 *The Giver*

Lois Lowry, [*The Giver*](http://www.amazon.com/Giver-Quartet-Lois-Lowry/dp/0544336267/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1431013478&sr=8-1&keywords=the+giver+lowry)(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993)

Summary:

Jonas lives in a society where pain has been eliminated. Marriages are arranged and couples are provided with children; careers are assigned; the elderly are “released.” There is no terrain or alteration in climate. Jonas does not question the logic of this world until at his twelfth birthday he is chosen as the society’s next Receiver of Memory. His training demands that he take on memories of deep happiness—snow, hills, holidays—but also of death, war, and pain. He is also allowed to lie. While Jonas’s world lacks poverty, divorce, and pain, it also is without honesty, choice, music, or love. Lois Lowry, author of *Number the Stars,* won the 1994 Newbery Medal for *The Giver,* despite her controversial treatment of euthanasia, infanticide, and suicide. Her inspiration was talking with her father after he lost his long-term memory.

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* Freedom. The Community has little freedom but an abundance of social rules. Jonas reasons, “We really have to protect people from wrong choices.”
* Sexuality. All youth and adults take a pill to repress their “Stirrings.” Nakedness, except in the old, is forbidden. Even gender norms are largely abolished. Differences are ignored.
* Gabriel. The newchild represents hope and functions as a *tabula rasa* for a new society where there is freedom to choose pleasure and pain.
* Sight. Jonas has the gift of “seeing beyond” and, like the Giver, Rosemary, and Gabriel, has “pale” eyes.
* Memory. The Giver offers Jonas the collective memories of many, which Jonas in turn gives (or gifts) to the Community once he leaves. Memory, though at times burdensome, can lead to revelation, to wisdom.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the markers for each year of childhood, and why are these significant?
2. Discuss terms from the book: Elsewhere, Sameness, Receiver of Memory, The Giver, Stirrings, release, Community, House of the Old, Ceremony of Loss, Elders, and seeing beyond.
3. Would families benefit from a daily sharing of feelings and dreams? Why or why not?
4. Why are both pain and pleasure so important to society? Is pain necessary to have pleasure? And vice versa?
5. *The Giver* was the first of a new genre—teen dystopian fiction—followed later by books like *The Hunger Games, Divergent,* and *The Maze Runner*. Why is this genre so popular?
6. The book seems to propose that there are things more important than avoidance of pain. What are those things?
7. If we took this story to be a parable, then what is the moral? If it is an allegory, then an allegory for what?
8. Why are traditional gender roles blurred in the Community, while at other times rigidly observed?
9. Is this a children’s, young adult, or adult book? Why?
10. What happens to Jonas and Gabriel at the end, and why did the novel end this way?