



KÖNIGS ERLÄUTERUNGEN

SPEZIAL

Lois Lowry

THE GIVER

**ANALYSE | INTERPRETATION
IN ENGLISCHER SPRACHE**

The next point Lois Lowry makes is about the ambiguous ending to the book. Remember that this speech was given years before she started writing the sequels to *The Giver*, which necessarily push the ending of the book in one firm direction. She mentions several different interpretations of the ending which readers had told her about. She says that some have seen it as being a “circular journey. The truth that we go out and come back, and that what we have come back to is changed, and so are we. Perhaps I have been travelling in a circle too”.[\[12\]](#)

She then talks about what **her circular journey** has been. She says “Here are the things I’ve come back to”, and lists:

- Her daughter, who had been so horrified by her reaction to the mass shooting, was the first person to read the manuscript of *The Giver*.
- The “different” girl from college is happily living with another woman now.
- Her son and German daughter-in-law now have a daughter, “who will be the receiver of all of their memories”.
- The photograph she took of the old painter she interviewed who went blind was used as the cover for the first edition of the book in the USA (see p. 26).

3.2 SUMMARIES

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

The Giver is organised in 23 numbered chapters. The book is short, so the chapters are also quite compact. Here is a brief synopsis of the major events and developments in each chapter, with the page number of the beginning of the chapter provided.

- The first seven chapters can be treated as a kind of **introduction** to this strange world.
- The **plot** begins in chapter eight, when Jonas is selected as the new Receiver of Memory.
- We will look more at **the structure and organisation** of the narrative of *The Giver* in the chapter in this study guide on 3.3 Structure (p. 42).

1 (p. 9)

Jonas is nearly 12 years old. He is returning home on his bicycle. At home he has dinner with his family (parents and younger sister Lily) and they go through a ritual of talking in turn about their feelings. He is feeling apprehensive about the approaching **Ceremony of Twelve**.

2 (p. 16)

At dinner, Jonas' father reminisces about his own childhood and tells Jonas what he can expect from the coming Ceremony of Twelve.

3 (p. 23)

Jonas' father brings a **baby** home to care for, one with pale eyes like Jonas. Lily is excited and talks about potential Assignments. Jonas recalls an incident at school where he had been publicly shamed for taking an apple, and thinks about why **the apple** had caught his attention: he had seen it change in some way he can't describe while he and Asher had been tossing it back and forth.

4 (p. 28)

Jonas goes to do his volunteer work, and looks for his friend Asher. He finds him working at the House of the Old. Jonas, **Asher and another Eleven called Fiona** are helping to care for the elderly ("the Old"). The woman Jonas is helping, called Larissa, tells him about a release they had celebrated that morning.

5 (p. 34)

The family's morning begins with the ritual of **Dream-telling**, and Jonas tells his family about a vaguely disturbing dream he had had about the girl Fiona. The dream has sexual connotations, with Jonas' strongest impression being "*wanting*" (p. 35) the girl, and he doesn't understand this and feels awkward and uncomfortable. Jonas' parents tell him he has experienced "the Stirrings" (first sexual feelings of desire). **The Stirrings** must be reported – which he has done – and treated with pills. His mother gives him a pill and tells him he will now be taking them for the rest of his life. Jonas is on the one hand proud to now be taking the pills like everyone else above a certain age, but he also in a way misses the warm and exciting feelings of sexual desire which he had briefly experienced in his dream.

6 (p. 38)

This important chapter contains a lot of useful information about the rituals, terminology and structures of the community, in particular the way in which family units are organised and children are integrated at the different stages of their lives into the community.

On the first day of the Ceremony the entire community attends the rituals of the children, from newborns being assigned to their new family units through to children aged eight getting their new jackets.

The second day includes the **Ceremony of Twelve**, which Jonas will participate in. He is nervous beforehand and waits impatiently through the Ceremonies of ages Nine to Eleven. He and Asher talk briefly about a story of a man who didn't like his Assignment and left to join another community: Asher says he asked to go Elsewhere and was released.

7 (p. 45)

At the Ceremony of Twelves, Jonas is number 19 in the line and waits while the other Elevens are given their Assignments. His friend **Asher is assigned Assistant Director of Recreation**. Fiona is one place ahead of Jonas and is assigned Caretaker of the Old, which Jonas had expected. But instead of 19, the Chief Elder then calls up number 20, and Jonas is left sitting alone without being called for an Assignment.

8 (p. 51)

Jonas is embarrassed and frightened and the rest of the community is confused by what has happened. The Chief Elder apologises to everyone, including Jonas, and then says that he has not been Assigned, he has been selected – **to become the next Receiver of Memory**. She says that the Elders have been watching Jonas with this goal in mind for years now, and that the last potential Receiver turned out to be something of a disaster. She lists the qualities that a Receiver must possess, and which they see in Jonas, as intelligence, integrity, courage and wisdom – and a fifth quality, which is only called the Capacity to

See Beyond.

