

Focus **ON READING**

The Giver

TERRY HOUSE

This is a sample not intended for classroom use.



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Introduction/Classroom Management

WELCOME TO *FOCUS ON READING*

Focus on Reading literature study guides are designed to help all students comprehend and analyze their reading. Many teachers have grappled with the question of how to make quality literature accessible to all students. Students who are already avid readers of quality literature are motivated to read and are familiar with prereading and reading strategies. However, struggling readers frequently lack basic reading skills and are not equipped with the prior knowledge and reading strategies to thoroughly engage in the classroom literature experience.

Focus on Reading is designed to make teachers' and students' lives easier! How? By providing materials that allow all students to take part in reading quality literature. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains activities that focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills that students need to get the most from their reading. In addition, each section within the guide contains a before-reading **Focus Your Reading** page containing tools to ensure success: **Vocabulary Words to Know**, **Things to Know**, and **Questions to Think About**. These study aids will help students who may not have the prior knowledge they need to truly comprehend the reading.

USING *FOCUS ON READING*

Focus on Reading is designed to make it easy for you to meet the individual needs of students who require additional reading skills support. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains teacher and student support materials, reproducible student activity sheets, an end-of-book test, and an answer key.

- **Focus on the Book**, a convenient reference page for the teacher, provides a brief overview of the entire book including a synopsis, information about the setting, author data, and historical background.
- **Focus Your Knowledge**, a reference page for students, is a whole-book, prereading activity designed to activate prior knowledge and immerse students in the topic.

The study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable sections to make it easy to plan classroom time. Five activities are devoted to each section of the novel.

Before Reading

- **Focus Your Reading** consists of 3 prereading sections:

Vocabulary Words to Know lists and defines 10 vocabulary words students will encounter in their reading. Students will not have to interrupt their reading to look up, ask for, or spend a lot of time figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words. These words are later studied in-depth within the lesson.

Things to Know identifies terms or concepts that are integral to the reading but that may not be familiar to today's students. This section is intended to "level the playing field" for those students who may not have much prior knowledge about the time period, culture, or theme of the book. It also gets students involved with the book, increasing interest before they begin reading.

Questions to Think About helps students focus on the main ideas and important details they should be looking for as they read. This activity helps give students a *purpose* for reading. The goal of these guiding questions is to build knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the topics in the reading.

During Reading

- **Build Your Vocabulary** presents the 10 unit focus words in the exact context of the book. Students are then asked to write their own definitions and sentences for the words.
- **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** offers 10 multiple-choice, literal comprehension questions for each section.

Check Your Understanding: Short Answer contains 10 short-answer questions based on the reading.

After Reading

- **Deepen Your Understanding** is a writing activity that extends appreciation and analysis of the book. This activity focuses on critical-thinking skills and literary analysis.
- **End-of-Book Test** contains 20 multiple-choice items covering the book. These items ask questions that require students to synthesize the information in the book and make inferences in their answers.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Focus on Reading is very flexible. It can be used by the whole class, by small groups, or by individuals. Each study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable units of study.

This literature comprehension program is simple to use. Just photocopy the lessons and distribute them at the appropriate time as students read the novel.

You may want to reproduce and discuss the **Focus Your Knowledge** page before distributing the paperbacks. This page develops and activates prior knowledge to ensure that students have a grounding in the book before beginning reading. After reading this whole-book prereading page, students are ready to dive into the book.

The **Focus Your Reading** prereading activities are the keystone of this program. They prepare students for what they are going to read, providing focus for the complex task of reading. These pages should be distributed before students actually begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. There are no questions to be answered on these pages; these are for reference and support during reading. Students may choose to take notes on these pages as they read. This will also give students a study tool for review before the **End-of-Book Test**.

The **Focus Your Reading** pages also provide an excellent bridge to home. Parents, mentors, tutors, or

other involved adults can review vocabulary words with students, offer their own insights about the historical and cultural background outlined, and become familiar with the ideas students will be reading about. This can help families talk to students in a meaningful way about their reading, and it gives the adults something concrete to ask about to be sure that students are reading and understanding.

The **Build Your Vocabulary** and **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** and **Short Answer** activities should be distributed when students begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. These literature guide pages are intended to help students comprehend and retain what they read; they should be available for students to refer to at any time during the reading.

Deepen Your Understanding is an optional extension activity that goes beyond literal questions about the book, asking students for their own ideas and opinions—and the reasons behind them. These postreading activities generally focus on literary analysis.

As reflected in its title, the **End-of-Book Test** is a postreading comprehension test to be completed after the entire novel has been read.

For your convenience, a clear **Answer Key** simplifies the scoring process.

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Focus on the Book

Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Jonas lives in a future time and place in which law and order, acceptance, consideration, and “Sameness” are the guiding principles. One’s daily life is regulated by strict rules and rituals; and a committee of wise Elders chooses one’s spouse, children, profession, and even one’s very name.

