



THE GIVER: NOVEL DISCUSSION GUIDE #2

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 6 – 8 Sample answers

Comprehension

- What are some of the new items that children are given in the December Ceremonies? What do the different items represent in terms of the children's roles in society?
Children are given jackets with different kinds of buttons (e.g., front buttons, smaller buttons). The different jackets symbolize a child's growing level of independence after spending the first few years of life learning interdependence. Nines are given bikes, which represent the children moving out into the larger community and away from the family unit.
- Describe the relationship between Jonas and Lily. Give examples from the text to support your answer.
Jonas and Lily tease and annoy one another, like when Jonas teases Lily that he would toss her out of a plane if he got Pilot. But they also care about one another. Lily looks up to Jonas, and Jonas wants to help and guide Lily. For example, he has been thinking about teaching her to ride a bike soon.
- Describe the purposes of the Ceremony of Loss and the Murmur of Replacement Ceremony.
The Ceremony of Loss is a somber mourning ritual intended to help the person who was "lost" fade from everyone's consciousness. The Murmur of Replacement Ceremony is the opposite of the Ceremony of Loss and is intended to welcome and celebrate the newchild who is essentially replacing the lost child.
- Based on what you've read so far, why is Release not the same as Loss in the community?
Release is always intentional, whether it's one of the Old celebrating their Release or someone being punished for breaking the rules. Loss is accidental and very rare because the community is a safe place.
- How does Jonas feel about the level of control the Committee of Elders has over the lives and choices of the community's citizens? Give specific evidence from the text that shows how Jonas feels.
Jonas trusts the Committee of Elders to make the right decisions for everyone in the community. He appreciates that the decisions on the Matching of Spouses, the Naming, the Placement of newchildren, and the Assignments are all "scrupulously thought through by the Committee of Elders."
- In Chapter 7, the entire community is laughing at Asher's past mistakes and experiences with the discipline wand. Why are they laughing? How does Asher feel about this? What does this tell you about Asher and about the community as a whole?
The community members are laughing because they all know and like Asher, and they remember his silly mistakes growing up. Asher looked "sheepish" but was "pleased at the special attention." This shows that Asher is good-natured. It also shows that the community is very close and familiar with one another and that they all accept the community's punishment for rule-breaking.
- In this community, much of the first twelve years of a child's life is about learning interdependence, fitting in, and establishing sameness. How is the Ceremony of Twelve different?
The Ceremony of Twelve is different because special attention is paid to each child, which is very rare in the community. In the Ceremony of Twelve, each child is brought on stage and the Chief Elder gives a speech about them. She shares their accomplishments and other stories about each child before announcing their Assignment.



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Analysis

- At the beginning of Chapter 6, we find out that Lily doesn't like her hair ribbons. Yet everyone in the community is given the same clothes, the same bikes, and the same haircuts, regardless of their preferences. Why is everyone given the same things? What does this tell you about the community?
Everyone in the same age group is given the same clothes and haircuts possibly because this is a quick and easy way to tell what group someone is in. Everyone is treated the same. This is more proof that the community values interdependence and sameness over independence and individuality.
- Compare and contrast the way the community treats newchildren with the way our society treats babies. Why are some things the same but others different?
In the community, newchildren are separated from their Birthmothers, raised in a center by Nurturers, and given to an approved family. They go by numbers for the first year of life because they don't have names until they're given to a family. This is different from our society, where most babies are named and raised by their birth families. Both societies find infants cute, but the community has a less personal or emotional approach than our society. Like most aspects of the community, newchildren are treated in a strictly equal and utilitarian way.
- Reread the section in Chapter 8 where the Chief Elder describes the qualities that a Receiver of Memory must have. What can you infer about the role of Receiver from the qualities required?
Based on the fact that it requires courage, you can infer that the training and the role of Receiver of Memories is extremely challenging and very different from other Assignments. The required qualities of intelligence and integrity show that the Receiver is extremely important and respected in the community. Since it requires the "Capacity to See Beyond," it might also mean that Receivers are born with certain qualities and that not everyone can be a Receiver.

