

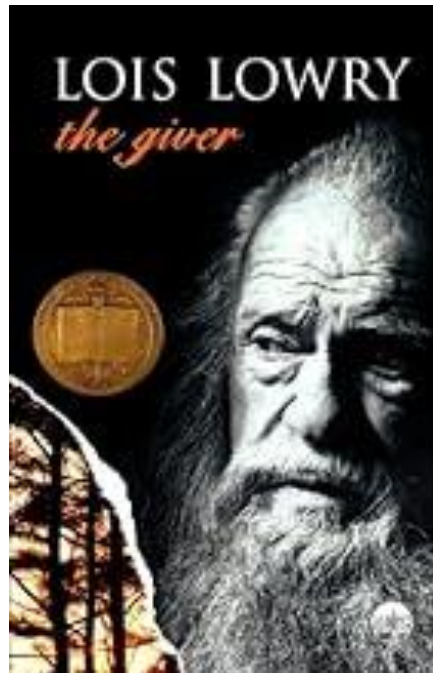
Sameness and Memory: A Study of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*

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Abstract

Lois Lowry's *The Giver* explores the concept of sameness and the significance of memory, illustrating how enforced uniformity diminishes individuality, personal freedom, and emotional

depth. Set in a dystopian society that eliminates differences to ensure stability and prevent conflict, the novel highlights the consequences of sacrificing diversity for control. Elements such as climate regulation, strict family structures, limited decision-making, and the suppression of emotions expose the risks of prioritizing order over authentic human experiences. Jonas's journey toward self-awareness and his resistance against the system serve as a critique of totalitarian rule, underscoring the essential role of memory in preserving humanity.

Keywords: *The Giver*, sameness, memory, dystopia, individuality, totalitarianism, emotional suppression, choice, utopia.

Is it possible to create a remarkable society by enforcing the concept of sameness? Imagine a world where differences are erased, and the dream of a perfect, conflict-free community becomes a reality. Every individual aspires to live in a society free from hunger, poverty, violence, prejudice, war, and discrimination. In such a world, every citizen is aware of their duties and responsibilities, striving to fulfill them to the best of their ability. The idea of constructing a model society, often referred to as a utopia, has led to the implementation of numerous rules and regulations. Lois Lowry, in *The Giver*, explores this notion by presenting a community devoid of war, pain, jealousy, vengeance, and suffering, achieved through the principle of sameness.

A society can never be purely good or evil; rather, it is a blend of both qualities. In *The Giver*, sameness is a concept that ensures uniformity in physical traits, behaviors, and attitudes from birth. "The society given in the novel "The Giver" strives for the sameness in physical appearance to eliminate any form of prejudice or differentiation based on looks". (Muthuvetrivel e53). The Committee of Elders, the ruling authority in Jonas's community, oversees the enforcement of this concept. One of their most striking actions in pursuit of sameness was the regulation of weather and climate through an artificial control system. Natural, unpredictable weather was seen as a threat to survival, as it could hinder agricultural production and lead to hunger, poverty, and suffering. By controlling the climate, the Committee eliminated factors that could cause pain and disruption, reinforcing the ideology that sameness equates to stability and security.

However, the elimination of natural variations comes at a cost. "If everything's the same, then there aren't any choices! I want to wake up in the morning and decide things! A blue tunic or a red one?" Jonas laments" (*The Giver*, 127). The rigid structure of the community erases individuality, leading to a monotonous and predictable existence. Climate control, for example, results in a dull, gray world with no seasons, limiting agricultural diversity and diminishing the vibrancy of life. Roads are flattened, and landscapes are altered to ensure uniformity, eliminating any potential obstacles to efficiency. While this system reduces problems such as sunburns, floods, and natural disasters, it also strips the world of its richness and beauty.

The pursuit of equality extends beyond climate control. In *The Giver*, family structures, homes, and even transportation are identical. Every aspect of life is standardized to prevent disparity. "Our people made that choice, the choice to go to sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences. We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others" (*Lowry*, 95). This enforced equality ensures a conflict-free life where no one takes advantage of another. However, it also eliminates individuality, innovation, and the motivation to explore new ideas. The community remains stagnant, cycling through the same patterns indefinitely.

