

Example Literary Essay: The Giver by Lois Lowry

Example Introduction Paragraph:

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” This quote by Marcel Proust speaks of discovering what’s right in front of you by seeing it differently, with “new eyes.” The main character, Jonas, in Lois Lowry’s The Giver goes through a similar experience when he discovers his “Capacity to See Beyond.” Jonas begins to see his Community differently, with an awareness or mindfulness that most people in the Community have lacked. Mindfulness, in fact, is one of central themes in The Giver. Although the book begins with what seems to be a perfect place, it turns out that the people in the Community are living shallow and superficial lives. As Jonas begins his work as the Receiver of Memories, he gains wisdom and through that wisdom, learns that in protecting the Community from the memories, their lives have lacked feeling and understanding. In the end, Jonas learns to value his new way of seeing and chooses to risk everything to restore mindfulness and wisdom to everyone in the Community.

Example Body Paragraph for First Argument (Main Point #1):

The people in Jonas’s Community share their feelings with family members in their dwellings each evening. However, the feelings they share are merely surface feelings shared by mindless people numbly going about their day, shallow and superficial. For example, when Lily expressed anger over the incident at the park with the boy from another community who did not follow the rules, it was not truly anger. Instead, Jonas realized, she felt “impatience and exasperation” (pages 131-132), and her feelings were relieved instantly after sharing them with her family. Also, after receiving a memory of a family celebrating Christmas, Jonas asked his father, “Do you love me?” His father replied with a chuckle, surprised Jonas used such a meaningless word. He suggested it would be more appropriate to consider whether he “enjoys” Jonas or takes “pride in his accomplishments” (page 127).

Example Body Paragraph for Second Argument (Main Point #2):

In the beginning of the story, Jonas seems like most of the other people in the Community, obediently following the rules. When something unexpected happened, like in a flashback description of the plane flying overhead, Jonas waited to be told what to do, before acting. “Jonas, looking around anxiously, had seen others—adults as well as children—stop what they were doing and wait, confused, for an explanation of the frightening event” (page 1). But as he receives the memories, the history of the Community, he learns about color, diversity, and war. From the red sleigh on the hill to the war scene where he watches a boy die, Jonas takes on memories that changes the way he sees his own world. He also takes on authentic feelings like joy, pain, grief, and love, feelings he had not known before. Jonas ends up with a longing to share the memories with the others, so that he can both deepen their understanding and make them mindful of how their lives are connected to the past. He tried passing on the memory of an elephant to Lily and the colors to Asher. When he recognizes a game they’re all playing, he stops it. “‘You had no way of knowing his... It’s a cruel game’” (page 134).

Example Body Paragraph for Third Argument (Main Point #3):

Ultimately, as Jonas grew to value his new way of seeing more and more, he decided to risk his life in attempt to restore mindfulness and wisdom to everyone in the Community. The idea seemed to evolve within him when he whispered to Gabe in their sleeping room about how different things could be if everyone saw colors and knew their grandparents. He told the sleeping new child that everyone could have the memories, and best of all, “There could be love” (pages 128-129). Then, he and The Giver carefully developed a dangerous plan to return the memories to everyone in the Community, so everyone could feel, so everyone could love, and so no one would be forced to hold all of the memories and be lonely (page 154). Finally, when Jonas learned Gabe was scheduled to be released, he chose to move quickly. After stealing food and his father’s bicycle, he fled with Gabe not only to restore mindfulness and wisdom to those he was leaving behind, but also to save the toddler’s life in the process (pages 165-166).

Example Concluding Paragraph:

Whether or not the Community learns to see themselves with new eyes is left up to the reader to decide. But as Jonas comes to his deepened understanding and new mindfulness, the reader is left with a new insight. **Mindfulness led Jonas from superficial feelings to a place of authentic love.** How can mindfulness lead the reader to recognize the places in his own life that are superficial? What experiences and new understandings might help open the reader to seeing with “new eyes?” And with whom will the reader share this new insight?