

The Giver – Chapter 12

The chapter starts with Jonas' family discussing dreams from the night before. Jonas does not share his dream, but the reader knows that he dreams of the sled. He awakes with this feeling every time:

“Always, in the dream, it seemed as if there were a destination: a *something* – he could not grasp what – that lay beyond the place where the thickness of snow brought the sled to a stop. He was left, upon awakening, with the feeling that he wanted, even somehow needed, to reach the something that waited in the distance. The feeling that it was good. That it was welcoming. That it was significant. But he did not know how to get there.”

In school, his fellow Twelves are excited to share details about their first days of their new training. Everything feels weird to Jonas because he can't share details about his day – he is not allowed. Besides, there were no words for him to use to accurately explain to his friends about a hill, snow, cold, sunshine. Jonas just listened and did not share. (Question 1)

Jonas and Fiona ride to their training together. Fiona talks about her training, but Jonas does not go into details of his own. As Fiona walks into the House of Old, Jonas notices that something about Fiona changes. Her hair. Just for a second. This causes him to be late for his second day of training. (Question 2)

Jonas explains to the Giver what happens, and the Giver is not surprised. This is part of Jonas' Capacity to See Beyond. After making sure, the Giver explains to Jonas that he is beginning to see the color red. (Question 3)

Jonas asks the Giver why he can only see red for a moment, but he could see the sled in the memory as consistently red. The Giver explains that the sled is “a memory from the time when color *was*” (120). In the present community, the citizens have given up the ability to see color, so until Jonas gets memories of all the colors, he will not see them in his everyday life. (Question 4)

People in the community cannot see color because of Sameness. The goal of Sameness was to do away with differences – everyone in the community would look the same (or at least seem the same to everyone else). For example, where once flesh was many different colors, genetic scientists have made it so it is now all one color. (Question 5)

In order for Jonas to be able to see all the colors and understand how and why they are all different, the Giver gives him the memory of a rainbow. (Question 6)

The Giver explains to Jonas, “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” (120). In order to make the perfect community where everyone is the same (and thus equal), the people got rid of everything. It was a trade-off – to achieve perfection in some areas, others had to be eliminated. To make perfect weather, for example, they had to get rid of snow, rain, wind, sunshine, etc. To create uniformity in the people, they engineered them to have the same skin tone, the exact same clothing, and the inability to see color. No one would be jealous of what another might have; therefore, no one would feel the need to compete with anyone else. If people never even knew that such things existed, then they wouldn’t feel like they were missing anything; they would only know their perfect society. Everyone would be happy, and there would be no fighting or dissatisfaction. The people who founded the community thought they had their citizens’ best interest at heart, but Jonas disagrees. (Question 7)

All of this has Jonas beginning to question his community. Why did they need to go to Sameness? Jonas feels the dissatisfaction that the people were afraid of. He is starting to experience the sunshine, the color, the weather – and he likes it. A lot. When the Giver started his training and receiving such memories, he started to feel the same way, but over time. Jonas comes to this realization on his second day. The Giver says to him, “You’ve come very quickly to this conclusion...It took me many years. Maybe your wisdom will come much more quickly than mine” (121). This could be dangerous for Jonas – if he is unhappy with the way the community is run, would he be able to advise them correctly? What kind of life would he have if he is constantly angry with the way things are handled? How unfulfilling when all he wants is MORE! (extra discussion question through email)

And now the question the chapter poses...what exactly is WISDOM? If Jonas doesn’t have it yet, when and how would he get it? What will change about him when he acquires it? How does the Giver demonstrate it? There are no real answers to these questions just yet; but it’s something to think about...