This is a safe, secure, and caring world—or so Jonas thinks until the Ceremony of Twelve, when he is tapped to become the new Receiver of Memory. Under the tutelage of The Giver, Jonas discovers the dark and dangerous secrets of the only world he has ever known. Suddenly, he must make choices—choices that threaten to shatter his entire community.

Winner of the prestigious Newbery Award for 1994, *The Giver* has been cited as a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Honor Book, an American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults, an American Library Association Notable Book for Children, a *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year, a *Booklist* Editor’s Choice, and winner of the Regina Medal.

About the Author

Lois Lowry was born in Hawaii in 1937. As a young woman in the 1950s, she left college to marry and raise a family. This strong emphasis on family has carried over into Lowry’s professional life, as well. When she began writing novels for young adults, Lois Lowry chose to focus on family life, specifically, on how families support and guide their children from adolescence to adulthood—through both the good times and the bad.

Her first published novel, *A Summer to Die*, loosely based on her own childhood, describes a young girl’s struggle to cope with the illness and death of her older sister. Since that first book, Lowry has written about different types of families, those that are headed by a mother and father (the *Anastasia Krupnik* series) and those that are led by a single parent (*Rabble Starkey*; *The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline*). The topics range from the serious and difficult (adoption, pregnancy, war, Nazi occupation) to the more commonplace concerns of friendship, popularity, and school. With the guidance of loving parents or other adult mentors, Lois Lowry’s characters learn to trust and rely on their own inner strengths and resources as they grapple with the issues in their lives.

Historical Background

The setting for *The Giver* is a well-ordered, well-run, and well-spoken community of the future. With its structure, support systems, and concern for civility and fairness, it seems, on the surface at least, to be the perfect place—the utopia that writers and philosophers long have imagined and desired. In fact, the term *utopia* first was coined by the English writer Sir Thomas More in his sixteenth-century novel of the same name. It derives from two Greek words meaning “no place” and “good place” and has come to describe an ideal, theoretical society.

Although the term originated in 1516 with the publication of More’s novel, the history of utopian literature extends back even further than that. Plato’s *Republic*, written in the fourth century B.C.E., is considered the first true utopian work. In general, examples of this genre can be divided into two categories: fictional, fantastical accounts of a perfect, idealized society (More’s *Utopia* and James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*) and socio-political treatises that outline a specific prescription for a better way of living (Plato’s *Republic* and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*).

A few individuals and groups have even taken their utopian ideas and attempted to turn theory into practice. In the United States, there have been utopian communities in Indiana, Massachusetts, and Iowa. All these enterprises have been short lived, but a few have left their mark nonetheless. The Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge; the Native American leader, Tecumseh; and the Transcendentalist writer, Bronson Alcott, all planned or implemented their own experiments in utopian living. Little Louisa May Alcott, her mother, and her sisters lived for over a year with her father Bronson at Fruitlands, his utopian community in Harvard, Massachusetts. Since Bronson’s version of utopia was one in which the females did most of the work, Louisa’s memories of that time were not particularly pleasant ones. Utopia, it may be said, is all in the eye of the beholder.

What has come to be called dystopian literature explores the darker side of the utopian dream. These works describe what might happen if contemporary ideas, philosophies, technologies, or policies were to be practiced in the extreme. Their role is that of the cautionary tale rather than the directions for a better society. Dystopian classics include *Animal Farm* and *1984* by George Orwell, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *Player Piano* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin. *Raising the Stones* by Sheri S. Tepper and *Beggars in Spain* by Nancy Kress are two modern dystopian novels that appeal to adolescent readers.

Focus Your Knowledge

For over two thousand years, writers and philosophers have imagined an ideal world in which perfection reigns. This perfect world has come to be called utopia and the books, plays, and poetry that describe it, utopian literature. In more recent times, a type of antiutopian literature has developed. These works describe what is termed dystopia. Dystopian literature presents an imagined world in which seemingly innocent philosophies or systems are carried out to a harmful extreme.

- If you could create a perfect world, what would it be like?
- What can utopian/dystopian novels tell us about the world we live in now?
- Choose an issue in current events. Think about how that problem could be solved in your utopian world.
- Learn about a real life utopian community such as Fruitlands in Harvard, Massachusetts, or New Harmony, Indiana. What worked and what didn't work? Why did it fail? Would you have wanted to live there? Why or why not?
- Writers of dystopian literature usually are alarmed by the potential for harm posed by certain ideas, technologies, or practices. Think of a present-day idea, technology, or practice. Write a brief description of the dystopian world in which it is carried to a harmful extreme.