Jonas is unnerved and wants to tell them they made a mistake, but when he looks at the community he again has the sensation he had as a child with the apple (see pp. 25–26), and he feels things change.

9 (p. 56)

Jonas notices that people treat him slightly differently afterwards. His parents are uncomfortable when he asks them what happened with the last person to be selected as Receiver, and what went wrong.

Like everyone else in the Ceremony, Jonas has been given instructions for his new role in the community: but he **has a list of eight instructions** which will immediately change his life. Some of his instructions directly contradict everything he has been taught, such as number 8, “You may lie”. This instruction, more than the others, disturbs him.

10 (p. 61)

As instructed, Jonas goes to the House of the Old next morning for his first day of training. He meets the current Receiver of Memory, who begins to explain to him what he will be expected to do. As the Receiver begins to explain that he must share with Jonas all the memories of the whole world, Jonas struggles with the concept – completely new to him – that there is **something outside his community**, and that there was a time before his time now. “I thought there was only us. I thought there was only now.” (p. 65.14–15)

The Receiver begins Jonas’ lessons by using a metaphor containing many concepts with which Jonas is unfamiliar (snow, sled, downhill) and then transmitting the memories which contain these concepts.

11 (p. 67)

The Receiver gives Jonas the memory of **riding downhill through snow on a sled**. The memory has now left him and has been given to Jonas: but, as he explains, it is only one memory of one hill, one snow storm, one sled ride. There are countless others in his memories.

He explains that these memories come from a very, very long time ago, and have been passed down from Receiver to Receiver through generations. They come from **a time before Sameness**, before everything – the weather, the landscape, and people themselves – were made the same to increase efficiency. To illustrate that the giving of memories will also be painful, he gives Jonas **the memory of sunshine** – which Climate Control has also manipulated to avoid great heat – and then the memory of sunburn, which Jonas finds extremely painful.

At the end of the first lesson Jonas asks the old man what his name is: he tells him to just call him The Giver.

12 (p. 73)

After school the next day Jonas returns for his next day of instruction. On the way to the House of the Old with Fiona he has another sense of change, what he now calls “seeing

beyond”. He asks The Giver about it. After a couple of tests to check that his theory is correct, The Giver explains that what Jonas has been experiencing is seeing the colour red. He explains that during the transition to Sameness, **many things were given up in exchange for control**. Perception of different colours was one of the things that was lost. Jonas believes this was wrong: The Giver agrees, and says that Jonas will achieve wisdom early.

13 (p. 79)

Time passes and Jonas continues to receive the memories from The Giver. He becomes increasingly frustrated with what **Sameness** means for him and everyone else – **a lack of choice**. He and The Giver talk about the issue of choice – that some people make the wrong choices, if given the opportunity. “We really have to protect people from wrong choices.” (p. 80.10–11)

Jonas feels increasingly angry and frustrated with the community and with the people around him. He tries and fails to show Asher, his father and Lily what he is learning.

The Giver shares with him an extremely painful memory of **an elephant being shot by hunters** and its mate mourning, all taking place in a strange and disturbing landscape.

The Giver explains to Jonas why it is so hard for the Receiver to have a spouse, or a family, and why life is so hard when you have the memories and the knowledge but are **forbidden to share it with others**. He is also frustrated that the Elders don’t ask him more often for advice.

They also talk about why the Receiver is so important in the community, and The Giver mentions briefly that an incident ten years ago, with the last Receiver-in-training, had led to a release of memories which would otherwise have been limited to the Receiver: the memories which were released had affected the community, apparently, and this had been a bad thing.

Jonas has an increasing sense of **the difficulties and actual pain** involved in being the Receiver of Memories. He spends some time alone, wandering around the community and testing his new, received memories, and questioning the nature of the world around him.

He asks The Giver about pain, and says that he had been warned that being the Receiver would involve pain, but that he has not yet really experienced any. The Giver tells him that now they will start with that part of the work.

14 (p. 87)

The Giver transmits to Jonas an extremely painful memory of a sled ride downhill through snow ending in a bad crash, with broken bones and torn flesh. Jonas is stunned by the sensation and asks for pain relief medication, which The Giver refuses to give him. Afterwards he still feels memories of the pain, and realises something else new about his world: **the people around him have never known pain**.

On one occasion Jonas learns about hunger. When he asks why that memory would be in any way useful, The Giver tells him that the Elders had come to him for advice about whether or not to allow families to have more than three children. He had found the