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The giver chapter 16 summary shmoop

Chapter 16Jonas no longer wants the memories, but he returns every day to the Annex knowing that others are free to live without anguish because he bears their burdens. After sharing memories of war, the Giver gives Jonas a number of happy memories so that he knows the joys of individuality and of art. He also remembers riding a horse and the bonds between animals and humans, and he learns the joys as well as the pain of solitude. He asks The Giver for his favorite memory, which the old man gladly gives him. The memory is of a family sharing presents on Christmas, although he does not know the holiday's name, and Jonas experiences the warmth and happiness of the memory. He learns that old people have not always been relegated to a place of respect in the House of the Old, but in fact used to be grandparents. Jonas realizes that he has never known who the parents of his parents are. The information is in the Hall of Open Records, but The Giver reminds him that when he has children, his mother and father will be living with the Childless Adults or eventually with the House of the Old and will no longer be a part of his life. Jonas and Lily will not attend their release celebration because they will be too busy with their own lives, and their children will not know their grandparents. Jonas sees why the community's method of creating family units is practical, but he wonders what the name of the overall feeling of the memory was. The Giver names it as love. Jonas hesitantly tells him that although having the Old in the same place as the rest of the family is impractical and may cause the Old to be less fully cared for, the family in the memory felt more complete. He guiltily wishes that society were still that way but momentarily convinces himself in his guilt that it is too dangerous, naming the fire as a hazard before admitting that it was also pleasant. After the evening meal, Jonas asks his parents if they love him. Amused, Father admonishes him for not using language precisely. Mother tells him that the word "love" is so generalized as to be meaningless, and they suggest questions such as "Do you enjoy me?" or "Do you take pride in my accomplishments?" as more appropriate questions, to which the answer is "Yes." Jonas completely disagrees but lies to them for the first time and tells them that he understands. Later, he talks to the sleeping Gabe, who now cries in the night unless Jonas is in the room, and tells him that life could be different with things such as love. Jonas also decides to cease taking his pill for the Stirrings. Chapter 17On an unscheduled holiday, Jonas leaves home to look for Asher, thinking on the way about the Stirrings that have returned and about his new ability to feel, both from the absence of pills and from his training. He can now see colors all the time, and he knows a great deal about Elsewhere through his memories. His feelings now have more depth than those analyzed every evening. Lily's story about the boy who broke rules in the play area was exasperation rather than anger, the latter of which Jonas has experienced because of knowing cruelty, something that he could never discuss calmly at dinner. Similarly, his mother's emotion of sadness was too easily comforted to be classified as real grief. Jonas understands how to feel emotions so deep they do not need to be told, and today, he is happy. When he looks for Asher at the play area, he sees Tanya, an Eleven, being play-ambushed in a game by Asher. For the first time, Jonas recognizes this not only as a game of good guys and bad guys but also as a game of war. He watches the children attacking and pretending to fall on the ground, but when Asher pretends to hit him, he remembers the boy who lay dying on the field of battle, and he remains standing, trying not to cry. The children leave nervously, and he asks Asher to stop playing that game. Asher refuses, saying that games are his expertise, although he apologizes for being disrespectful to the new Receiver. Jonas tries to explain the cruelty of the game but gives up. Fiona offers to ride with him along the river, which he would normally love to do, but he no longer feels that he can. His friends ride away, leaving him feeling friendless because they cannot understand what he feels. At home, Lily chatters about the bicycle she will receive in a month while Gabe learns to walk. The scene cheers Jonas, who anticipates teaching Lily to ride. Father mentions that he will have to select the twin that will go Elsewhere and perform a Ceremony of Release, although he will not be the one to take it Elsewhere. Lily speculates about another community receiving the twin, so that there are two children of the same name and age who meet each other in the future during a visit to another community. Mother suggests that Lily might receive the Assignment of Storyteller, which sets Lily off on another story until Father sends her to bed. Analysis Gaining a memory of war deeply affects Jonas, who knows that everyone in his community is able to live a carefree, ordinary existence because of his suffering and the suffering of the past. It is for this reason that the behavior of Asher and the children in the play area nearly causes Jonas to break down. He understands that they do not understand that their imitation war game is cruel and representative of terrible suffering, but their inability to understand further isolates and frustrates him. The incident shows how their innocence of war makes playing at war possible, and it also highlights the lack of understanding that Asher and Fiona have about certain aspects of life as it used to be. Although the experience of war was horrible, Jonas finds that it has helped widen his capacity to feel and to live life to the fullest on both ends of the spectrum. Having experienced true pain, anger, and fear, he also is now able to experience the simple pleasure of having an unscheduled holiday and to appreciate its qualities more