

The Giver – Chapters 2-3 “Discussion”

Hi sixth grade! I hope you are all doing well and staying safe and healthy! I miss seeing you all every day, and I miss reading this novel with you. It's so good! For now, let's "talk" about Chapters 2 and 3 here.

Chapter 2 –

It is in the family's dwelling, and Jonas and his mother and father are about to have a private conversation. Jonas is nervous – apprehensive – about the upcoming Ceremony of Twelve.

The Ceremony is quite a long event – you will see that the Elders start with the newchildren and progress through every child in the community through the Elevens. As Father said on page 17, the entire process takes two days. The newchildren becoming Ones and the Elevens becoming Twelves are the most involved and most important ceremonies. The other ages have much smaller rites of passage.

We learn that the children in the community do not age until December. All of the children born in the same calendar year have the same "birthday" and are grouped together by age. So that means that a child born in January, a child born a week before the ceremony, and every child born in between all turn One at the exact same time. Every year, there are exactly 50 newchildren in the group (if none had been released).

During the Ceremony of One, these fifty newchildren are brought to the stage in the order that they were born. Newchild One, for example, is the oldest of the group, and Newchild Fifty is the youngest. Each newchild is assigned a name and a family unit. Remember that a family unit is made up of a father, a mother, a male child, and a female child. The parents apply for a child, and if their application is accepted, they receive the child at the Ceremony of One. They know beforehand whether or not they will get a child that year, but they don't know which child or his/her name.

Children get their bicycles as a Nine, but most of the time, the children already know how to ride them. Older brothers and sisters teach the younger ones. This rule of bicycles at Nine is hardly ever taken seriously and almost always broken (without consequence).

When Jonas and Father talk about the bicycle rule, we learn something very important. For a rule to be changed, the rule goes to a committee to be studied. If the rule was very important (not as trivial as bicycle age), the committee would consult The Receiver. No one sees The Receiver; he lives and works alone. We can infer that his role in the community is very important. There is only one Receiver.

During the Ceremony of Twelve, each new Twelve is given his/her Assignment. The Committee of Elders makes the decision for each child. They spend much time observing the Elevens – how they behave in school, how they play and interact with their friends, where they spend their volunteer hours, what skills they seem drawn to and skilled in, and what their interests seem to be. The Elders meet for long hours to discuss the Elevens and choose their Assignments based on these observations. Father, for example, knew early on that he would most likely become a Nurturer because he spent most of his volunteer hours at the Nurturing Center. Most Elevens are not disappointed with their Assignments because the Elders choose so carefully. Imagine...you can't even choose what career you want for the rest of your life; it is decided for you AT TWELVE. That would be like I'm telling you now that since you enjoy science class, you will become a doctor – start training for it tomorrow. But the children of the community didn't complain – this is how it is, and they need to trust that the Elders know exactly what they are doing.

Mother talks to Jonas about how his life will change after the Ceremony. First, hardly anyone remembers (or cares to remember) their age. The community stops counting after Twelve. Secondly, the Twelves' time out of school is spent differently. Mother says, "But it means that you'll move into a new group. And each of your friends will. You'll no longer be spending your time with your group of Elevens. After the Ceremony of Twelve, you'll be with your Assignment group, with those in training. No more volunteer hours. No more recreation hours. So your friends will no longer be as close" (22). She is saying that his entire IDENTITY is changing. Right now, he is known as a Twelve; after the Ceremony, he will be known as his Assignment in training. He will be part of a new group with new responsibilities and a new role in the community. He may still play after Twelve, but it will become less and less important to him.

Lily comes into the room and asks for her comfort object – a stuffed animal. As we learned earlier, people in the community do not know what an "animal" is; the only time they see different animals is in their comfort objects. The names of the objects seem very foreign to them. Lily's is an elephant; "Jonas's had been called a bear" (23). They simply accept that these creatures are imaginary things with funny names. They will NEVER see any of these animals live – they are not in the community. When children become an Eight, their comfort object is taken away to be given to a newchild, and the cycle begins again.

Jonas seems somewhat reassured after his talk, but he is still nervous. Where his father knew pretty well what his Assignment would be, Jonas has no idea. He does not think he stands out in any area, so he can't even begin to guess what the Elders will choose for him. He's worried if he will like it or not. THAT is what is making him nervous for the Ceremony of Twelve.

Chapter 3 –

Father is approved to bring Gabriel to his dwelling place for extra nurturing. The very first thing that Lily and Jonas notice about the baby is his EYES. The pale eyes. "And he has funny eyes like yours, Jonas!" (25). Most citizens of the community have dark eyes, but there are a few with light eyes. So few that Jonas can name them – he himself, a female Five, and now Gabe.

There are no mirrors in the community (why would they need them, since everyone looks and dresses the same?), so Jonas never really pays attention to his eyes. Seeing Gabe's eyes makes him think about his own. He says that having the pale eyes gives the person a look of "depth...as if one were looking into the clear water of the river down to the bottom, where things might lurk which hadn't been discovered yet" (26). The pale eyes will be important – don't forget about them.

Lily and Mother discuss the role of Birthmother in the community. Birthmothers give birth to all of the children in the community. They bear three children, and then they become Laborers until they enter the House of Old. Having certain people give birth to the entire community ensures that everyone will look the same – this is one way that the community takes away individuality. A little bit of biology for you...dark eyes are dominant traits, which means that if a person carries the gene, that trait will show up. Light eyes are recessive traits, which means that a person needs to receive this gene from both parents to exhibit the trait. If one person gives the dark eye gene and the other gives the light eye gene, then the child will show dark eyes. Light eyes are very rare in this community. Birthmothers never see the children they give birth to; the children are taken immediately to the Nurturing Center to be cared for until their Ceremony of One.

Also in this chapter, we learn more about how the community members are observed at all times. Even when they think that no one is watching or that what they're doing is insignificant, a voice comes over the loudspeaker to remind them of the rules. The message is directed toward one individual; however, the reminder is something that everyone could hear. For example, the loudspeaker reminds Lily (and all females under Nine) that hair ribbons must be tied at all times. The message was for Lily, but it also forces the other female children to check their own bows at that moment.

The loudspeaker reminded Jonas once that objects are not to be removed from recreation areas and food is to be eaten, not hoarded. This was in response to Jonas taking an apple home one day last month. Jonas was not intentionally hoarding food; he was confused about something that happened to the apple.

He and Asher had been playing catch with an apple (also probably not the best idea). As the apple soared through the air, Jonas noticed that it *changed*. He's not sure how, but something was different about it for a split second in the air. When he looked at the apple, he remarks that it was "Unchanged. The same size and shape: a perfect sphere. The same nondescript shade, about the same shade as his own tunic" (30). This quote tells us A LOT about the community, not just the apple. A "nondescript shade" is gray. An apple is certainly not gray – it's usually a bright red or green – but that's how it looks to the people in the community. Same as their tunics, which all members of the community wear. A tunic is like an oversized shirt. There is no shape or style to it, and everyone looks the same when they wear one. Again, taking away their individuality. Jonas goes on to explain that the apple "changed" four times, and he still couldn't figure out how or why. Then the announcement came on, and Jonas had to make his apology and move on.

Looking at Gabe, he remembers this incident, probably because he and Gabe share those different eyes. He can't explain the eyes, and he can't explain the apple, and both things have Jonas questioning things that he shouldn't.