

THE GIVER

Student Mission & Response Journal

CENTRAL IDEA

What does a community gain when it removes pain, difference, and choice — and who gets to decide that the trade is worth it?

Novel: The Giver by Lois Lowry

Setting: A managed community that has adopted Sameness, at some unspecified point in the future

Designed for: Advanced readers in grades 6–8, with adaptable supports

TEXT USE

Use a teacher-approved copy of the complete 23-chapter novel. This resource supplies original prompts and no reproduced passages.

Your Mission

You are auditing a trade. This community gave something up in exchange for something else, and it did that a long time before the novel starts. Your job across six missions is to build a ledger: what was surrendered, what was purchased with it, who made the decision, and who is paying. Keep the two columns separate and keep them honest, including when an entry turns out to have been a reasonable purchase.

DRIVING QUESTION

What is a community actually buying when it removes pain, difference, and choice — and who was asked?

Reading Care

This book includes the killing of an infant and of elderly people, described calmly and without graphic detail, along with required medication that removes strong feeling. None of it is gore, but one chapter in particular is genuinely upsetting. Ask for a preview, a pause, or a different way to respond if you need one. That is not a failure of nerve; the book is engineered to do this.

Use of the Novel

- Use a teacher-approved edition containing all 23 chapters.

- Cite chapters; add page numbers only when everyone uses the same edition.
- Do not copy long passages. Record brief location notes and paraphrase evidence.
- Do not use the three sequel novels to settle arguments about this one's ending.
- The culminating mission requires the complete novel, including the final page.

Conceptual Questions

The Trade

- What did the community surrender, and what did it receive in exchange?
- Who made that decision, and is that person or group ever named in the book?

Systems and People

- Is anyone in this book cruel — or is the cruelty in the design?
- If no individual intends harm, who is responsible for the harm?

Language

- The community demands precision of language. Where is its language least precise, and why there?
- What can you do more easily once you have a mild word for a severe act?

Memory and Pain

- What is memory for, in this book? What is pain for?
- What changes when one person holds what everyone else has been spared?

Narrative Craft

- The narration only knows what Jonas knows. What does that let the novel hide from you?
- Why does the last chapter refuse to tell you what happens?

Reading Route

Mission	Chapters	Title	Transfer Question
1	Chapters 1–5	A Community With No Wrong Answers	Why does a community this orderly still need so many rules, corrections, and public apologies?
2	Chapters 6–9	The Ceremony and the Sealed Rules	Jonas’s new rules are the first thing in the community that is not public. Why does that matter more than any single rule on the page?
3	Chapters 10–13	The First Memories and the First Color	What does Jonas gain by receiving memory — and what does he lose by being the only person who has it?
4	Chapters 14–17	What Pain Is For	If the community’s whole purpose is to protect people, why does the Giver insist that someone still has to carry the pain?
5	Chapters 18–20	The Word “Release”	How can an entire community take part in something terrible without anyone believing they have done anything wrong?
6	Chapters 21–23	Elsewhere	The ending can be read as escape or as death. What does the text actually establish, and what does it deliberately leave open?

RANGE ALIGNMENT

The same six missions are used in the journal and the facilitator guide. Mission 6 ends with Chapter 23.

Edition Record

Publisher / year: _____ Format: _____

23 chapters confirmed: ☐ Yes ☐ No Page-number citations required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

People & Roles

Person	Role to Track	Question
Jonas	The Eleven selected as the new Receiver of Memory	What does he come to understand that no one around him is able to?
The Giver	The current Receiver, who transmits memories to Jonas	Why can he not simply tell the community what he knows?

Person	Role to Track	Question
Gabriel	A newchild in Jonas's dwelling who is not thriving	What does his situation reveal about how the community handles difference?
Jonas's father	A Nurturer who works with newchildren	How can someone gentle carry out something terrible?
Jonas's mother	Works in the Department of Justice	What does her job assume about how wrongdoing works?
The Chief Elder	Announces the Assignments at the Ceremony of Twelve	What is she protecting, and from whom?
Rosemary	The previous Receiver-in-training	What does her story reveal about the risk the community is running?
Asher	Jonas's friend, corrected for imprecise language	What does his story show about how the community shapes a person over time?

Discussion Toolkit

Move	Ask Yourself
Claim	What do I think this community is actually doing?
Evidence	Which rule, action, or detail supports it?
Reasoning	How does that evidence lead to that meaning?
Perspective	How would a satisfied member of this community describe the same evidence?
Revision	What later evidence changes my claim?

- Separate what the community says it is doing from what it is doing.
- Name a decision-maker for every trade, or state that the text refuses to name one.
- Explaining why someone acts is not the same as saying they were right to.

Mission 1: A Community With No Wrong Answers

CHAPTERS 1–5

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why does a community this orderly still need so many rules, corrections, and public apologies?

Notice

What did this section show you about the community that you had not seen before?

Evidence from the Chapters

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions, rules, or craft choices.

Trade Ledger

Surrendered / Gained / Who decided / Who pays. Fill in every column you can support, and mark the ones the text will not answer.

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Craft Lens

The narration stays inside what Jonas can perceive, which means the reader is missing information without being told anything is missing. Find one detail these chapters describe in a way that will read completely differently on a second reading.

Mission 2: The Ceremony and the Sealed Rules

CHAPTERS 6–9

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Jonas's new rules are the first thing in the community that is not public. Why does that matter more than any single rule on the page?

Notice

What did this section show you about the community that you had not seen before?

