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Sample MonkeyNotes

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The Giver

by

Lois Lowry

1993



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Jane Johnson

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The setting of *The Giver* by Lois Lowry is both familiar and strange. The time is the future. There are family groups, each with a boy and a girl. The adults work. The children go to school. But, people have made changes in how society operates since our time. As we first encounter the characters in the story, we

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Jonas - Jonas, the protagonist, is an eleven year-old boy at the beginning of the book. He has blue eyes. He is awaiting an important milestone in December when he and all the other Elevens will find out what their future jobs will be and will begin preparing for their new assignments. He receives a very

The Giver - The Giver, known in the community as the Receiver of Memory, already knows what Jonas will discover. He is troubled by what he knows. He believes that the community would be better able to.....

Jonas's father - Jonas's father is a Nurturer, a job that fits his personality. He cares for infants in their first year of life. He, like the rest of the community, has no memories. He lives.....

Minor Characters

Jonas's mother - Jonas's mother does what is required of her in her assigned job and in her role as mother to Jonas and Lily. As with the other women in the other family groups, she.....

Lily - Lily, Jonas's sister, is a Seven when Jonas is an Eleven. She becomes an.....

Gabriel - Gabriel is one of the babies that Jonas's father nurtures. The other babies that Jonas's father nurtures do not have names yet. But, hoping to help him to thrive by calling him

Asher - Asher is Jonas's best friend. He has difficulty always using the correct words when.....

Fiona - Fiona is Jonas's friend. She has red hair. The job that she is assigned is as.....

Larissa - Larissa is an old woman in the House of the Old. She looks forward to her Release.

The Chief Elder - The Chief Elder is the person whose job it is to announce the.....

CONFLICT

Conflict arises when Jonas becomes aware of reality as he receives Memories. This awareness is very unsettling to him. He begins to mentally revolt against some of the restrictions placed on community members.

Protagonist - Jonas is the protagonist in this story.

Antagonist - No one character fits the label, antagonist. But, the antagonist can be something.....

Climax - The climax of the story, the point of no return, is when Jonas realizes that "Release" of newchildren is actually killing them. The fact is made worse.....

Outcome/Falling Action - The outcome of this realization is that Jonas flees the community with.....

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

The Giver is written from Jonas's point of view. We see his community through his experiences. At first, his community seems to be a good place to live. There is no pain. Everyone is polite. Everyone has what they need. They have a home and food. They have a job that fits their interests and abilities. As the story progresses, we learn more about the community. Some of it is unsettling. Children are born to Birthmothers who never see them. After their first months in the Nurturing Center, they are given to compatible couples who have applied for a child. Each family can include two children, no more. When the children are grown, the parents go to live with the Childless Adults. Later, when they no longer contribute to the community, they go to the House of the Old until they are released. Release happens to the Old, unacceptable newchildren and those who break three rules. Release is actually death, but is not called that. Talk of death along with other topics that might upset people is unacceptable. People in the community cannot see color and they cannot feel love. They have no memories of the past. This started many generations ago when the community went to Sameness.

Jonas lives with his father, mother and sister. They are the father, mother and sister who have been selected for him. Father is a Nurturer. He cares for newchildren at the Nurturing Center. He has brought home one newchild who needs special attention. His name is Gabriel and he has trouble sleeping through the night. Mother works at the Department of Justice. Lily is four years younger than Jonas. Jonas is Eleven at the beginning of the book. He is looking forward to being assigned the job, or Assignment, that he will.....

THEMES

Major Themes

The Importance of Memory - In Jonas's community there is no need for memory. At least that is what those who guide the community believe. Jonas's community does not want its members.....

The Importance of the Individual - As Jonas grew up he ignored differences between people. The members of the community considered it impolite to draw attention to differences.....

Additional themes are discussed in the complete study guide.

MOOD

The mood of this novel is apprehensive. We see through the eyes of the protagonist, Jonas. In the beginning of the story, Jonas's apprehension is centered on what assignment he.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Lois Lowry was born in Hawaii on March 20, 1937, but did not stay there. Her father was an Army dentist, and as many military families do, they moved a lot. She went to Brown University in Rhode Island and majored in writing, but left during her sophomore year at age 19 to be married. Her husband was a Naval officer and she and her husband similarly moved from place to place. After he left the military, they lived in Cambridge, Mass. where her husband went to Harvard Law School. They later moved to main and had four children.

While there, she went to the University of Southern Maine and finished her degree and began Graduate school. After her marriage ended in 1977, she began writing. Her writing has been inspired by her children's adventures. She has focused on children and young adult novels and been a prolific and award winning author. She won the Newbery Medal for *The Giver* and for *Number the Stars*. The Newbery Medal is a highly coveted award given each year to an author by librarians. It is named after an eighteenth.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

CHAPTER ONE

Summary

Jonas is thinking about the upcoming December ceremony where he will be told what job he will have for the rest of his life. The Committee of Elders will decide which job best fits his qualifications. Jonas is trying to decide what word best describes how he feels about the ceremony. He decides that “frightened” is not the best word.