The community's rigid control extends to personal decisions. Most aspects of individuals' lives including their jobs, spouses, and children are pre-determined by the Committee of Elders. "People must accept the roles prescribed for them by the government as the community being tightly regulated by the system of rigid rules. Based on their judgments, the committee of elder is responsible to decide and assign job to every person in the community." (Kezang 63) The only exception is volunteer hours, where individuals can choose where to spend their time. Jonas, the protagonist, gradually realizes the lack of personal agency in his world. While discussing colors, The Giver explains that people abandoned diversity to maintain control, sacrificing personal choices in the process. Jonas begins to see colors momentarily and becomes frustrated by the community's uniformity. Without differences, there are no true choices. The Giver

acknowledges Jonas's concerns but warns that allowing choices could lead to unwise decisions, a fear that underpins the entire system of sameness.

The suppression of emotions is another consequence of this controlled environment. Pills are distributed to suppress stirrings, natural emotions and desires and ensure that citizens remain detached and compliant. Jonas initially follows this rule but later decides to stop taking the pills, longing to experience genuine feelings. This decision marks the beginning of his rebellion against the system. His realization deepens when he discovers that "release" a term used to describe the removal of individuals from the community is actually euthanasia. Witnessing his father euthanize an infant shakes Jonas to his core, leading him to question the ethics of his society.

Jonas's growing awareness compels him to take action. He learns that memories of the past were erased to maintain the illusion of a utopia. However, in doing so, the Committee of Elders has created a dystopia where individuals live in ignorance, devoid of true emotions, memories, and freedom. Jonas's decision to flee the community is driven by his newfound understanding of love, loss, and the importance of choice. As he embarks on his journey, he experiences the natural world for the first time, encountering wildlife, starvation, and the raw beauty of an unregulated existence. Although he momentarily doubts his decision, he ultimately realizes that staying in the community would have meant starving for emotions, color, and love.

The rigid structure of Jonas's world is reinforced by an extensive set of rules. Every aspect of life is dictated by regulations, from the way individuals dress to how they interact. Precision of language is strictly enforced, ensuring that citizens express themselves in the most neutral and controlled manner. Breaking rules results in swift correction, reinforcing obedience. Even seemingly minor infractions, such as taking an object from the Recreation Center, lead to public reprimands. The community's emphasis on control extends to its justice system, where third-time offenders face "release." Spouses are assigned based on compatibility factors such as intelligence and temperament, but love is never considered. Children are placed in families rather than being born naturally, further reinforcing the artificiality of relationships.

The Giver, who serves as the keeper of memories, understands the significance of the past. When Jonas receives memories of pain, suffering, and love, he gains a perspective that others in the community lack. He begins to see the beauty of individual choice, despite the risks it entails. The Giver himself experiences sorrow, knowing that the community's attempt to eliminate suffering has also erased true happiness. He reveals that the previous Receiver of Memory, Rosemary, chose to end her life rather than endure the burden of memories alone. Her loss serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of suppressing human experience.

As Jonas and The Giver develop a plan to restore memories to the community, it becomes clear that true wisdom comes from shared experiences. Jonas ultimately escapes, carrying the burden of memories with him. Along the way, he draws strength from the recollections he has received, using them to survive the harsh journey. His final moments suggest that he reaches a place of warmth, music, and human connection, a stark contrast to the cold, calculated world he left behind.

In conclusion, *The Giver* explores the dangers of totalitarian control disguised as utopia. The community, in its attempt to eliminate suffering, has instead created a dystopian world devoid of choice, emotion, and individuality. By suppressing memories and enforcing sameness, the society sacrifices the very essence of what it means to be human. Jonas's journey symbolizes the struggle for freedom, love, and self-discovery, ultimately emphasizing the significance of memories in shaping a meaningful existence.

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