The GIVER

Lois Lowry’s famous tale of a tragic future world—and the teen who risks his life to save it.

ADAPTED BY SPENCER KAYDEN

CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play.

*Starred characters are major roles.

*NARRATORS 1, 2 & 3 (N1, N2, N3)

FIONA, a 16-year-old girl

*JONAS, a 16-year-old boy

MOTHER, Jonas’s mom

FATHER, Jonas’s dad

LILY, Jonas’s little sister

*CHIEF ELDER

ALL, to be read by the whole class

*THE GIVER, an old man

SEEING BEYOND

HEARING BEYOND

Now a hit movie!

ADAPTED FROM THE MOTION PICTURE THE GIVER, SCREENPLAY BY MICHAEL MITNICK AND ROBERT B. WEIDE, BASED ON THE NOVEL THE GIVER, WRITTEN BY LOIS LOWRY. PUBLISHED BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. COPYRIGHT ©2014 BY WALDEN MEDIA, LLC, AND ARC ENTERTAINMENT, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. USED BY PERMISSION.
Scene 1

N1: Jonas and Fiona ride their bikes down a perfectly manicured pathway.

FIONA: What Life Positions do you think we’ll get?

JONAS: You’re so good with new children, I’m sure you’ll be a Nurturer.

FIONA: What about you?

JONAS: I don’t think I fit anywhere.

N2: Jonas looks out at the dense wall of Mist that surrounds the Community.

JONAS: Why would it? The Community provides everything I need.

FIONA: But aren’t you curious what’s beyond the Mist?

JONAS: If he doesn’t grow, he will be Released to Elsewhere. Your turn, Jonas.

FATHER: Elsewhere. Your turn, Jonas.

MOTHER: What about you?

JONAS: =Harmony!

N3: Jonas looks at the map of the Community.

JONAS: Well, I guess I’m sort of... terrified.

FATHER: What will happen to it?

N2: Jonas rides to the current Receiver’s dwelling, a strange stone building at the edge of the Mist.

N3: Inside, Jonas stares in awe at towering shelves of books.

JONAS: Why?

FATHER: Why does his name tag say “Uncertain”?

MOTHER: New children are not given names until they are placed with a Family Unit.

FATHER: We’re going to look after this little guy until he gets bigger. (whispering) Be strong, Gabriel, or we’ll have to Release you.

JONAS: What was that?

N3: Jonas reaches out. Gabriel wraps his tiny hand around Jonas’s finger.

JONAS: It’s the Boundary of Memory. Forbidden.

N2: At Jonas’s dwelling, Father holds a tiny baby.

LILY: Why does his name tag say “Uncertain”?

FATHER: New children are not given names until they are assigned to a Life Position.

MOTHER: New children are not given names until they are placed with a Family Unit.

FATHER: We’re going to look after this little guy until he gets bigger. (whispering) Be strong, Gabriel, or we’ll have to Release you.

JONAS: What was that?

N3: Jonas places the baby on a crimson boat.

SEEING BEYOND: Suddenly, Jonas is standing alone in the woods. Plump, white snowflakes drift around him.

HEARING BEYOND: There is a CRUNCH as Jonas takes steps in the thick snow.

N3: Jonas’s eyes snap open.

JONAS: It’s called snow.

N2: Jonas waits to hear the Life Position assigned to him by the Community. People don’t make their own decisions in the Community. What is the reason for this?

Image: Jonas waits to hear the Life Position assigned to him by the Community.

