

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

# Gathering Blue

Lois Lowry

NOVEL UNITS<sup>®</sup>



NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING,  
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# GATHERING BLUE

by  
Lois Lowry

## Teacher Guide

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### Note

The Laurel-Leaf paperback edition of the book, published by Dell, © 2002, was used to prepare this guide. The page references may differ in other paperback editions.

**Please note:** Parts of this novel deal with sensitive, mature issues. Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Interpreting evidence,  
compare/contrast, forming  
opinions, identifying  
stereotypes, paradox,  
pros/cons, research

### Comprehension

Cause/effect, classifying,  
details, generalizing,  
inferring, main idea,  
predicting, summarizing

### Writing

Article, description, editorial,  
poem, list, narrative,  
letter, report

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, interview, oral  
report, role-playing

### Vocabulary

Compound words,  
context clues

### Literary Elements

Analogy, characterization,  
descriptions, foreshadowing,  
plot development, setting,  
point of view, simile, theme

### Across the Curriculum

Art—architecture, drawing,  
embroidery, woodcarving;  
Science—weather, botany;  
Social Studies—maps,  
culture, history, politics, laws;  
Math—survey statistics

- Social Studies: Have students look at a time line of civilization and note the rise and fall of societies, such as Greece and Rome. They should compare these civilizations' histories to the history reflected on the Singer's robe.
- Research: Have students research totalitarian governments and make a list of four countries that currently have or have ever had dictators.

### Chapters 13–15, pp. 122–146

Kira, Matt, and Thomas hear Jamison speaking harshly to a child on the floor below them. The trio retreats to Kira's room, and Matt explains that the child is Jo, an orphan from the Fen. Her mother got the sickness and her father stabbed himself in grief. When Jamison comes to Kira's room he seems normal, and Kira tells him that Annabella said there are no beasts. He says Annabella's mind is wandering and reminds Kira that he was present when beasts took her father. Kira feels her special cloth and it seems to withdraw from her. The next morning, Matt warns Kira not to go to Annabella's because she has died. He says he saw Jamison walking by the draggers as they moved her body to the Field. At the Edifice, Kira searches for Jamison. On the way, she tells Jo that she will come back and promises to help. Jamison sympathetically tells Kira that Annabella died of a natural death in her sleep. Her coffin will stay there, and someday Kira might live in it. Workers move Annabella's dying equipment to a place near the woods, in sight of Kira's window. Kira tells Thomas that Jo is locked in. Thomas is not surprised and says he made a wooden key that can unlock any door in the Edifice. Kira and Thomas make plans to visit Jo that night.

#### Vocabulary

indistinct (123)
relishing (130)
misery (130)
grotesque (133)
enclosure (137)
deceitful (138)
wistfully (139)
mordant (140)
solitary (141)

#### Discussion Questions

- Kira recognizes Jamison's voice. He's been kind to her, so why would she be oddly fearful? (*Answers will vary. Thus is before she hears Jamison's voice, so she fears him because he's a authority figure. Some of his statements, like the one about beasts, contradict what she already knows, but it's a warning. Answers will vary. p. 123*)
- Why does Kira question that Matt's father would kill himself? (*Because he has a child who depends on him.*) Matt also finds it odd that he would have a son. What does this say about Matt's character? Do you agree with their assessments? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary. p. 125*)
- Kira tells Jamison that Annabella says there are no beasts. What is Jamison's reaction? Should Kira believe Jamison or Annabella? Why do you think so? (*His expression is a mixture of astonishment and anger. Answers will vary. p. 128*)
- The cloth withdraws from Kira's touch. What message is it sending her? (*Answers will vary. Suggestion—Do not trust Jamison. p. 129*)
- If Jo's songs give knowledge, as the woman in the weaving shed tells Kira, how could that knowledge be important to the guardians? (*They could see threats to their power or the direction of civilization. Answers will vary. pp. 131–132*)
- Jo answers Kira's knock by saying she is practicing. What does this say about her treatment and responsibilities in the Edifice? (*She's been punished for not practicing her songs. Answers will vary. p. 137*)

7. Why doesn't Kira tell Jamison that she's talked with Jo? Defend your answer. (*She is beginning to distrust Jamison. Answers will vary. p. 138*)
8. Jamison is still in Kira's room talking about Annabella's death when workers start assembling a dyeing place for Kira. Discuss how quickly Annabella's things are moved and why Jamison forbids Kira to be Annabella's watcher. (*Discussions will vary, but should note how it seems Annabella's death was not sudden or unexpected. Students may suggest that Jamison played a role in Annabella's death. pp. 140–141*)
9. Thomas calls himself, Kira, and Jo "artists," though Kira has never heard the word. Discuss the importance of artists to Kira's society and then discuss their importance in your society. How would the world be different without art? (*Answers will vary. pp. 143–145*)
10. Discuss how Thomas was treated as a type. Do you agree or disagree with the way he was raised in the Edifice? (*Answers will vary. pp. 142, 145*)
11. **Prediction:** Will Kira and Thomas get caught when they visit Jo?

### Supplementary Activities

1. Literary Activities: **Characterization:** Have students add to their Character Analysis charts.
2. **Social Studies: Mapping:** Have students draw a floor plan of the floor of the Edifice that Thomas and Kira live on and the floor above them. Where is Jo's room in relationship to Kira's?
3. **Literary Analysis/Foreshadowing:** Recall Jamison's expression of how Kira told him Annabella said there were no ghosts (p. 138) and the foreshadowing of Annabella's death. Were students surprised? Do they suspect that something would happen to Annabella? Is the secret warning a signal sign of trouble to come? Have students add to their foreshadowing chart.
4. **Music:** Have students make a list of songs that present information (e.g., *The Alphabet Song; The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald; The Battle of New Orleans; Fifty Nifty United States*; etc.). Then have them write their own song that presents information or offers words of wisdom.
5. **Social Studies:** For one day, have students listen to how people talk and record the number of times people refer to "they" without a pronoun reference. For instance: "'They' say..." Discuss who they refer to as "they" is.
6. **Art:** Discuss with students the art of wood carving. Have students research famous woodcarvers.
7. **Brainstorming:** Have students brainstorm a list of different types of carvers.

## Character Analysis

**Directions:** The names of some of the characters who appear in the novel are written in the boxes below. Begin the chart after reading the first chapter and add to the chart as you continue reading the novel. Working in small groups, discuss the attributes of the various characters. In each character's box, write several words or phrases that describe him or her.

Kira	Mitt	Thomas	Jamison
Vandara		Annabell	Christopher