

The giver by lois lowry

Literature, American Literature



The Giver is a highly influential book written by Lois Lowry. It is science fiction, with a theme of the past and connection. In a world where there are no feelings, no choice and no pain, the main character Jonas who is twelve struggles to find his place in the small community. He was "assigned" the job as Receiver of Memory. (yes, jobs were chosen) Unaware of what dark secrets lie beneath his perfect utopia of a world, he is suddenly plunged into the past, exposed to all the memories, back and back and back. Of what happened before everything changed. Before the community changed everything to sameness. Roads had to all be flat. The only form of transport was by bike. Children were grouped by ages, as in Sevens, Sixes, and so on. All the girls has the same hairstyle. All house units were the same. Fathers and mothers and children were assigned together as a family and received the exact same number of children. Babies who were too troublesome and elders were 'released'. Which means they are killed. Everything had to be the same to prevent discrimination. Even the love feelings of youngsters and adults had to be controlled with a pill. Weather was controlled too! The community elders who decided all this meant to do good, because without pain, everyone was safe. And without feelings, there was no sadness. The Giver transfers memories to Jonas of the past. Memories that were both happy and sad. Like a fun sled ride down a hill and starvation and war. By removing all the pain, the fun side was removed too. With the sled, there's another sinister side which Jonas also received the memory of. Crashing on a rock, falling ten feet down, cracking your neck and lying there in the cold dying in agony. That was what Jonas had to hold onto, and experience. For the community elders asked the Giver and the Receiver of Memory what

mistakes happened in the past so they could not be experienced again. So the whole isolated community was literally a totalitarian environment. Jonas feels weighed down with all the knowledge of the past, while his feelingless parents and little sister Lily go about their daily lives happily. One day Jonas sees his friends playing a simple game of war. He had already been given that terrible memory of war, so he angrily barged in and demanded them to stop, but he could not make them comprehend exactly what wrong they were doing, for they did not know what war was, and the pain that went with it. The community was also colourless too. Everything that they saw through their eyes was just plain grey. Jonas himself, had been given the colours so he could see clearly each morning and choose either a red sweater or blue sweater he wanted to wear. Choice in the community was very limited.

Everyone was set a job above the age of twelve and were forced to do it. The same thing happened the day after, and the next. It was all very automatic. Jonas and the Giver (an old man weighed down with all the memories he held) planned something together on the day of the ceremony. The ceremony is a big event always at the end of the year, symbolising growth where Fours would move up a year and be Fives. Fives would be Sixes, and etc. There were not be any birthdays for the individual children for that would single one out and mean they were special. Everything had to be the same, and as a result of that, a child might feel left out and feelings of rejection would grow. Anyway, they planned that Jonas would wake up the next morning with a cheerful note saying he was going out for a morning ride beside the river. He would then of course ride his bike to the river, and then... He would drop his spare bag of clothes nearby and ride off into the forbidden woods. All the

while, taking toddler Gabriel with him, whom he has saved from release the morning, as the child was the smaller boy of twins. And the community could not have two of the same people walking around either. So that was to be done the morning, except Jonas quietly took him away, for he could not bear the thought of this happy child innocently murdered. From that point on, he rode and rode away further and further, until at last, starving, tired and shivering into a snow storm. Where he found a sled waiting on top of the hill. He rode down it with Gabriel who was on his last life, down to the town below with christmas lights. The reader is not told where precisely this is, but judging by the description, it was the REAL world, unchanged and uncontrolled. The Giver teaches people to value their freedom, colours and choice more carefully, and not to take it for granted. Lois Lowry has written another similar book, not in the same series called 'Gathering Blue' just another suggestion for those who enjoyed The Giver. It is a must read!