Text: People don’t make their own decisions in the Community. What is the reason for this?
Scene 7

N1: One day, the Giver plays a lovely tune on a piano.
GIVER: This is called music. Listen to what it calls from inside of you.
SEEING BEYOND: Jonas is at a wedding—his wedding.
HEARING BEYOND: He and the bride are dancing and laughing.
JONAS (opening his eyes): My chest hurts, but . . . it’s good.
GIVER: That’s called love.
JONAS: Why would we get rid of love?
GIVER: Because emotions can’t be controlled. There’s heartbreak. There’s sorrow. (taking Jonas’s wrists) I’ll show you.
SEEING BEYOND: A mother elephant feeds its baby in the windswept grasslands.
HEARING BEYOND: Crack! Crack! Rifles shoot.
SEEING BEYOND: The young elephant drops in agony.
HEARING BEYOND: The mother roars with rage.
N2: Jonas opens his eyes. They are wet with tears.
JONAS: How can people be so cruel?
GIVER: People make bad decisions. You can see why.
N3: If there is neither good nor bad, what is there?
GIVER: Good question.

Scene 8

N3: Later, Jonas lies in the grass.
SEEING BEYOND: He sees the light penetrate the bright green leaves of a tree.
N1: Suddenly, Fiona is standing over him.
SEEING BEYOND: Jonas can now see that Fiona’s hair is bright red. But Fiona has no idea—she can see only in black and white.
FIONA: Jonas? Jonas, have you fallen? Do you need Immediate Help?
JONAS: No, I was just . . .
FIONA: Why are you smiling like that?
JONAS: The leaves . . . your hair . . .
FIONA: What is going on with you?
N2: Jonas stands up and seizes Fiona’s hands.
JONAS: Fiona, there is so much more to life!
N3: He begins to sing and spin Fiona around.

FIONA (giggling): What are we doing?
N1: He twirls Fiona faster and faster, until they fall down, laughing.
N2: A loud voice emanates from a nearby speaker.
CHIEF ELDER: Warning Issued: Fiona.
FIONA (shocked): You got me in trouble, Jonas!
N3: She runs off.
JONAS (quietly): It’s called dancing.

Scene 9

N1: The Chief Elder-summons the Giver.
CHIEF ELDER: Jonas is corrupting his friends and questioning Sameness.
GIVER: The Receiver’s job is to question everything.
CHIEF ELDER: No, the Receiver’s job is to hold in all the pleasure and pain. This is what keeps our people safe and content. If Jonas continues to break the Rules, we will have to find a new Receiver.
GIVER: And what . . . Release Jonas?
CHIEF ELDER: If it comes to that.

Scene 10

N2: As the months go by, Jonas receives memories of skyscrapers, dinosaur skulls, and many other wonders.
N3: He also learns of war and destruction and loss.
GIVER: Tell me if any of this proves too much for you.
JONAS: I want to know everything.
N1: The Giver pushes a button on the wall.
GIVER: Show this morning’s Release.
N2: A screen appears. Jonas’s father is placing twin babies on side-by-side scales.
FATHER: OK, who’s my chubby champion?
N1: Father inserts a syringe into the baby’s head and presses down. The squirming baby goes still.
FATHER: And you, Mr. One Unit Less: Bye-bye, little guy.
GIVER: The memories will give you courage.
N1: Father inserts a syringe into the baby’s head and presses down. The squirming baby goes still.
JONAS: That is what it means to “Release”? He killed that baby!
GIVER: He doesn’t know what “killed” means. You and I are the only ones who can understand.
JONAS: Then it’s OUR fault. People need the memories so they can understand. Because if you can’t feel, what’s the point of life?

Scene 11

N2: Jonas and his Family Unit are having dinner.
FATHER: Enjoy it, baby Gaby. This is your last night here.
JONAS: What do you mean?
MOTHER: Uncertain failed his Growing Test.
FATHER: He’s going to kill Gabe tomorrow. I’m leaving tonight, and I’m taking him with me. I need to find the Boundary of Memory—and cross it.
GIVER: The Boundary is far away. And you’re not ready.
CHIEF ELDER: Come with me.
GIVER: If the memories are released, chaos will return. I must stay to help the Community.
N2: The Giver grabs Jonas’s wrists.
SEEING BEYOND: Images flash of a man crossing a vast desert, a woman swimming through a mighty river.
HEARING BEYOND: Jonas hears a long-distance runner’s footsteps pounding against gravel.
GIVER: These memories will give you courage.

