The Giver

Themes
Making Connections

Lowry states the book:

“Speaks to the vital need for humans to be aware of their interdependence, not only with each other, but with the world and its environment.”
Making Connections

The Giver:

• Must transmit “the memories of the whole world” to Jonas

• Has a fuller, richer life than others in community
  – Sees color, hears music, feels love; also feels pain
  – “If you gave some of it to me, maybe your pain would be less.” So Jonas suffers, but not as much as if he were alone
Lowry on choice:

“The Giver relates to me in probably the same way it relates to everybody – it is a reminder of the importance of the choices we make; also of the value of our freedom to make choices.”
Choice

• Jonas reflects on the choices the community has made
  – All has been lost since the community decided to go to Sameness

• The Giver states that freedom of choice brings the possibility of making the wrong decision

• Jonas almost believes the community’s reasoning:
  – “We really have to protect people from wrong choices...it’s much safer.”
  – He is uneasy as he states this
Lowry on the Dystopian world:

“I tried to make Jonas’s world seem familiar, comfortable, and safe, and I tried to seduce the reader. I seduced myself along the way. It did feel good, that world. I got rid of all the things I fear and dislike: all the violence, prejudice, poverty, and injustice: and I even threw in good manners as a way of life because I liked the idea of it. And if I’ve learned anything...it is that we can’t live in a walled world, in an ‘only us, only now’ world where we are all the same and feel safe. We would have to sacrifice too much.”
Freedom Versus Security

• Sameness as security
  – Becomes sameness versus diversity
• People wear the same kinds of clothes, ride same bikes, have same kinds of family units
• Until spending time with The Giver, Jonas is unaware of the sameness
• He then wants color, snow, hills, and sleds
• The Giver explains they had to let go of some things to gain control of others. Jonas: “We shouldn’t have!”
• After leaving, he is awed by the world.
Individuality

• No room in this community for individuality
  – Being “your own person” is frowned upon
  – Only in Assignments are differences acknowledged and honored
    • No birthdays, but groupmates
You may lie.

- Jonah wonders if others have been told the same.
  - Erodes trust immediately
- Learns his father lies about the euthanasia
  - Yes, someone comes from Elsewhere to get the baby...
  - The Giver says, “I am empowered to lie... but I have never lied to you.”
- Honesty is a choice
Family

• Family units aren’t traditional
  – No love, courtship, decision to start a family
  – Children born in Birthing Center by Birthmothers and raised in Nurturing Centers
  – Leave parents when grown and aren’t part of parents’ lives
    • No intergenerational connectedness
    • No grandparents

• Jonas is given a vision and understands the impracticality but desires a family bound by love instead of duty
Questions

• What do you think is the most important theme?
• How much would you be willing to give up to live in a safe and secure world? Would you give up as much as the people in Jonas’s community?
• What are the good and bad things about Jonas’s family?