Personal Connection

- ★ How would you feel about living in a community like Jonas's where everyone is given the same clothes, the same bikes, and the same haircuts? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of this type of community?

Student answers will vary.



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Chapters 9 – 11 Sample answers

Comprehension

- Summarize how the rules for Jonas as the Receiver of Memory are different from the rules for the rest of the community? How does Jonas feel about these new and different rules?
Jonas no longer has free time, is exempt from rules governing rudeness and dream-telling, can't discuss his training or receive medicine related to it, and can now lie to others. He feels stunned, dismayed, unnerved, and even frightened about most of the new rules, particularly the one about being permitted to lie, but he feels glad to be excused from dream-telling.
- Use context clues from the text to explain the importance of truth in Jonas's world.
Telling the truth is of utmost importance in the community, so much so that it is considered "an integral part of the learning of precise speech." Jonas has been trained "since his earliest learning of language" never to lie and recalls the time he exaggerated and said he was "starving," and was immediately scolded.
- At the beginning of Chapter 10, what does Jonas notice about the Annex that is unusual? Also, what is out of the ordinary about Jonas's interaction with the Attendant at the Annex?
The door to the Annex has a lock, which is unusual because no other doors in the community are ever locked as far as Jonas knows. The Attendant stands when Jonas enters as a sign of respect because he's the new Receiver, and Jonas is not used to that level of respect.
- How is the Receiver's verbal description of sledding different from the memory he transmits to Jonas?
When the Receiver describes sledding downhill in the snow, Jonas doesn't understand what any of those words mean because he has never experienced them. But when the Receiver transmits the memory, Jonas feels like he is actually experiencing all of those things, and he naturally picks up on what the words mean.
- What new information do you now have about the setting of the story after Jonas's first visit with the Receiver?
We learn that the story takes place many generations in the future and that the community doesn't have snow or hills or sunshine because of Climate Control and Sameness.
- Why does the Receiver transmit the memory of sunburn to Jonas?
He transmits the memory of sunburn to Jonas because Jonas asked about the pain that the Chief Elder had spoken of. The Receiver didn't intend to transmit painful memories yet, but Jonas insists that he is brave, so the Receiver chooses a memory related to one he has already given Jonas.



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Chapters 9 – 11 Sample answers

Analysis

- At the end of Chapter 9, how does Jonas's "thought that he had never had before" impact his feelings about the community? Why does it affect him this way? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

Jonas's trust in the community is shaken when he wonders if other adults had received the same permission to lie when they first got their Assignment instructions. The community's strict insistence on never lying, even unintentionally, indicates that telling the truth is one of the most important features of this society, so much so that Jonas had never even thought that other people might lie.

- In Chapter 10, we learn that Jonas "had never known that other books existed." What does the lack of books tell you about the purpose of books in the community?

This likely means that reading books isn't important or encouraged in the community. The only books Jonas has experienced are the dictionary, a directory of the community, and the Book of Rules, which are all used for specific kinds of information. Reading for pleasure or general knowledge isn't allowed.

- In Jonas's first conversation with the Receiver, he tells the Receiver, "I thought there was only us. I thought there was only now." Why had Jonas held those beliefs? Use clues from the text to support your answer.

Based on the fact that Jonas doesn't know what or where Elsewhere is, we can assume that no one in the community is taught about what lies beyond the community's borders. That uncertainty is part of why the airplane incident at the beginning of the book was so frightening. And based on the fact that Jonas has only ever seen three books, we can assume that no one in the community learns history. No one in the community talks about the past or about what's beyond the community, so Jonas has never had to think about those things before.

- Why does the Receiver differentiate between power and honor? What is the difference?

Jonas suggests that since the Receiver has a lot of power, he could somehow bring back snow and hills. But the Receiver tells Jonas that he has honor, not power. The difference is that power is the ability to make things happen or change things, while honor is just a feeling of respect that impacts how others treat you.

Personal Connection

- ★ The first memories that the Giver transmits to Jonas are simple moments like sledding down a hill and the feeling of sunshine. What are some small moments from your own life that you would want to share with someone else? Describe the sensations and emotions involved in the memory.

Student answers will vary.