**BOOK SYNOPSIS**

In Lois Lowry's Newbery Medal–winning classic, twelve-year-old Jonas lives in a seemingly ideal world. Not until he is given his life assignment as the Receiver does he begin to understand the dark secrets behind his fragile community.

Life in the community where Jonas lives is idyllic. Designated birthmothers produce newchildren, who are assigned to appropriate family units. Citizens are assigned their partners and their jobs. No one thinks to ask questions. Everyone obeys. Everyone is the same. Except Jonas.

Not until he is given his life assignment as the Receiver of Memory does he begin to understand the dark, complex secrets behind his fragile community. Gradually Jonas learns that power lies in feelings. But when his own power is put to the test—when he must try to save someone he loves—he may not be ready. Is it too soon? Or too late?

Told with deceptive simplicity, this is the provocative story of a boy who experiences something incredible and undertakes something impossible. In the telling it questions every value we have taken for granted and reexamines our most deeply held beliefs.

**REVIEWS AND PRAISE**

“A powerful and provocative novel.”  
— *New York Times*

"Wrought with admirable skill—the emptiness and menace underlying this Utopia emerge step by inexorable step: a richly provocative novel."  
— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Lowry is once again in top form raising many questions while answering few, and unwinding a tale fit for the most adventurous readers.”  
— *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“The simplicity and directness of Lowry's writing force readers to grapple with their own thoughts.”  
— *Booklist* (starred review)

“Lois Lowry has written a fascinating, thoughtful science-fiction novel. The story is skillfully written; the air of disquiet is delicately insinuated. And the theme of balancing the virtues of freedom and security is beautifully presented.”  
— *Horn Book* (starred review)
"The Giver has things to say that cannot be said too often, and I hope there will be many, many young people who will be willing to listen. A warning in narrative form."
— *Washington Post*

**AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

- Newbery Medal
- Golden Sower Award (Nebraska)
- Nene Award (Hawaii)
- New York Public Library’s Best Books for Kids
- Golden Archer Award (Wisconsin)
- Nevada Young Readers’ Award
- Buckeye Children’s Book Award (Ohio)
- Pacific Northwest Library Association Young Reader’s Choice Award
- Heartland Award
- Land of Enchantment Book Award (New Mexico)
- Rebecca Caudill Young Readers’ Book Award (Illinois)
- Indian Paintbrush Book Award (Wyoming)
- Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Award
- Maine Student Book Award
- Pennsylvania Young Reader’s Choice Award
- Sequoyah Children's Book Award (Oklahoma)
- 100 Best Young Adult Books of All Time
- 100 Great Children's Books 100 Years
- Booklist Editors’ Choice
- Great American Read
- Notable Children’s Books in the Language Arts
- School Library Journal Best Books
- YALSA Best Books for Young Adults
- YALSA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults
- YALSA Quick Pics for Reluctant Readers
- 3 Apples Book Award
- Alaska Battle of the Books
- Arizona Young Readers Awards
- Charlie May Simon Children’s Book Award
- Great Stone Face Book Award
- Lone Star Reading List

*Updated 3.14.24*

HarperCollins

Josie.Dallam@harpercollins.com
• Quahog Book Award
• William Allen White Book Award
• Young Hoosier Book Award

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

• Activities From www.walden.com
• Teaching Guides At www.bookrags.com
• Teaching Guides At www.bookrags.com
• Teaching Guides At www.shmoop.com
• Teaching Guides At www.booksontape.com
• Teaching Guides At www.storyboardthat.com
• Teaching Guides At www.readinggroupguides.com
• Teaching Guides At www.shmoop.com
• Teaching Guides At drive.google.com

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

Add responses to challenges whenever possible, including links if available. Relevant information includes official responses from a board of education, library statements of support, or other statements of support from relevant organizations like PEN America or the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

AUTHOR STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

In my early years as a writer for young people, I occasionally received letters from people who wondered why I had used a “bad word” in a book. I always wrote back, explaining that an author tries to reflect reality, and so book characters have to speak the way real people would speak; it didn’t mean, I always explained, that the reader should speak that way, or that the author does.

When I wrote The Giver, it contained no so-called “bad words.” It was set, after all, in a mythical, futuristic, and Utopian society. Not only was there no poverty, divorce, racism, sexism, pollution, or violence in the world of The Giver; there was also careful attention paid to language: to its fluency, precision, and power.

The reaction to the book was startling. It was startling in the number of letters and responses I received almost immediately, but it was even more startling in the degree of differences in the responses.

• A Trappist monk wrote from his monastery that he and his brothers were reading the book as a Christian metaphor and finding it profoundly significant as a message of redemption.

• At about the same time, a parent in California demanded that it be taken off the library shelves of her child’s school because of its immorality.

• A private school in Michigan made it required reading not only for all the upper-school students, but for their parents.
At the same time, a teacher wrote to me that the Newbery committee should be chastised for their awarding the 1994 medal to a sensationalistic piece of trash.

The children of Belgium and France chose the book, in translation, as their favorite of the year.

A parent wrote to me that I should be ashamed for exposing children to “messy data.”

What’s wrong with this picture? I found myself thinking.

I went back and re-read the book myself. I tried to figure out whether these disparate people were, in fact, all responding to the same thing: whether there was actually a theme in the book that people found either uplifting or terrifying, or maybe both. And I discovered that it was the concept of choice. *The Giver* is about a world where those decisions are made for them. It seems very safe and comfortable, and I bet a lot of parents—later to object and censor—liked the book until they were two-thirds of the way through it.

Then it got scary. It got scary—and they decided to take it away from their own kids—because it turned out that it wasn’t safe and comfy to live in a world where adhering to rigid rules is the norm. It turned out, in the book, that such a world is very, very dangerous, and that people have to learn to make their own choices.

I sympathize with the fear that makes some parents not want that to be true. But I believe without a single shadow of a doubt that it is necessary for young people to learn to make choices. Learning to make right choices is the only way they will survive in an increasingly frightening world. Pretending that there are no choices to be made—reading only books, for example, which are cheery and safe and nice—is a prescription for disaster for the young.

Submitting to censorship is to enter the seductive world of *The Giver*: the world where there are no bad words and no bad deeds. But it is also the world where choice has been taken away and reality distorted. And that is the most dangerous world of all.

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES*

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.