Evidence from the Chapters

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions, rules, or craft choices.

Trade Ledger

Surrendered / Gained / Who decided / Who pays. Fill in every column you can support, and mark the ones the text will not answer.

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Craft Lens

A public ritual lets the novel explain the whole structure of the community without a narrator stopping to lecture. Identify one rule of this world you learned only because you watched a ceremony, and explain what the scene gains by delivering it that way.

Mission 3: The First Memories and the First Color

CHAPTERS 10–13

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What does Jonas gain by receiving memory — and what does he lose by being the only person who has it?

Notice

What did this section show you about the community that you had not seen before?

Evidence from the Chapters

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions, rules, or craft choices.

Trade Ledger

Surrendered / Gained / Who decided / Who pays. Fill in every column you can support, and mark the ones the text will not answer.

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Craft Lens

The novel has to describe the arrival of color to readers who have always had it. Find the strategy it uses — what it compares the experience to, and what it refuses to name — and explain why a direct description would not have worked.

Mission 4: What Pain Is For

CHAPTERS 14–17

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

If the community's whole purpose is to protect people, why does the Giver insist that someone still has to carry the pain?

Notice

What did this section show you about the community that you had not seen before?

Evidence from the Chapters

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions, rules, or craft choices.

Trade Ledger

Surrendered / Gained / Who decided / Who pays. Fill in every column you can support, and mark the ones the text will not answer.

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Craft Lens

Pleasure memories and pain memories are placed close together on purpose. Choose one pairing and explain what the second memory does to your understanding of the first.

Mission 5: The Word “Release”

CHAPTERS 18–20

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can an entire community take part in something terrible without anyone believing they have done anything wrong?

Notice

What did this section show you about the community that you had not seen before?

Evidence from the Chapters

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions, rules, or craft choices.

Trade Ledger

Surrendered / Gained / Who decided / Who pays. Fill in every column you can support, and mark the ones the text will not answer.

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Craft Lens

The reader and Jonas learn what release means at the same moment, and the novel has been using the word for nearly twenty chapters. Trace back through the book: find two earlier uses of the word that are now unbearable, and explain what the delay accomplished.

Mission 6: Elsewhere

CHAPTERS 21–23

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

The ending can be read as escape or as death. What does the text actually establish, and what does it deliberately leave open?

Notice

What did this section show you about the community that you had not seen before?

Evidence from the Chapters

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions, rules, or craft choices.

Trade Ledger

Surrendered / Gained / Who decided / Who pays. Fill in every column you can support, and mark the ones the text will not answer.

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Craft Lens

Jonas is exhausted, freezing, and carrying memories that are leaving him. Identify every detail in the final pages that his condition could explain — then identify anything his condition cannot explain. Which list is longer, and what does the novel gain by making it close?

Trade Ledger: Whole-Book Pattern

Looking back across all six missions, what pattern do you see in how this community makes trades — and in who is never consulted?

Historical & Ethical Inquiry

Use the companion context packet. Choose one question that helps you interpret the novel — not replace it.

- What does the documented history of real eugenics programs let you say about release that the novel alone cannot?
- What does real memory science say about the book's central premise, and what does the impossible premise buy the author?
- Where do real intentional communities resemble this one, and where does the comparison collapse?
- What does a verifiable real-world euphemism reveal about how the word “release” functions?

Research Plan

Culminating Mission: The Trade Ledger Case

COMPLETE-NOVEL REQUIREMENT

Read all 23 chapters, including the final page, before completing this mission.

Build an argued case about what this community surrendered, what it gained, who decided, and who pays — using evidence from across the whole novel and at least one context source. Before you reject a trade, state the strongest honest case for it.

Required Evidence

- Novel evidence from at least four of the six missions.
- At least one credible context source, with fact, inference, and judgment distinguished.
- One trade defended as fairly as you can manage before you answer it.
- A named decision-maker for each ledger entry, or an argument from the text that the novel withholds one.
- A reflection on what this story can and cannot prove about real ethical questions.

Product Options

☐ Written case file ☐ Annotated ledger with commentary ☐ Short podcast script ☐ Two-voice script:
the community and its critic ☐ Approved design

Culminating Planner

My claim about what the community actually purchased, in one sentence

Evidence plan (which missions, which moments)

Context source plan

The trade I will defend before I answer it

Student Rubric

Criterion	4 — Advanced	3 — Secure	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Interpretation	Nuanced, conditional, revisable	Clear and defensible	Broad or uneven	Summary or opinion
Novel Evidence	Precise, drawn from across the whole novel	Relevant and accurate	Uneven or incomplete	Little or inaccurate
Context Evidence	Credible sources deepen the interpretation	Accurate and connected	Mostly background	Unverified or absent
Systems vs. People	Holds design and individual responsibility apart and relates them	Distinguishes the two	Names one	Collapses them into villains
Opposing Case	States the strongest defense fairly, then answers it	States a real objection	States a weak version	None offered
Communication	Audience-shaped and clear	Clear and appropriate	Sometimes unclear	Incomplete
Reflection	Specific revision and a next question	Explains growth	General process	Completion only

Reflection & Access

How did your understanding of the trade change?

Which evidence most disrupted your first idea?

What remains unresolved — and is it unresolved because you lack evidence, or because the book refuses to settle it?

What support helped you show your best thinking?

Useful supports: ☐ preview questions ☐ audio + text ☐ writing before speaking ☐ speech-to-text ☐
visual organizer ☐ compacted practice ☐ independent extension