fully. In addition, The Giver exposes him to memories of art and of the happier side of solitude, and finally he receives the memory of love, which raises new questions for Jonas about why this society must be the way that it is, lacking love or strong emotion. In a second conversation with The Giver, Jonas struggles with the idea of love, as his instinctive knowledge of the value of love comes into conflict with those values that he has been taught for much of his life. The result of his confusion is that he nearly convinces himself that sprawling families and the presence of grandparents are less practical and thus worse than temporary but utilitarian family units with a special center for the Old. Further evidence of the dominance of practicality in the community's customs appears in Jonas's subsequent conversation with his parents, whose refusal to acknowledge that they love him adds a sinister aspect to the concept of a family in Jonas's society. Jonas's decision to accept the Stirrings and cease taking the pill each day reflects his repudiation of the absence of love and emotion in his community. His society, which at first seemed so innocent and happy, has proven to be dystopian. Its practical rejection of unwanted individual variations and the experience of pain has also inadvertently led to an inability to feel deep positive emotions, such as love. The suppression of the Stirrings may originally have been an attempt to reduce the complications that often result from human sexuality, but it has instead served as another means of ridding the society of all emotions, both good and bad. At the end of Chapter 17, release is yet again mentioned without any explanation of its true nature, but Father is due to release the weaker one of two newborn twins and take it Elsewhere. Lily's assumptions about the nature of Elsewhere are similar to Jonas's in that they both imagine Elsewhere to be perhaps another community that is in need of another newchild. However, Jonas's father's description of release, as comforting as it is, answers few questions about what actually happens in Elsewhere. Jonas's lifelong indoctrination by the community is evident in that he does not think to ask any real questions about the release process or its results. LitCharts assigns a color and icon to each theme in The Giver, which you can use to track the themes throughout the work. The Individual vs. Society The Giver transmits the memory of another ride on a sled, only this time the sled loses control and Jonas experiences pain and nausea from a badly broken leg. The pain lingers after the experience is over, but the Giver is not allowed to give him relief-of-pain, and Jonas limps home and goes to bed early. Forbidden to share his feelings with his family, he feels isolated, realizing that they have never known intense pain. Over the next days, the Giver transmits more and more painful memories, always ending the day with a memory of pleasure. After experiencing starvation, Jonas asks why these horrible memories need to be preserved, and the Giver explains that they bring wisdom: once, for example, the community wanted to increase the number of children allowed to each family, but the Giver remembered the hunger that overpopulation brings and advised against it. Jonas wonders why the whole community cannot share the pain of these important memories, and the Giver tells him that this is the reason the position of Receiver is so honored—the community does not want to be burdened and pained by memories. Jonas wants to change things, but the Giver reminds him that the situation has been the same for generations, and that there is very little hope for change. Meanwhile, the newchild Gabriel is developing well, but still cannot sleep through the night. Jonas's father worries that he will have to be released after all. He mentions that the Nurturing Center will probably have to make another release first, though: a Birthmother is expecting twin males, and if they are identical, one will have to be released. Jonas wonders what happens to children who are released. Is someone waiting for them Elsewhere to bring them up and take care of them? He asks his parents to let Gabriel sleep in his room that night so that he can share the responsibility of caring for him. When Gabriel wakes up crying, Jonas pats his back while remembering a wonderful sail on a lake transmitted to him by the Giver. He realizes that he is unwittingly transmitting the memory to Gabriel and stops himself. Later, he transmits the whole memory and Gabriel stops crying and sleeps. Jonas wonders if he has done the right thing. The next day, Jonas finds the Giver in incredible pain, and the Giver asks him to take some of the pain away. The Giver transmits the terrible memory of a battlefeld covered with groaning, dying men and horses. Jonas, himself horribly wounded, gives water to a young soldier and then watches him die. After this memory, Jonas never wants to go back to the Annex for more wisdom and pain, but he does, and the Giver transmits beautiful memories—birthday parties, art museums, horseback riding, camping—that celebrate individuality, brilliant colors, the bond between people and animals, and solitude, all things absent from Jonas's society. He asks the Giver what his favorite memory is, and the Giver transmits a memory of a family—grandparents, parents, young children—opening presents at Christmas. Jonas has never heard of grandparents. In his community, parents cease to be a part of children's lives once the children have grown up—children do not even know when their parents are released. He understands that his organized society works well, but he felt a feeling in the room that he liked. The Giver tells him that the feeling is love, and Jonas says that he wishes his own family could be like the family in the memory and that the Giver could be his grandparent. At home that evening, he asks his parents if they love him. They laugh and tell him to use more precise language: the word "love" is so general that it is almost