

her when and how her family got here and I was surprised to find out it was almost like Kristen! She left Italy in 1924 aboard a ship called the Conte Grande. She was only 5 years old, but she still remembers the voyage. She said a lot of people got sick, especially sea sick. After a long trip they finally arrived in America and they had to pass through Ellis Island where they checked them for diseases. She still remembers how nervous, scared and excited she felt when she saw the Statue of Liberty and how big New York City was! She also had to learn a whole new language like Kirsten.

Reading about Kirsten and her family made me realize how hard life was for so many immigrants. It makes you think about all the sacrifices and risks they took to have a better life for their children. Before I read this book I really didn't know how dangerous it was to travel back then. Nowadays we just travel for fun mostly, but back then they traveled to have new opportunities in a new land. They took terrifying journeys and suffered many hardships, like family members dying during the trip. They also had to leave everything behind, even most of their family members. My great grandma said she remembers saying goodbye to her grandparents and she never saw them again.

This is why reading books like "Meet Kirsten" is so important because it made me appreciate my life more. When I talked to my grandma I told her thank you for being such a brave and strong little girl and making it through a tough journey because if she had not made it I would not be here today (or my dad or my sister!). And thank you Mrs. Shaw for writing such exciting books.

My name is Isabella Krug and I'm 11 years old. One of my favorite things to do is read. I really enjoy reading historical fiction books. I also love taking my dog Princess on long walks or hiking with my family. We usually go to Mt. Baldy on the weekends and have a picnic and then hike along one of the trails. Another favorite place to visit is the Los Angeles County Arboretum. It's really beautiful and there are lots of things to do, like feed the ducks and squirrels. After school my sister and I also enjoy riding our bikes while my dog follows along. I am in the 5th grade and I haven't really thought about what I want to be when I'm older, but I guess I would enjoy being a veterinarian because I love animals.

L E V E L O N E



Anushka Patil, Age 11, Grade 6
Individual Entry
Cupertino, CA

Dear Lois Lowry,

I heard about your book, *The Giver*, from a friend. I didn't want to read it at first, not that I don't like to read, but I had lots of things to do, and time to read wasn't

even anywhere close to being on my schedule. Reluctantly, I read the back, and my mind's strong opposition toward the book rapidly began to collapse. My head was filled with questions. How is it possible for Jonas' world to be perfect? How did his world learn to block feelings? How did they choose one person to hold the burden of pain and pleasure of life?

My friend urged me to read it, but that wasn't necessary anymore. As I read the first chapter, I was amazed at the fantasy world that you had created. I sometimes drift off in my dreams into a perfect world, where there was no hatred amongst people and no people whose intentions were to harm others. People like that vanished from my "dream world" immediately. Your book made me look at my "world" in a different perspective. How would I know if a person had intentionally tried to hurt someone, or if it was an accident? What if the person vanished because I thought that he/she had intentionally tried to hurt someone else? That person could have been just like the Pilot-in-Training who was released. Thinking about this, the rules of my "dream world" quickly changed. *The Giver* made me think about the different ways to look at life, and if it really should be altered to make it perfect. It completely changed my angry thoughts about this world that is almost always disturbed by wars, hate and fighting.

When Jonas said, "Imagine if people could choose their own jobs or spouses," I understand why he thought that the idea was absurd, because he never knew a different world. But what I don't understand is why the people who decided on Sameness agreed to give up all the rights they ever had, and let strangers make decisions for them. If someone's marriage didn't work out, why should it matter? The couple could get divorced and remarry if they wanted to. But apparently Jonas' world couldn't tolerate the hostile feelings that the couple might have. The intolerance of Jonas' world astonishes me. People might not like the job they picked, so they might get a new job. In Jonas' world, the awkward feeling that might show in the person couldn't be accepted. I think that his world went to the extreme trying to keep everyone happy. If they were so obsessed with making a perfect world, why didn't they think about the Giver, and the pain he must endure? Though Jonas' mixed up world disturbed me, it opened up my mind. Before, I would laugh at my sister, or my friends, when they made the wrong choice, though the right one was obvious. But now, I think about what perspective and reasons they might have had to make that choice instead of thinking that they're crazy.

When Jonas began to see the color red, I realized that I had begun to feel sympathetic for him. To not be able to see such wonderful things in color made sight pointless. Now I understand what life is like for people who are blind. If they ever see again, the light and color of this world would amaze them, since they have seen nothing but darkness.

As I read about Jonas receiving the memory of war, where he delivered water to a dying soldier, I couldn't believe how strange our world is. We fight, killing our soldiers, but really killing ourselves. And what do we fight over? Oil, water, and weapons! We immediately hate a person, just because he or she did a little thing that

we didn't approve of. Compared to our world, Jonas' world is perfect. Perfect, but empty. Even if it were possible to have a world without hatred, and only love, it would still be a dull world because your feelings, good or bad, are part of who you are. Taking some of them away is just like taking the life out of you. Anybody who lives in a perfect world would be a robot. They just do what they are told, and live life like a teddy bear, full of "love," but they don't have any real love.

While I read about Jonas watching the release, I was as horrified as he was. It was murder. Murder in cold blood. Jonas' father knew that he was killing the people, because when Rosemary released herself, he had to know about the memory of the war. I felt so angry, that the people lied to all of the kids that didn't know about death. But then I realized that it was not their fault. To save the peace and calmness of their world, they were almost forced to lie. They were like toddlers. Like my little brother, the kids could scratch you in order to stop you from doing something to them (taking them to the bathtub or the doctor, etc.) and they would never understand what they had done to you or if they did anything wrong. The adults of the community lied to the kids, and never understood what they had done wrong, or how much it would hurt the kids if they found out (like Jonas). The character that I felt most similar to was Rosemary. If I had found out that my whole world was a lie, just a blank cover-up to real life, I would have applied for release too. And like her, I would inject myself, instead of let some lying stranger do it for me.

I agree with Jonas' decision to take Gabriel along on his journey but I believe that before leaving the Giver, Jonas should have taken almost every memory of food, warmth, and cold. It may seem a little selfish, but it is better to take the memories than for Jonas and Gabe to die. The ending of the book made me want to cry. It is horrible for a small baby like Gabe to have to go through hunger and the cold. I think that the end of the book, where Jonas sees the lights and the house, could happen two ways. Either Jonas was really seeing a community that hadn't changed to Sameness (or changed back to normal after experiencing what Jonas' community would experience now that they had their memories back) or Jonas and Gabe were dying and hallucinating. I would like to believe that the house was real, because the thought of the baby (and Jonas) dying after all of this disturbs me, and also because the way the book is written makes it seem real. But something in the back of my head thinks that Jonas and Gabe were dying. Maybe it is because I'm a little pessimistic, but anyway, I still believe that the house was real. I would love to know what you had in mind as you wrote the ending.

The Giver is an inspiring book, which changed the way I look at this world and opened up my mind. I want to thank you for writing this book, and changing the thoughts of hundreds of readers.

My name is Anushka Patil, and I'm a sixth grader. Some of my hobbies include reading, surfing the Internet, and hanging out with my friends. I also like mystery books and playing with my younger brother, who is two years old. Lois Lowry is one of my favorite authors because she writes books that aren't always set in the world as we know it, such as Gathering Blue, The Messenger, and Number the Stars. The Giver is one of my favorite books, because it is interesting to read about what an alternate world could be like.