



# THE GIVER: NOVEL DISCUSSION GUIDE #1

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

## Chapters 1 – 2 Sample answers

### Comprehension

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- What is unusual or important about the aircraft incident that Jonas mentions at the very beginning of the book?  
The incident with the aircraft is important because it was a time when Jonas felt frightened. He describes how an unidentified aircraft flew over the community last year. This was strange because that sort of thing isn't supposed to happen in the community, and there was an urgent announcement telling residents to immediately go inside.
- Jonas spends much of Chapter 1 trying to accurately describe how he's feeling. What are some of the words he uses, and how are they different from each other?  
Jonas uses the words frightened, eager, excited, apprehensive, nervous, and worried to describe how he's feeling. Some of them (frightened, apprehensive, nervous, worried) are more negative emotions while others (eager, excited) are more positive emotions.
- What do the group names "Elevens" and "Sevens" mean in the story? Why are these group names important?  
The group names are similar to grade levels at school, but they refer to the approximate age of all of the children in the group. Children in the community get different privileges and items as they progress through these groups.
- Jonas makes comments about animals and imaginary creatures being used as comfort objects. What might his comments indicate about the setting of the story?  
Community members don't know what animals are, and they think that bears and elephants are imaginary creatures. This might mean that they're taught that animals like bears and elephants aren't real, or that those animals are extinct in this world.
- What is the purpose of the December ceremonies for the children of the community? What are some of the specific things that happen for the children?  
The ceremonies every December are when all of the children move up to the next age group together. This is also a time for getting certain items, privileges, and responsibilities. For example, the December ceremonies are when newchildren get names and families, when all Nines get bicycles, and when female Nines get their hair ribbons removed. It's also when new Twelves get their permanent Assignments, or jobs.
- Who is the Receiver? Why is this person important in the community?  
The receiver is the most important Elder in the community. He lives and works alone, and Jonas has never seen him. He is important to the community because if an important rule needs to change, a committee will have to ask the Receiver for a decision.
- Describe the Committee of Elders. Who are they, and what is their role in the community?  
The Committee of Elders are leaders of the community who make important decisions. They are responsible for the rules and for observing Elevens and giving them their assignments at the Ceremony of Twelve.



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### Analysis

- Why was Jonas “awed” that his father had broken a rule? And why was he “relieved” when he saw his mother smiling? What does Jonas’s response to this information tell you about the importance of following the rules in the community and the consequences for breaking them?  
Even though his father broke a minor rule by looking for the newchild’s name, Jonas is awed that his father would break a rule at all, even a minor one. He is relieved when he sees his mother smiling because she works for the Department of Justice and is responsible for making sure people follow the rules. Jonas was probably worried that his mother would have to report or punish his father for breaking the rule. Jonas’s response indicates that following the rules is extremely important in the community and that rule-breaking is taken very seriously.
- How does Lois Lowry build suspense about the month of December throughout Chapter 1? Cite specific parts of the text in your answer.  
In the very first line of the book, the author builds suspense by writing, “It was almost December, and Jonas was beginning to be frightened.” She doesn’t say why Jonas is nervous about December or what specifically is coming until later, only calling it “the event” later in Chapter 1. Lowry also spaces out the parts about the upcoming event in December, putting in other events and details in between. It’s not until the end of Chapter 1 that we learn that the event is called “The Ceremony of Twelve,” which Jonas’s sister, Lily, “whispered in an awed voice.”
- How does the author use language to build the setting and create a sense of strangeness? Give some examples from the text to support your answer.  
Lois Lowry uses a lot of unfamiliar words and phrases to name everyday events, objects, and people. We get the feeling from the narrator that these are the proper names for these things in the community, which helps the setting feel more different from our own world. For example, babies are called “newchildren,” people who look after the babies are called “Nurturers,” jobs are called “Assignments,” and stuffed animals or toys are called “comfort objects.”

### Personal Connection

- ★ How would you feel about receiving an Assignment at age 12 that would last for the rest of your life? Explain why you would feel this way.

Student answers will vary.



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## Chapters 3 – 5 Sample answers

### Comprehension

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- How does Jonas feel when Lily mentions his eyes at the beginning of Chapter 3? Why does he feel that way?  
Jonas feels annoyed with Lily because she pointed out how he is different from most of the other community members. She says he has “funny eyes” because his eyes are light instead of dark like most of the other citizens. Calling attention to differences is considered rude, even though it’s not against the rules.
- What do you know so far about different Assignments and how they’re viewed in the community?  
Some of the Assignments mentioned so far are Speaker, Instructor, Nurturer, Night-Crew Nurturer, positions at the Department of Justice, the Receiver, Laborer, Doctor, Engineer, Birthmother, Recreation Director, Rehabilitation Director, and Caretaker. Daytime assignments are typically more respected than night crew assignments. Birthmothers and Laborers are less honorable or desirable, while Instructors and positions at the Department of Justice are more honorable and respected.
- Go back to Chapter 3 and look closely at the paragraph where Jonas describes how the apple changed. Keeping in mind what you know about apples, what is unusual about the apple that Jonas describes in Chapter 3? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  
Jonas says that the apple was still “the same size and shape: a perfect sphere.” Most apples are not actually perfect spheres, so this is unusual. He also says that it was “the same nondescript shade, about the same shade as his own tunic” when he looked at it again later. Most apples are red, green, or yellow, so it’s strange that Jonas doesn’t say specifically what color the apple is.
- What are some rituals that members of the community are required to participate in? What do you think is the purpose of these rituals?  
People in the community are required to participate in dream telling in the morning and the evening telling of feelings. This is when they share and discuss their dreams and feelings with their families. On the one hand, it’s a way for family units to bond and support each other emotionally, but it is also a way for the community leaders to keep track of citizens’ thoughts and feelings.
- What is the purpose of volunteer hours?  
Volunteer hours are a way for children in the community to learn about and get experience with different kinds of Assignments. This helps the community and allows the Committee of Elders to observe the children to see what Assignment they will be best suited for.
- Describe the release celebration that Larissa talks about in Chapter 4.  
The release celebration takes place at the House of the Old. It starts with the telling of a person’s life, and then toasts, cheers, and speeches. It’s meant to celebrate the person being Released and to wish them well.



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### Analysis

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- In the beginning of Chapter 3, you learn that “almost every citizen in the community has dark eyes.” But Jonas and the newchild, Gabriel, have pale eyes. What can you infer about the characters with light eyes?  
“Dark eyes” are probably brown eyes, and “light eyes” are probably blue or green eyes. While dark eyes are very common in the community, light eyes are very rare and different, and it is something residents aren’t supposed to talk about. It might mean that the characters with light eyes are special in some way.
- Volunteer hours are a rare opportunity for children to make their own choices. Why do you think the community allows children to make these choices?  
Volunteer hours are a time when children can choose where and how to spend their time because the Committee of Elders considers their volunteer hour choices when choosing a person’s Assignment. It helps the Elders know what each person will enjoy and be good at.
- Why do you think there are rules against calling attention to differences and bragging in the community? What do minor rules like this tell you about the community?  
Bragging is a way to draw attention to yourself and your own accomplishments, which points out how you are different from or better than others. People in the community aren’t supposed to draw attention to differences, and there are a lot of other minor rules about being polite and considerate of others. These types of rules indicate that the collective group or community is more important than an individual.

### Personal Connection

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- ★ What Assignment would you want in the community? What do you think the Elders might choose for you based on your personal interests and things you’ve done in your own life?

Student answers will vary.