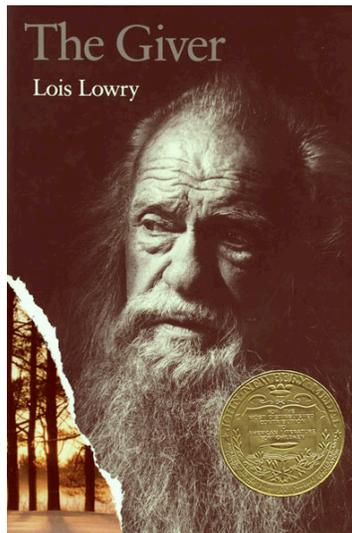


# The American Place Theatre

## *Literature to Life*

### Teacher's Resource Guide

A companion guide to the *Literature to Life* production of:



The Giver by Lois Lowry

## Pre-Show Activity: What is a Utopia?

**Bookmark:** Science Fiction

**Objective:** Students will understand the meaning of a utopia and create their own utopian societies building on significant features in our present-day society.

### Common Core Anchor Standards

**Reading Standard 11:** Respond to literature by employing knowledge of literary, textual features, and forms to read and comprehend, reflect upon, and interpret literary texts from a variety of genres and a wide spectrum of American and world cultures.

**Speaking & Listening Standard 1:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Character Education:** Examine one's own beliefs, thoughts, and feelings.

*Compiled from recommendations by New York and New Jersey State Departments of Education CHARACTER ED.*

### Procedures:

In *The Giver*, Lois Lowry introduces us to a utopian society set in the distant future. A utopia is an imaginary place, situated in a particular time and space, that is socially, morally, and politically ideal. The utopian writer is someone who closely examines his or her present society to determine its significant elements, and then asks: what if those significant elements were fully developed?

Next, students will brainstorm a list of "significant elements" of our present day society. What are the elements of our society that you would like to change in order to make the world safer, healthier, and happier for everyone?

Working in smaller groups, students will select the element of our society they would like to change. Using that element, groups will create their own special utopia. They must decide on a name for the place, and how they would change their chosen element so that it is more fully developed. For instance, if the element was healthcare, they may opt to make sure that everyone is screened at birth for any genetic disorders and cured while still in the womb. There may also be strict rules about how people eat, exercise, and how many hours they sleep each night.

Students should consider what the three most important rules are in their utopia, what are the consequences for breaking those rules, and who has the power in their utopia. At the completion of the activity, each group will present their utopia.

### Discussion Questions:

- Would you want to live in any of the societies described? Why or why not?

- In order for a utopia to function well, do you think there should be someone in control of the larger group? Or can a utopia also be a democracy?
- What happens when people challenge the rules of a utopian society?

### Pre-Show Activity: Objectivity

**Bookmark:** Semantics and the Use of Language

**Objective:** Students will understand that concrete and sensory language contributes to effective writing, and will write their own poems that demonstrate these writing strategies.

#### Common Core Anchor Standards:

*Writing Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.*

*Writing Standard 10: Write routinely over short time frames and over extended time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.*

*Language Standard 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*

#### Procedures:

Distribute and have students read aloud excerpts from *The Giver* in which Jonas describes snow, cold, and pain.

Discuss how Lois Lowry uses concrete and sensory-based language to have Jonas describe things he has never before experienced, things for which Jonas does not have a singular word label. Lois Lowry describes familiar things in new and original ways - she uses concrete nouns, words that describe things that tangibly exist and can be perceived with the 5 senses. Lowry also uses language that appeals to our 5 senses, words that describe what Jonas sees, hears, smells, tastes, and touches (or bodily sensations). This is a primary technique used by creative writers to help bring their *literature to life!*

#### Object Partner Share:

Students are instructed to select an object that they have either on their person or in their backpack. In pairs, while concealing the object from their partner students will share three things about the object. Focus on using sensory language to describe your object. Before revealing what the object is see if the partner can guess. Place the object in their hands, without them looking at it to see how they would describe it without having seen the object. Finally, partners reveal their objects.

#### Object Writing Exercise:

Next, students will sit down to begin writing about their object using some of the words they compiled in their object partner share. Write about the object using sensory language, concrete

nouns, and high action verbs. What does the object do, what is its purpose, how useful do you find it, what does it look like, and feel like? Students should describe the object without actually using the name of the object.

