



The Giver Discussion Guide

GRADES 7 - 11

Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students, we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. Consider saying to your students:

“This book contains topics that may be sensitive. Not all books fit all readers. If you are uncomfortable with this book, you have the right to stop reading it, but please pick another.”

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Have students complete the [Anticipation Guide](#) to prepare for understanding and connecting with the deeper themes and messages of the story.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).
- Jonas lives in a controlled “utopia” that has erased pain, difference, and choice — a condition the book calls Sameness. There’s no color, no strong feeling, and jobs, spouses, and children are all assigned. Students should read this community as unsettling, not ideal.

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 1 - 5

- The community runs on precise language and a nightly “telling of feelings.” Using a specific example, what do these rituals actually accomplish for the people in charge?
- When the apple “changes” in Jonas’s hand (Ch 3), what is really happening, and why can’t he explain it? What does this hint about him?
- Father quietly breaks a rule to learn Gabriel’s name early (Ch 2). What does this small act reveal about the tension between the rules and genuine care?
- Jonas takes a pill to stop the Stirrings (Ch 5). Using the surrounding text, what do you think the Stirrings are, and why would the community want them gone?

Chapters 6 - 9

- The Chief Elder says the community now “honors your differences.” How does that contradict everything the community has enforced until this moment?
- Jonas is selected, not assigned. What clues in Chapters 7-8 signal that his role will be isolating?
- One of Jonas’s new rules is that he may lie (Ch 9). Why is this so shocking to him, and what does it foreshadow about the truth of the community?
- Compare how the community frames Asher’s, Fiona’s, and Jonas’s Assignments. What does each say about how people are valued here?

Chapters 10 - 14

- The Giver starts with snow, sunshine, and sunburn (Ch 11). Why begin here, and what is Jonas learning about the world before Sameness?
- When Jonas first perceives the color red (Ch 12), he argues Sameness took away far more than color. What is he really mourning?
- In the elephant memory (Ch 13), what does the surviving elephant’s behavior teach Jonas about grief and connection? Point to specific actions.
- The Giver says holding memories “gives us wisdom” (Ch 14). Based on the airplane and the population examples, what does he mean — and why must the pain stay with one person?



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During Reading Cont: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 15 - 19

- After the war memory (Ch 15), Jonas can't play the children's attack game (Ch 17). Why not, and what does this show about how the memories are changing him?
- Jonas asks his parents if they love him, and they call the word meaningless (Ch 16). What does their answer reveal about what the community traded away?
- In Chapter 19, Jonas finally understands what "release" means. How does the author use this scene to change the reader's view of everything that came before? (Handle with care — see content warning.)
- The Giver reveals that Rosemary was his daughter, and that her release sent the memories back to the people (Ch 18-19). Why does this history make his and Jonas's plan so dangerous?

Chapters 20 - 23

- Jonas and The Giver design the escape (Ch 20-21). What does each of them hope will happen to the community's memories once Jonas is gone?
- Jonas leaves early to save Gabriel (Ch 21). How does this choice measure how far he's come since Chapter 1?
- On the journey, Jonas feels hunger, cold, and fear — but also birds, color, and "exquisite happiness" (Ch 22). Why does the author give him both at once?
- The ending is intentionally unresolved (Ch 23). Using evidence from the final pages, argue what you think happens to Jonas and Gabriel, and why Lowry may have left it uncertain.

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- The community traded pain, choice, and memory for safety and Sameness. Across the whole novel, was it a fair trade? Defend your position with evidence.
- Trace Jonas's transformation from Chapter 1 to the ending. Which single memory or moment changed him most, and why?
- The Giver tells Jonas that the hardest part of holding memories isn't the pain — it's the loneliness, because memories are meant to be shared. How does that idea connect to the novel's central message?
- What does Lowry gain by leaving the ending open rather than explaining it?

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.