Jonas remembers a time in the past when that word did describe how he felt. It was when, against the rules, an airplane flew over the community. People stopped what they were doing. Directions came over the loudspeaker to go to the nearest building. Everyone did as they were told. Nothing happened. When the possibility of danger was over, the voice on the loudspeaker assured everyone that the pilot would be released. Jonas knows that “released” was not a word to be used casually. Children are not to threaten each other with it. Jonas remembers once when he used it against his friend, Asher, and was reprimanded for doing so.

Asher frequently used the wrong word. Once he had used “distracted” when “distracted” would have been correct. Jonas tries to use the correct word at all times. He decides that he was apprehensive, not frightened.

Over dinner every night Jonas’s family have a conversation called “the telling of feelings.” Each dinner time the family members tell the others gathered at the dinner table about an emotion they had earlier in the day. This night Jonas lets his sister, Lily, go first. His sister tells about a visiting child at her school who did not follow the rules. Her mother suggests that perhaps the child’s community has different rules. Father suggests that perhaps the child felt strange.

Then Father tells of his concern for a baby that he has been caring for at work. The child is not doing well. Father wants to bring him home at night. He feels that might help because the night crew does not have the best Nurturers. Mother likes the idea. Jonas and Lily do, too.

After Father’s turn is Mother’s turn. She works in the Department of Justice and is concerned about a repeat offender that was brought to her. Mother mentions the rule about offenders being released after a third transgression. The family all comfort her.

Now it is Jonas’s turn to tell his feelings. When he says that he is apprehensive about the upcoming Ceremony of Twelve, Father and Mother know that this conversation should not include Lily. They send her to get ready for bed.

Notes

The word “frightened” in the first sentence of the book is a clue to what is ahead. Otherwise, we might not be aware of the fact that all is not as it appears.

On the surface the community seems like a good place to live although we can already tell that it is different than our communities. There is emphasis on sharing feelings and on correct word usage to avoid misunderstandings. The family members seem interested in each other. These are good ways to act. The presence of the loudspeakers gives the feeling of a dictatorship, but it seems like a benevolent one.

There is something strange about the word “release,” however. If it only has its usual meaning, then why is so much emphasis placed on not using it lightly?

Jonas’s life will soon change dramatically. He is looking forward apprehensively to the change. This foreshadows dramatic changes that will soon be taking place in the community.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Jonas - Jonas is the protagonist. The story is written from his point of view. He changes greatly as the story proceeds. In the beginning, Jonas is an Eleven. The time is nearing when he will go through the Ceremony of Twelve. After the Ceremony of Twelve, children are treated as adults. As with other children in the community, the Ceremony of Twelve is an important milestone in Jonas's life. He looks toward it with some unease. He wonders what Assignment he will be given. At the ceremony, he is given a rare Assignment, that of Receiver of Memory. The Elders have been watching him and know that he.....

The Giver - The Giver is a wise, older man who has a special place of honor in the community. He is one of a long chain of Receivers of Memory. Each Receiver becomes a Giver when he passes on the memories to the next Receiver of Memory. It is the job of the Giver/Receiver to hold all the memories from the past for the community. Some memories are painful, so it is felt that it is better if only one

Father - Father is the father of Jonas and Lily. His Assignment is Nurturer. He has always enjoyed taking care of the newchildren. When he became a Twelve, because the Elders had noticed his interest, he was give the Assignment of Nurturer. Nurturers take care of the newchildren until they become.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

As *The Giver* begins, we are introduced to what seems overall to be a pleasant, if somewhat strange, community. We learn things about the community that seem appealing. At the same time, there are a few disquieting aspects of the community. The most important concern of Jonas, the protagonist, is the upcoming Ceremony of Twelve. This is the introduction or exposition.

The day of the Ceremony of Twelve arrives but the stress in Jonas's life does not end. Instead, his life changes dramatically. Jonas learns much from The Giver. What he learns changes him. Because.....

THEMES ANALYSIS

The Importance of Memory - This story developed from the author's understanding of the importance of memory, an understanding which came from her observation of someone who no longer had their memory. When one has no memory they cannot remember painful episodes in their life. Some.....

The Importance of the Individual - What Jonas accomplishes shows what an individual can do. He manages to not only change his life and the lives of Gabriel and the Giver, but also the lives of everyone in the community by making it possible for the memories to go to the community. Before the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas was one of a group of Elevens who were all living according to the rules of the.....
Additional themes are analyzed in the complete study guide.