meaningless. They enjoy him, and they are proud of him, but they cannot say they love him. Jonas pretends to agree with them, but secretly he does not understand. That night, he tells little Gabriel—who can only sleep through the night when Jonas gives him memories—that if things were different in the community, there could be colors and grandparents and love. The next morning, Jonas decides to stop taking his morning pill. Analysis The Giver's role in making decisions for the community explains the importance of his position. He is not just a mystic who holds onto out-of-date emotions and sensations despite that they are no longer useful to the community. He is the only person in the community who can prevent mistakes from being repeated, which is the practical function of history. In this sense, the Giver's job is as practical and necessary as any other in the community: through his wisdom, he keeps the community well fed and well ordered just as much as the Fish Hatchery Attendant or the Nurturer do. Read important quotes by and about the Giver. But the Giver's presence somehow still undermines the impression of logic and order that we get from the community. The Committee of Elders does not base its decisions on real logic or reason because it lacks the resources to make any kind of considered decision about anything (the characters in the novel constantly make jokes about the Committee's painfully slow decision-making process.) The resource they need is experience, and as a culture, Jonas's community lacks experience: it destroys experience. On the issue of adding a third child to every family, the Committee did not take the Giver's advice because they thought about his argument and realized that too many people would lead to a lack of resources. They took his advice on blind faith, because they lacked any other way of making a choice. Choice is impossible without memory, just as freedom is impossible without choice. Read more about how the society mirrors totalitarian governments. The pain Jonas experiences isolates him further from his family and friends when he realizes that they have never experienced any real pain, but at the same time it drives him to try to forge deeper connections with other people—his parents and the newchild Gabriel. Jonas learns about love when he receives the memory of the family at Christmas, but he learns about true compassion in his experience on the battlefeld. The contrast between his painful memories and his pleasurable memories is strong, but not as strong as the contrast between the memories and the colorless realities of life in Jonas's community. Jonas's pain gives new depth and value to his pleasure. We realize that the citizens of the community lack the capacity for pleasure not only because it would destabilize the society, but also because it is impossible to experience deep pleasure without having experienced pain, and they have consciously eliminated pain. Read more about the relationship between pain and pleasure as a theme. Jonas's attempt to reach out to his parents fails when they tell him that they do not love him. They emphasize precision of language, but that particular kind of precision actually limits the expressiveness of their language. Jonas knows that the feeling of love exists and that to reduce it to simpler feelings, like enjoyment and pride, is useless as well as imprecise. We see how the "precise" language the community uses for things often drains them of meaning: "pride" and "enjoyment" do not express the feeling of love, and "release" does not express the idea of death. Although we do not know for sure at this point in the novel that release is death, we have a strong suspicion. The use of the word "release," though it might be technically correct, makes it too easy to ignore what really happens when someone dies. Read important quotes by and about Jonas's father. Jonas's attempts to connect with Gabriel are much more successful. In possibly breaking the rules of his Assignment by transmitting memories to the baby, Jonas is also breaking a more unspoken rule against forming too close a bond with an individual. After experiencing the Christmas scene, with grandparents who remain part of their children's lives long after their practical function as parents is finished, Jonas craves the kind of close, selfish relationship with another human that his society discourages. He says he understands that this kind of close family life is a "dangerous" way to live, trying to justify his statement by saying that the candles and fire in the loving family's living room are dangerous to have indoors. The fire and candles, however, serve as symbols for the warmth and light of human love, and that love is dangerous because it would upset the delicate balance of Jonas's society. But warmth and light are necessary for survival, and Jonas begins to feel that love is too. It is important to note that the depiction of the family at Christmas seems to idealize the traditional family group and reject the system of Nurturers and Caretakers presented by Jonas's community. This rejection is based on the lack of love and lasting relationships to be found within Jonas's community, and not necessarily on its nontraditional structure. This need for close relationships and desire for the strong emotion that accompanies them influences Jonas's decision to stop taking his pills. Jonas stops taking the pills just so he can experience the sensation of wanting something, not because he has hopes to start a sexual relationship with another person. He wants to feel capable of making choices, and he wants to want things—nothing will change if he does not want it to very badly. The only person he can connect with, besides the Giver, is the newchild Gabriel. As a new human being, Gabriel symbolizes the hope for change. Jonas can give Gabriel his memories and his love because he has not yet been conditioned to live like everyone else in the community. Read more about why Jonas must take pills.

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