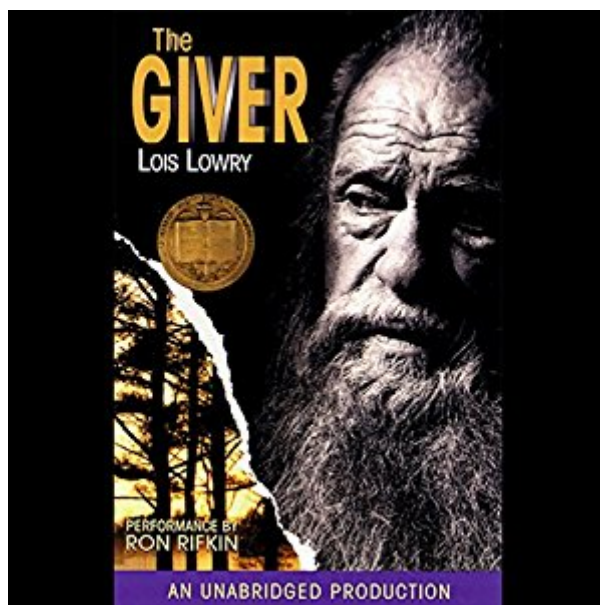


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The Giver



Synopsis

The Giver, the 1994 Newbery Medal winner, has become one of the most influential novels of our time. The haunting story centers on twelve-year-old Jonas, who lives in a seemingly ideal, if colorless, world of conformity and contentment. Not until he is given his life assignment as the Receiver of Memory does he begin to understand the dark, complex secrets behind his fragile community. Lois Lowry has written three companion novels to The Giver, including Gathering Blue, Messenger, and Son. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dystopian teen fiction is pretty hot right now, with blockbusters like "The Hunger Games" and "Divergent." But the granddaddy of them all was "The Giver." And long before it became chic, Lois Lowry produced a hauntingly memorable quartet of stories set in a world where emotions are suppressed and people with gifts are imprisoned. The four books are loosely tied together -- the first and last most tightly -- and mingle fantasy and science fiction, with haunting prose and some very strong characters, as well as a message of compassion and acceptance. In "The Giver," Jonas lives in a rigid, joyless community where people use emotion-deprivation pills and adhere to insanely strict rules -- they have no conflict, poverty or discrimination... but they also have no love, no fun, and no creativity. When Jonas is selected as the Receiver of Memories, he is suddenly flooded with feelings and memories of both the good and the bad from humanity's distant past. And as he comes to realize what his people have lost in their quest to be the same, Jonas begins yearning for the

world he knows must exist outside the Community. But his quest becomes a more personal one when he discovers another price for the Community's existence: the "release" of babies that they don't deem good enough. The only one who can change the Community is Gabe. "Gathering Blue" introduces us to Kira, a young girl born with a deformed leg in another community that leaves disabled or sickly people to die in the Field of Leaving. She is only kept alive because of her skill with embroidery and weaving, so she can make the Singer's robe. As she comes to realize the horrible flaws in her village's way of life, Kira must make an important decision -- stay and try to improve things, or leave for a place that would welcome her? "Messenger" was somewhat controversial upon its release, since some fans of "The Giver" felt that it "ruined" the bleak ending they had imagined for the first book. It takes place in Village, a community made up of outcasts, misfits and disabled people, ruled by the kindly Leader. But the Village is surrounded by Forest, a terrifying and deadly forest that kills those who venture into it -- and though the awkward teen boy Matty has been able to go there, it is now growing darker and twisted. As the Village begins to close itself off from the outside world, Matty finds that he may be the only one who can save them all. "Son" takes us back in time to Claire, a young woman whose entire purpose is to produce babies for the Community -- and her child is the sickly baby boy known as Gabe, who vanishes with Jonas into the great unknown. Her desperation to find her son inspires her on a years-long quest to find him -- and a Faustian pact with a terrible figure who only wants suffering. Pretty much all young-adult dystopian fiction owes a debt to the Giver Quartet -- it has young people discovering the cruelty and callousness of their societies, and finding different ways to rebel. But Lowry doesn't shy away from asking the serious questions in her story, such as lack of respect for life (if it's inconvenient or doesn't fit in), kindness, compassion, and the good AND bad roots of what it means to truly live. Lowry's writing is simple but poetic, winding through with some quietly eloquent language ("Now, on this shattered morning, he felt nothing but knots and snarls under his fingertips"). And she fills the stories not with bombast and battle, but with tragedy and quiet triumph -- and while the story is in a future world fragmented into multiple civilizations, there's a hint of the fantastical as well. Think special powers, the mysterious Trademaster, and whatnot. And she creates a varied collection of characters. All of them are tied together into a story that culminates in "Son," and they all have the theme of seeking to improve the cruel, callous worlds they were in -- Jonas by leaving the Community to the memories they are trying to avoid, Kira by staying and working, and Matty through self-sacrifice. Claire is the odd duck out, a young woman adrift in the world, desperate to find her baby. "The Giver Quartet" is a haunting memorable collection of novels, some of which inspired the current widespread dystopian novels. Rich, haunting and well-written.

I read this along with my ten-year-old when it was assigned in school. Jonas lives in a dystopia disguised as a utopia where everyone is cared for and all has a place. Everything is controlled, from the weather, to the number of births in each community. Every family unit is assigned two children and all jobs are assigned by the committee of elders based on an individual's strengths and interests. There is no want, no lack or homeless. Crime is all but extinct (as are many animals) and the elder residents are pampered and taken care of until the day of their Release to Elsewhere. The children undergo a strict form of training where emphasis is on manners, precise language and obedience. When Jonas turns twelve he is selected as the new Receiver of Memory. As the Receiver in Training, Jonas's training consists of taking on all the community's memories from the outgoing Receiver. Once his training begins, Jonas becomes privy to situations, places, sensations and feelings that has him quickly understanding that nothing is as it seems in his idyllic community. The world he lives in vastly differs from the memories of the Giver, and in some instances, is a flat out lie. As he gains knowledge of concepts such as family holidays, seasons, conflict and even color; Jonas realizes that the Sameness of his community is not ideal; it's cruel brainwashing. When faced with this truth, Jonas realizes that he also now has something that the rest of the community doesn't have: a choice. As far as novels that you must read because you are in school and it's assigned goes, this is probably one of the better ones. I remember when I was in school all the books we had to read were completely boring it truly is a wonder I love reading after the dreck I was exposed to! Jonas world is bleak and boring. Nobody sees color, everyone is taught to be painfully polite as they go about their lives volunteering at various places, discussing their dreams and feelings all the while being totally naive to the things that they are missing. At least in the Hunger Games, the folks in District Twelve knew they had it bad. The people in Jonas's community are like the proverbial frogs in the boiling pot. The Giver has provided quite a few topics of discussion for my son and I as I am sure it has provided for his class and I am sure it will continue to provide in the future. While the Giver is identified as Teen & Young Adult, do not, for one minute believe it is written on an elementary level. The topics that are addressed, either in passing or in greater depth are compelling and thought provoking. Even after I finished this book, I find myself thinking about a person, situation or comment and still being affected. The cliffhanger ending will leave the reader with a mixed feeling of relief and curiosity. As part of a quartet of books by Lois Lowry, I am looking forward to reading more books in this series for more glimpses into dystopia through Lois Lowry's eyes.

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