POINT OF VIEW

Limited omniscient. The story is told from Jonas's point of view by someone who observed Jonas, who knew what Jonas was thinking and experiencing, but who only learned what others.....

OTHER ELEMENTS

TERMS USED

The author makes the community seem different by using common words in different ways. Here are some examples:

A "**Newchild**" is an infant. A Birthmother is a woman who gives birth to a newchild. The newchild is immediately taken from the Birthmother. He or she goes immediately to the Nurturing Center to be cared for by Nurturers.

A **Comfort Object** is a stuffed animal that, as its name implies, is given to a newchild to comfort him or her.

A **Bike Port** is a place used to park a bicycle.

Volunteer Hours are temporary jobs performed by children. These help th.....

STAGES OF CHILDHOOD

Fifty children are born each year. Each newchild is assigned a number and stays in the Nurturing Center until the December after her/his birth.

The first December after birth, each newchild is given a name in addition to the number assigned at birth. Each child is also assigned a family and is called a One. The group of children born each year stays together. The group is promoted each year to the next age group.

The third December, when the newchildren become Threes, their training in the correct usage of words begins. At this time, each child begins to take part in their family's morning analysis of the previous night's dreams.

The fourth December, when the children become Fours, they wear jackets that button in the back. This ends the seventh December, when the children become Sevens. At that time they begin.....

QUOTATIONS - IMPORTANT QUOTES AND ANALYSIS

"We failed in our last selection....I will not dwell on the experience because it causes us all terrible discomfort." (Page 61)

The Chief Elder is referring to an earlier Receiver who did not complete her training. When she left, it caused much pain in the community. The reader does not find out the details until later, when the Giver talks to Jonas about what happened.

"Well, there was the telling of his life. That is always first. Then the toast. We all raised our glasses and cheered. We chanted the anthem. He made a lovely good-bye speech. And several of us made little speeches wishing him well." (Page 32)

Larissa, one of the Old, is describing the ceremony before the Release of another of the Old. The community thinks that Release is something good. A few do wonder why it is such a secret event, but most just accept what they have been led to believe.

"What if they had all been instructed: You may lie?" (Page 71)

When Jonas becomes the new Receiver, he is given a sheet of rules. The last rule on the page is "You may lie." These three words send shocks through him. Throughout his childhood, he was aware that he was not allowed to lie. Based on this, he has assumed that others are likewise not allowed to lie. But, if he is allowed to lie, perhaps others have also been given permission, when they became a Twelve, to lie. He has no way to find out if others can lie. It is obvious to him that, if someone has permission to lie, they can lie about whether or not they can lie.

Many additional quotes are analyzed in the complete study guide.

SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS

Symbols

Gabriel - Gabriel, the newchild who Jonas takes to Elsewhere when he leaves the community, is a symbol of the future, as babies often are. Jonas takes this symbol of the future with him when he heads toward the future, leaving the community's past behind.

The Sled - The sled symbolizes the memories that carry Jonas from the.....

Motifs

Vision - The depth of vision that Jonas possesses is an ability to understand what he sees.

Eye Color - The light eye color of Jonas and the Giver connects the two.....

IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

Title: *The Giver*

Author: Lois Lowry

Date Published: 1993

Meaning of the Title: In the community, there is almost always one Receiver. When it is almost time for a new Receiver, the old Receiver becomes the Giver. What are given and received are memories. The Receivers/Givers are the only members of the community that have access to the memories.

Setting: Some time in the future in a seemingly utopian community that is actually a dystopian community.

Genre: Dystopian novel for young adults.....

VOCABULARY

These are some common words used in uncommon ways in this novel:

Nurturer is one who takes care of the newchildren.

Newchild is a baby before it is named and given to its family.

House of the Old is where the Old live until they are released.....

STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

1. What happened to the pilot who flew over the community?
 - a.) He had to go to additional training.
 - b.) He was jailed for two months.
 - c.) He was released.
 - d.) He was given another assignment and no longer allowed to fly.
 - e.) He was put on display where others could make fun of him.
2. What is Jonas's father's assigned job?
 - a.) Elder
 - b.) Caretaker of the Old
 - c.) Instructor of Elevens
 - d.) Receiver
 - e.) Nurturer.....

Answer key: 1) c 2) e 3) b 4) a 5) a 6) c 7) a 8) a 9) b 10) a 11) a 12) e 13) d 14) e 15) a 16) d

ESSAY TOPIC IDEAS - BOOK REPORT TOPICS

1. Write your own ending for *The Giver*. What happens right after the given ending? Explain either why yours is the most logical ending, or why you prefer the ending you present.
2. What parts of the community would fit in a true utopia? What parts would only be found in a dystopia?
3. Do you think that twelve is the right age for the community members to be assigned their life-long job? Explain why you believe as you do.....

END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS

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