

Summer Reading

The Giver

Lois Lowry (1993)

About This Guide: *This document is designed for Honors ELA students. In addition to chapter comprehension questions, you will complete close-reading annotations, vocabulary analysis, literary device identification, thematic essay prompts, and a pre-discussion Socratic Seminar preparation. All written responses should demonstrate textual evidence, precise literary vocabulary, and analytical depth.*

PART I: CONTEXT & BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Complete this section BEFORE you begin reading. Use prior knowledge and any research needed.

A. Genre: Dystopian Fiction

Dystopian literature imagines a future society that appears perfect on the surface but is deeply flawed and oppressive beneath. Before reading, consider what you already know:

- Define dystopia in your own words and contrast it with utopia.
 - *Utopia:* _____
 - *Dystopia:* _____
- Name one other dystopian novel, film, or story you know. What features made it dystopian?
 - *Title:* _____
 - *Dystopian features:* _____
- What conditions in real history or the real world might inspire an author to write dystopian fiction?

B. Literary Vocabulary — Pre-Reading

Define each term before reading. You will be expected to apply these terms in your chapter analysis.

Term	Definition + Example from any source
Dystopia	
Euphemism	
Allusion	
Motif	
Allegory	
Dramatic irony	
Foil (character)	
Unreliable narrator	
Totalitarianism	
Cognitive dissonance	

PART II: CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER LITERARY ANALYSIS

Instructions: For each chapter, answer all questions with complete sentences. Where noted, provide a direct quotation from the text and analyze it using specific literary terminology. All questions marked.

How to Cite the Text: Use parenthetical citations throughout: e.g., (Lowry 23). When you quote, introduce the passage, quote accurately, and then analyze — never drop a quote without commentary.

Chapters 1–2 — *Exposition: A World of Precision*

- Identify three details from Chapters 1–2 that signal to the reader that Jonas's society is a dystopia rather than a utopia. For each, explain what it implies about how the community operates.
- Lowry opens the novel with Jonas searching for the precise word to describe his emotion, settling on 'apprehensive.' What does this opening reveal about the society's relationship with language and emotional expression? How does this foreshadow later themes?

- Close Reading: Reread the passage about the community's reaction to the unscheduled plane. Identify one example of diction that reveals the community's relationship with fear and authority. Quote and analyze.

Literary Focus — Diction & Tone: *As you read, track Lowry's word choices. The precision of language in Jonas's world mirrors the precision of its control. Ask: Who benefits from controlling the words people use?*

Chapters 3–4 — *Observation & Difference*

- Jonas perceives the apple 'change' in mid-air but cannot name or explain what he saw. Analyze this moment as an example of dramatic irony. What does the reader understand that Jonas does not?
- The community enforces precision of language yet also restricts vocabulary (no words for color, complex emotion, or historical events). Write a paragraph arguing whether this linguistic limitation is a tool of oppression or a logical consequence of Sameness. Use at least one piece of textual evidence.

Chapters 5–6 — *Rules, Rituals, and Control*

- The 'Stirrings' and the pills that suppress them are introduced in Chapter 5. What do the Stirrings represent symbolically? What does the community's response to them reveal about how the society handles anything outside its control?
- Families in Jonas's community are not formed through love but through application and assignment. Compare this to a feature of a real totalitarian government. What fundamental value does this practice undermine, and how does Lowry use it to build her critique?
- Vocabulary in Context: The word 'release' appears again. At this point in the novel, how does the community's use of this word function as a euphemism? What emotional effect does Lowry create by withholding its true meaning?

Chapters 7–9 — *The Ceremony of Twelve & The Weight of Selection*

- Jonas is 'selected' rather than 'assigned' — a rare distinction treated with reverence and fear. What does this tell us about how the society views individual exceptionalism? Is it welcomed or feared?
- The final rule Jonas receives — 'You may lie' — is the most destabilizing. Write a close-reading analysis of this moment: What does it reveal about the relationship between power and truth in the community? How does it shift the reader's perception of every character who has spoken to Jonas before this moment?

