

The Giver

Lois Lowry



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

Choice

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

Freedom Versus Security

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

Honesty

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?