Scene 12

N1: Jonas speeds toward the wall of Mist and punches through it, disappearing from sight.
CHIEF ELDER (shocked): Release the drone planes!
N2: The Chief Elder storms into the Giver’s dwelling.
CHIEF ELDER: You gave him that map, didn’t you?
GIVER: I made it available. Jonas made the decision to restore people’s freedom.
CHIEF ELDER: Freedom? Imagine if we let people choose their spouse, their food, their job. They would choose wrong every single time.
GIVER: But we have stolen life from people. We are distant whispers of what once made us human.
CHIEF ELDER: We will find Jonas and we will stop him.

Scene 13

N3: Jonas, now on foot, clutches Gabriel as he struggles up a mountain. The hum of planes gets closer.
N1: Snowflakes begin to fall from the sky.
JONAS: We’re almost there, Gabe.
SEEING BEYOND: At the top, Jonas sees a bright-red sled. He climbs on with Gabriel and pushes off.
HEARING BEYOND: Whoosh! The sled picks up speed.
N2: Jonas wraps his arms around Gabriel. They rocket past the Boundary of Memory.
N3: Back in the Community, Father pauses. He cannot bring himself to Release the baby smiling up at him.
N1: Lily, at school, begins to hum a tune.
N2: And Fiona opens her arms and begins to dance.
Could *The Giver* Happen in Real Life?

Scientists say that erasing bad memories could soon become a reality.

By Jennifer Dignan

The futuristic world of *The Giver* is pretty terrifying. People see in black and white, no one falls in love, and everyone is expected to dress and behave in the same way. Perhaps most terrifying of all is that memories have been erased.

That got us thinking: Could memories be erased in real life?

The answer might surprise you. Erasing memories is swiftly moving out of the world of science fiction into the world of science fact. A team of scientists at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore recently discovered a chemical that can permanently delete the memory of a traumatic event.

So far, the chemical has been tested only in mice. But it is quite possible that one day, a memory-erasing drug for humans might be developed.

Think for a moment about the worst thing that has ever happened to you. If you could take a pill and erase that memory forever, would you?

Forget About It

We all have bad memories. But some people have memories that are so horrible that they interfere with their lives. Soldiers who have witnessed war and victims of violent crime, for example, can be tormented by their memories. They may develop post-traumatic stress disorder, a disease that causes severe anxiety, flashbacks, nightmares, anger, or depression. Learning to cope with such debilitating memories can take years of treatment, and some people never recover from their experiences.

For them, the ability to erase a memory could be truly lifesaving. “Erasing a memory and then everything bad built on that is an amazing idea,” says Kate Farinholt, director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Maryland.

It’s a Little Scary

Yet there are serious problems with the idea of erasing memories. “Completely deleting a memory . . . is a little scary,” says Farinholt. “How do you remove a memory without removing a whole part of someone’s life?”

Our experiences—the bad as well as the good—make us who we are. Each one helps us grow. Would losing a memory take away the wisdom gained from that experience? Would we become less compassionate? Less kind? Simply put, would erasing memories change who we are?

There are other concerns as well. What if, as one memory is erased, others are accidentally deleted? What if the pills were to fall into the wrong hands? Could crime victims be forced to take the drug to stop them from talking to the police? Would people act differently if they knew that they wouldn’t have to remember what they did?

Finally, where would we draw the line between a memory that is bad enough to erase and one that isn’t—and who would get to draw that line?

No one is suggesting that memory-erasing pills be sold on store shelves like aspirin. The idea is that doctors would prescribe these pills only to those who are truly crippled by their terrible experiences.

In the debate over memory-erasing drugs, at least one thing is for sure: There’s a lot to keep in mind.

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Imagine that Jonas has time-traveled to the present-day United States. A memory-erasing drug has just been developed. Write a short editorial, as Jonas, explaining his opinion about this drug. Send it to THE GIVER CONTEST. Five winners will get *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. See page 2 for details.