Chapters 10–12 — *Memory, Color & the Cost of Sameness*

- The Annex where the Receiver lives has locked doors and books — both absent everywhere else. Analyze these two details as symbols. What do they represent about knowledge, privacy, and the individual in a controlled society?
- Color is gradually introduced to Jonas and functions as a central motif. Track its appearances through Chapter 12. Write a paragraph analyzing what color symbolizes in the novel and how Lowry uses its presence and absence to develop the theme of individuality vs. conformity.
- Close Reading: Reread Jonas's first memory of snow and the sled. Identify the sensory imagery Lowry uses. How does experiencing sensation for the first time affect Jonas's understanding of what has been taken from his community?

Chapters 13–15 — *Knowledge, Pain & Moral Awakening*

- The Giver tells Jonas that without memory, there can be no wisdom. Unpack this argument. Do you agree? What specific examples from the novel support or challenge this claim?
- In Chapter 15, Jonas receives the memory of war — death, suffering, devastation. How does this contrast with the world he has known? Write a literary analysis paragraph arguing what Lowry is saying about the relationship between suffering and meaning. Use the concept of 'the sublime' if applicable.
- As Jonas absorbs painful memories, he begins to feel anger toward his family and friends for their ignorance. Analyze this as an example of the protagonist's 'awakening' in dystopian literature. What is the cost of knowing the truth?

Chapters 16–18 — *Love, Loss & the Limits of a Controlled World*

- Jonas experiences the memory of a family Christmas celebration and asks his father if he loves him. His father laughs off the question as 'imprecise.' Write an analytical paragraph: What does this exchange reveal about the emotional poverty of the community? How does Lowry use the concept of love as a foil to Sameness?
- Rosemary, the failed previous Receiver, requested her own release after receiving memories of pain. Analyze her as a foil to Jonas. What does her choice foreshadow, and what does it suggest about different responses to moral awakening?

Chapters 19–20 — *The True Meaning of Release*

- The word 'release' is finally revealed to mean lethal injection — death administered by Jonas's own father. Trace the word's use throughout the novel. Write a paragraph analyzing Lowry's use of euphemism as a critique of how language shapes moral reality.
- Jonas's father shows no remorse when releasing the infant. Is he a villain? Write a nuanced analytical response: How does Lowry use his character to explore the concept of the 'banality of evil' (ordinary people committing immoral acts because of social conditioning)?

Chapters 21–23 — *Escape, Ambiguity & Meaning*

- The ending of *The Giver* is deliberately ambiguous. Jonas reaches a hilltop and hears music he believes is real — but it may be a final memory or hallucination. Write a literary analysis of the ending: What does the ambiguity accomplish thematically? How would the novel's meaning change if the ending were unambiguous?
- Jonas carries Gabriel to safety, risking his own life. How does this act embody the novel's central argument about what gives life meaning? Connect your answer to the themes of memory, love, and individual moral responsibility.
- The community pursues Jonas desperately because his absence would release all memories back to the people. What does this reveal about the fragility of the system? What is Lowry suggesting about the relationship between collective knowledge and social control?

PART III: CHARACTER ANALYSIS & RELATIONSHIPS

A. Character Profile — Jonas

Trait / Quality	Evidence from Text (Quote + Chapter)
At the start of the novel	
After receiving painful memories	
After learning the truth about release	
At the novel's end	

- ★ HONORS — Jonas is often described as an outsider even before his Selection. How does his ability to perceive beyond Sameness mark him as different from the beginning? Is his rebellion an act of individual courage or the inevitable result of his unique perception?

B. Character Foils

A foil is a character whose traits contrast with another character's, highlighting key qualities. Analyze the following pairs:

Foil Pair	How They Contrast + What This Highlights About Jonas
Jonas vs. Asher	
Jonas vs. The Giver	
Jonas's Father vs. The Giver	
Rosemary vs. Jonas	

C. The Giver — A Complex Figure

- The Giver is both Jonas's mentor and a complicit member of the system he critiques. Is he a heroic figure, a tragic one, or something more complicated? Construct an argument supported by at least two pieces of textual evidence.
- The Giver chooses to stay behind while Jonas flees. Analyze this decision: Is it sacrifice, resignation, or something else? How does his choice complicate the novel's moral framework?