**Advanced:**

Students are assigned to bring in a photograph of themselves together with someone they love. Then, students must describe the photograph in writing. They cannot use any form of the word love. They can describe only what can physically and literally be seen in their photograph. If it is not visible to the eye, it cannot be written.

**Follow Up:**

Share these pieces as a group and ask students to identify their own and their peers' use of concrete nouns, high-action verbs, and sensory language. Ask students to evaluate these works and to assess how these criteria impacted the clarity, originality, and overall effectiveness of the writing

**Pre-Show Activity: Remote Control**

**Bookmark:** Manipulation and Censorship

**Objective:** Students will design, describe, and present a fantasy remote control device. They will personally connect to the concepts of manipulation and censorship, and interrogate their own ideas and beliefs about these concepts.

**Common Core Anchor Educational Standards:**

*Speaking & Listening Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*

*Speaking & Listening Standard 6: Adapt speech to variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.*

*NYS ART Standard 1: Performance Indicator – Imitate various experiences through pantomime, play making, dramatic play, story dramatization, storytelling, role-playing, improvisation, and guided play writing.*

**Procedures:**

Working in small groups of 4-5, students will design a remote control on a piece of paper. This remote control is a product of your imagination: it might cause things to occur, or it might prevent things from occurring; it might also function to reveal or conceal information, thoughts, or ideas. It's your remote; it can do just about anything you want it to! However, there are a few parameters you must consider in the design of your remote control:

1. Your remote control must have at least 5 different buttons. Each button performs a unique function, and each button must be clearly labeled.

2. Your remote control can only work on one of the following:
  - a. Self
  - b. Parents
  - c. Teachers
  - d. Friends
  - e. Siblings
  - f. A celebrity
  - g. The President of the United States
3. Create an instruction manual for your device, which describes the following:
  - a. Describe the specific function of each button on your remote control. What does each button do?
  - b. Explain why you have designed your remote control in this manner.
  - c. Imagine and describe both the positive and negative consequences that might occur when you use your remote control.
4. Give your device a unique name.
5. Create an advertisement and/or commercial to sell this amazing new product. What is the tagline or motto for your product? Students script, rehearse, and present their commercials.

**Discussion Questions:**

What would you change with your device?

How would you use your device? What would you do with it?

Is it ethical to use your device to control others?

How might you feel if someone used their remote to control you?

Are there ways in which others try to control you in real life?

Are there ways in which you try to control others in real life?

Are there words, images, or ideas that you are prevented from accessing?

Is it okay to prevent people from accessing words, images, or ideas? Why or why not?

**Pre-Show Activity: Cellitis!**

**Bookmark:** Individual versus Community

**Objective:** Students will engage in a dramatic scenario in which they consider the value of civil liberties and debate the role of personal freedoms within community contexts.

**Common Core Anchor Educational Standards:**

*Speaking & Listening Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*

*Speaking & Listening Standard 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.*

**Procedures:**

In *The Giver*, the Elders make all major decisions for members of the Community. Individual citizens do not participate in the rule-making process and it seems impossible to change any of the societal rules and constructs. In a democracy, however, citizens play a critical role in their own government by electing officials to make laws which reflect the will of the people. For instance, in the United States citizens elect members of Congress.

A fictitious scenario is presented to students as follows:

The year is 2020, scientists have discovered *Cellitis*: a new bio-digital disease transmitted through cell phones. Cellitis strikes young people between the ages of 10 and 18. It is transmitted from young person to young person during cell phone conversations. Usually, Cellitis causes a low-grade fever and fatigue, which lasts a week and then disappears. Most young people make a full recovery from the bio-digital disease. However, in a number of rare cases the disease can be quite serious.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) has developed a bio-tech vaccine that can prevent the spread of the disease. Parents, teachers, and other concerned adults have petitioned Congress to pass legislation that will allow the government to automatically deliver the vaccine to every young person in the country. The vaccination is delivered through the cell phone and can be administered without the knowledge of the cell phone user. The vaccine delivery mode also enables the government, as well as parents and teachers, to listen in on cell phone calls.

The teacher in-role as a community leader and key decision maker, will address half of the students as adults who are for the vaccine and half of the students as adults that are against it. The community leader has called a town hall meeting to have a debate on the vaccine and decide whether to continue administering it to the young people in the community.

