

# The giver

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



1. One of the more controversial topics that Lowry touches upon in the giver is euthanasia, or the practice of ending someone's life to ease their suffering. Jonas's community practices euthanasia on very old citizens as well as upon unhealthy newchildren. Jonas's horror at this practice motivates him to take drastic measures to reform the society, and yet many people in our own society consider euthanasia to be a compassionate practice and one that should be available to all citizens. Discuss the attitude toward euthanasia as expressed in the giver. Does the novel condemn, promote, or conditionally accept the practice?

2. It is difficult for us to imagine a world without color, personal freedoms, and love, but in the giver, the society relinquishes these things in order to make room for total peace and safety. Consider the pleasures and experiences that our own society discourages in order to preserve the public good (certain recreational drugs, for example.) In the context of the lessons Jonas learns in the giver, explain why we should or should not sacrifice an orderly community in order to allow individuals more spiritually or sensually satisfying experiences. Where do you think the line between public safety and personal freedom should be drawn?

3. Read at least one other novel depicting a dystopian society. What techniques does this society use to maintain order? How does its structure differ from the community's in the giver?

4. Consider the community's repression of sexuality in the giver. What function does it serve in helping the society run smoothly? What dangers does sexuality pose to a structured community, and how are those dangers different from the dangers posed by love? If you have read brave new world by Aldous Huxley, compare that society's use of sexuality and promiscuity to keep people from accessing deeper feelings to

the giver's restriction of sexuality for essentially the same ends. 5. Despite the community's emphasis on precise language, language is often used as a tool for social control in the giver. Choose two or three words used in the society (examples are release, newchild, Stirrings) that distort or conceal the meaning of the words we use now in order to promote the rules and conventions of the community, and describe how their use affects the behavior and attitudes of the people in the community. 6. the giver is one of the most frequently censored books in America, partially because some critics believe that Lowry is promoting the community Jonas lives in as an exemplary place to live. Although it might be extreme to suppose that Lowry supports all of the institutions that her protagonist rejects, examine the giver's attitude toward the community rules and culture. Which aspects of the community are the targets of the most criticism and condemnation? Do any aspects of the society escape criticism? 7. Analyze the giver's relationship to the social questions that were most frequently discussed in the early 1990s. To what degree is the giver a cautionary tale? Who is the object of its warning?