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Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

squat—low and broad

rasping—a harsh, grating sound

ironic—darkly humorous

unison—two or more speakers speaking the same words together

rituals—any procedures faithfully or regularly followed

apprehensive—anxious or uneasy about something in the future

depth—deepness; intensity

honor—respect or distinction

hoarded—saved to use later

solemn—very serious

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Newchild refers to all babies born within a given calendar year and matched with a family.

Nurturers attend to the newchild's needs before it is given to a family.

The **Naming**, also called The Ceremony of One, is the annual December ceremony in which all newchildren are given to their chosen families and given an assigned name.

The **Ceremony of Twelve** is the last and most important ceremony held each December. It marks the end of childhood.

The **Committee of Elders** make and enforce all the rules and assignments for the community.

The **December** is the most important Elder, lives and works alone.

An **Assignment** is one's lifetime job, announced during the Ceremony of Twelve.

A **comfort object** is the particular stuffed animal that each child is allowed until the age of eight.

Birthmothers are the women assigned to give birth to all the children in the community. Each produces three babies in three years, after which she spends the rest of her working life doing manual labor.

The **House of the Old** is where the elderly members of the community live.

A **tunic** is a long, loose-fitting shirt, required clothing for Jonas and his groupmates.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why is using exactly the right word so important in Jonas's community?
2. Jonas says he is "apprehensive" about the upcoming Ceremony of Twelve. How do his actions show this?
3. What does the Sharing of Feelings tell about the individual members of Jonas's family?
4. Why do you think the community has so many rules and rituals regarding the developmental stages and milestones of childhood? What benefit might they serve?
5. How does the information that animals are now only fanciful, make-believe creatures make you feel? What does it tell about the community?

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Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “It was not a **squat**, fat-bellied cargo plane but a needle-nosed, single-pilot jet.”
squat: _____
2. “IMMEDIATELY, the **rasping** voice through the speakers had said.”
rasping: _____
3. “There was an **ironic** tone to that final message, as if the Speaker found it amusing; and Jonas smiled a little, though he knew what a grim statement it had been.”
ironic: _____
4. “‘We accept your apology, Asher.’ The class recited the standard response in **unison**.”
unison: _____
5. “It was one of the **rituals**, the evening telling of feelings.”
rituals: _____
6. “But there was a little shudder of nervousness when he thought about it, about what might happen. ‘**Apprehensive**,’ Jonas decided. That’s what I am.”
apprehensive: _____
7. “Now, seeing the newchild and its expression, he was reminded that the light eyes . . . gave the one who had them a certain look—what was it? **Depth**, he decided; as if one were looking into the clear water of the river, down to the bottom, where things might lurk which hadn’t been discovered yet.”
depth: _____
8. “I hope you’re assigned to be a Birthmother. Lily! Mother spoke very sharply. ‘Don’t say that. There’s very little **honor** in that Assignment.’”
honor: _____
9. “. . . SNACKS ARE TO BE EATEN, NOT **HOARDED**. . . .”
hoarded: _____
10. “The evening proceeded as all evenings did. . . . It was different only in the addition to it of the newchild with his pale, **solemn**, knowing eyes.”
solemn: _____

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Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- Who is Asher?
 - Jonas's neighbor
 - Jonas's coach
 - Jonas's best friend
- Which word does Jonas choose to describe his feelings about the Ceremony of Twelve?
 - apprehensive
 - frightened
 - excited
- How old is Lily?
 - She is a Five.
 - She is a Six.
 - She is a Seven.
- What is Father's job?
 - judge
 - nurturer
 - doctor
- What is the name of new child number Thirty-six?
 - Michael
 - Benjamin
 - Gabriel
- What is received at the Ceremony of Nine?
 - a bicycle
 - a comfort object
 - a book bag
- Who makes the Assignments for the Ceremony of Twelve?
 - the parents
 - the Elders
 - the Instructor of Elevens
- What had Jonas once taken from the Recreation Area?
 - a ball
 - an apple
 - Asher's bicycle
- Where does Fiona spend her volunteer hours?
 - the Birthing Center
 - the Rehabilitation Center
 - the House of the Old
- What happened to Roberto?
 - He moved to Florida.
 - He was released.
 - He accepted an Assignment in another community.

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Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. What is the evening telling of feelings?
2. What do animals represent to Jonas and the others in his community?
3. When is release not meant as a punishment?
4. Of all the rules, which one is almost always broken?
5. Who is the most important Elder?
6. Which job does Mother consider the most important in their community?
7. Why is Jonas worried about Asher's Assignment?
8. Why is age no longer important after the Ceremony of Twelve?
9. What does Lily mean when she says that Jonas and Gabriel have "funny" eyes?
10. How does Larissa describe Roberto's attitude toward his release?

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Deepen Your Understanding

Foreshadowing refers to elements of the story that give the reader the sense that something is going to happen. Describe the sense of foreshadowing that Lois Lowry creates in Chapter 1. Do you think something good or something bad is going to happen? Give specific examples from the story to explain your answer.

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