

The Giver Chapters 4-5

I'm not sure if everyone got to see this when they submitted their questions yesterday, but I want to clarify the concept of Stirrings. It's not exactly what you think it is!

Understand that Stirrings are ALL FEELINGS of heightened emotion. This includes ANY sort of excitement, joy, pleasure, depression, anxiety, extreme fear, etc. The first sign of Stirrings happens in their dreams because it is their subconscious brain developing these emotions - the emotions haven't been regulated yet, so they are starting to surface. Biology lesson again - as children begin to mature, the hormones in their body and brain intensify ALL of their emotions for a number of years until they settle back down as young adults. Jonas is experiencing true emotions for the first time because he is physically at that stage of development. His dream is just how his emotions begin to manifest. The dream itself doesn't mean anything specific in regard to the relationship with Fiona or his feelings towards her.

Answers to the questions:

1. Children begin their volunteer hours when they are an Eight. They now have the freedom to choose where they want to spend these hours. This is particularly exciting because the rest of their days are so rigidly scheduled.
2. It is both good and bad that Jonas completed his volunteer hours at a variety of places because he has the chance to experience lots of different Assignments in the community, which is good. Because he does not gravitate toward one volunteer opportunity over another, he has absolutely no idea what the Elders might assign for him and he feels he has not developed a particular set of skills that may help the Elders decide.
3. In the House of Old, Release is a celebration. It is a reward for a full life well-lived. In that small ceremony, the life of the person is retold, and there is a toast to the person. Everyone there wishes him well as he happily walks through the door to the Releasing Room. When someone is Released as a result of a wrongdoing, there is no ceremony. It is done quickly and privately and is seen as a punishment.
4. As part of the morning ritual, family members are required to tell their dreams from the night before. The family discusses the dreams and helps the person analyze the message in the dream. This ritual begins with the Threes.
5. Jonas dreams that he and his friend Fiona are in the House of Old in the bathing room. He wanted Fiona to take off her clothes and get into the tub so he could bathe her (the way they did with the Old). Fiona kept laughing and would not take Jonas seriously. The very specific feeling that Jonas feels in this dream is *wanting*.
6. See the note above for the specific definition of Stirrings.
7. The treatment for Stirrings is a daily pill, which usually begins around Jonas' age (onset of puberty). But remember that the pill is meant to suppress ALL feelings, not just attraction between people. This treatment exists in the community to take away people's desire. If they do not feel anything, then there is no reason for anyone to want anything different from what they are given – this includes their spouse, their Assignment, and their general way of life. If these emotions are suppressed early and throughout their lives, the people don't know any other way; they will follow along with the community more blindly and willingly.