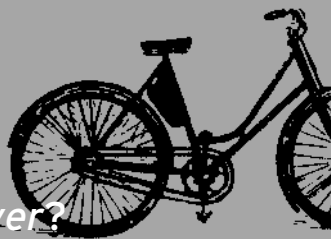


Opinion: What Have Other People Thought About *The Giver*?



It's a winner!

The Giver has won many awards, the most prestigious of which is the 1994 Newbery Medal. This award is given annually to the author of “the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” published the preceding year. The selection is made by fifteen librarians on the American Library Association’s Newbery Committee. Look at your copy of *The Giver* and you may see the award, printed in gold on the cover.

Lowry had previously won the 1990 Newbery Medal for her historical novel *Number the Stars*. She remembers when the time was approaching for the Newbery to be announced for 1994: “People were predicting that *The Giver* would win. I didn’t want to be waiting by the phone. I went on a trip where no one could reach me. I was in Antarctica when they made the announcement.” When her publisher finally managed to reach her by radioing her ship, Lowry was so excited that she turned to the woman next to her and said, “You’ve probably never heard of this, but I just won the Newbery Medal.” The woman had indeed heard of the award—she was the former president of the American Library Association!

Censored!

While *The Giver* is a popular book, it is also a controversial one. It ranked number eleven on the American Library Association's list of most frequently challenged books of the 1990s. A challenged book is one that a person or a group of people has tried to have removed from library shelves.

Why has *The Giver* been challenged? Some people say the book is too violent. They object to the passages regarding what is referred to in the book as "release": infanticide and euthanasia. Others complain about references to Jonas's "stirrings," the natural result of increased hormone production in the body. Parents with such complaints have managed to get the book banned from some school districts or to make it required that a student needs a parent's permission to read the book.

How does Lois Lowry feel about *The Giver* being such a frequently challenged book? "I think it's an honor I would prefer to forgo," she says. "It's a difficult situation." Lowry worries about the chilling effect such controversy can have on librarians and teachers, and what it means regarding whether or not the book will be read. "Even though they [librarians and teachers] may like a book and want to teach the book, they don't have time to deal with the bureaucracy that's required, and they're likely to choose a less controversial book."

The end?

Probably the biggest complaint Lowry gets from children about *The Giver* has to do with its ending.

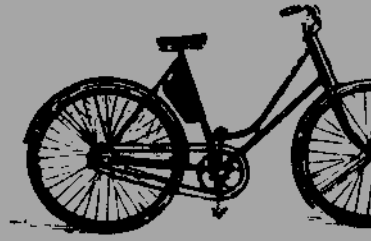
“Many kids want a more specific ending to *The Giver*,” she says. “Some write, or ask me when they see me, to spell it out exactly. And I don’t do that . . . because *The Giver* is many things to many different people. People bring to it their own complicated sense of beliefs and hopes and dreams and all of that. I don’t want to put my own feelings into it, my own beliefs, and ruin that for people who create their own endings in their minds.”

Lowry says that the open-ended conclusion is the reason she won’t write a sequel to this popular book. “In order to write a sequel, I would have to say: This is how it ended. Here they are and here’s what’s happening next. And that might be the wrong ending for many, many people who chose something different.”

Thinking about what others think about *The Giver*

- Do you think that *The Giver* seems like an award-winning book? What other Newbery Medal-winning books have you read? How does *The Giver* compare?
- How does the subject of censorship relate to the theme of *The Giver*? What do you think the leaders in Jonas’s community would say about censorship? What would Jonas and The Giver say?
- How do you imagine *The Giver* ends? Would you like to see the ending more spelled out? Why or why not?

Glossary



Here are some important words used in *The Giver*. Understanding these words will make it easier to read the novel.

anguish a strong feeling of misery or distress

annex an extra building that is joined onto or placed near a main building

apprehensive worried and slightly afraid

buoyancy the ability to keep afloat

chastise to punish or criticize for wrongdoing

counsel advice

dejected sad and depressed

depth deepness

destination the place that a person or vehicle is traveling to

diminish to become smaller or weaker

disposition a person's general mood

exempted freed or excused from a certain duty or obligation

fugitives persons who are running away, especially from the authorities

integrity being honest and fair

interdependence dependency on one another

meticulous very careful and precise

monitored kept watch over

nurturer a person who tends to the needs of someone, especially a child

obsolete out-of-date and no longer used

ominous threatening; signaling trouble, danger, or disaster

petitioned made a formal request

phenomenon something very unusual and remarkable

precision accuracy or exactness

prestige honor or esteem

prohibited forbidden

regulated controlled or managed

relinquish to give up

restriction something that limits

rueful full of regret, remorse, or sorrow

scrupulously with extreme care about details

solace comfort or relief from sorrow or grief

solemn very serious; grave

standardize to make the same as everyone or everything else

stirrings exciting, strong feelings

summit the highest point; the top

tentatively with uncertainty

transgression a violation of a law or duty

transmit to send or pass something from one person or place to another

violation an act or instance of breaking a rule or law

yearning a strong wish for something