First, each side will brainstorm a list of arguments to represent their position on the vaccine in preparation for the debate.

The teacher will serve as the debate moderator using the following questions to guide the debate. Similar to presidential debates, a coin toss will determine which side will speak first. Each side will be given a limited period of time to defend their point of view and to rebut their opponents' arguments.

**Debate Questions:**

- Should the needs of a few individuals (those stricken with severe Cellitis) outweigh the needs of the many (the right to privacy)?
- Is it fair to limit individual freedoms in order to ensure everyone's well-being?
- Is it okay to make choices for other people when it benefits society as a whole?
- Should adults make the decision as to whether the Cellitis vaccine should be delivered to all young people? Or, should young people, as a group, be able to make that decision for themselves?

## Post-Show Activity: Message in a Bottle

**Bookmark:** Individual and Community

**Objective:** Students will become familiar with Lois Lowry's life and work, and they will identify key information in a piece of autobiographical text. They will use autobiographical writing as a means to communicate their unique understanding of the world.

### **Common Core Anchor Standards:**

*Reading Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.*

*Writing Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences/events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.*

### **Discussion:**

Distribute a copy of Lois Lowry's biography to each student and ask students to take turns reading paragraphs of the biography aloud. While listening and reading along, students should circle key information and main ideas contained in the biography. Ask students focusing questions such as:

- What sort of child was Lois Lowry?
- Where did she live as a child? How do you think this affected her outlook on the world?
- What sort of education did Lois Lowry receive? What are the various ways that people can become educated? How might these contribute to a writer's work?
- What types of loss does Lois Lowry describe? How do you think these losses affected her?
- What does she mean when she says that people must "...be aware of their interdependence?"
- How does Lois Lowry wish to honor her son? Why do you think she wants to honor him in this manner?
- Based on her biography, what do you think Lois Lowry is most proud of?

## Lois Lowry, Biography

I've always felt that I was fortunate to have been born the middle child of three. My older sister, Helen, was very much like our mother: gentle, family-oriented, eager to please. Little brother Jon was the only boy and had interests that he shared with Dad; together they were always working on electric trains and erector sets; and later, when Jon was older, they always seemed to have their heads under the raised hood of a car. That left me in-between, and exactly where I wanted most to be: on my own. I was a solitary child who lived in the world of books and my own vivid imagination.

Because my father was a career military officer - an Army dentist - I lived all over the world. I was born in Hawaii, moved from there to New York, spent the years of World War II in my mother's hometown: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and from there went to Tokyo when I was eleven. High school was back in New York City, but by the time I went to college (Brown University in Rhode Island), my family was living in Washington, D.C.

I married young. I had just turned nineteen - just finished my sophomore year in college - when I married a Naval officer and continued the odyssey that military life requires. California. Connecticut (a daughter born there). Florida (a son). South Carolina. Finally Cambridge, Massachusetts, when my husband left the service and entered Harvard Law School (another daughter; another son) and then to Maine - by now with four children under the age of five in tow.

My children grew up in Maine. So did I. I returned to college at the University of Southern Maine, got my degree, went to graduate school, and finally began to write professionally, the thing I had dreamed of doing since those childhood years when I had endlessly scribbled stories and poems in notebooks.

After my marriage ended in 1977, when I was forty, I settled into the life I have lived ever since. Today I am back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, living and writing in a house dominated by a very shaggy Tibetan Terrier named Bandit. For a change of scenery Martin and I spend time in Maine, where we have an old (it was built in 1768!) farmhouse on top of a hill. In Maine, I garden, feed birds, entertain friends, and read.

My books have varied in content and style. Yet it seems that all of them deal, essentially, with the same general theme: the importance of human connections. *A Summer to Die*, my first book, was a highly fictionalized retelling of the early death of my sister, and of the effect of such a loss on a family. *Number the Stars*, set in a different culture and era, tells the same story: that of the role that we humans play in the lives of our fellow beings.

*The Giver* - and *Gathering Blue*, and the newest in the trilogy: *Messenger* - take place against the background of very different cultures and times. Though all three are broader in scope than my earlier books, they nonetheless speak to the same concern: the vital need of people to be aware of their interdependence, not only with each other, but with the world and its environment.

My older son was a fighter pilot in the United States Air Force. His death in the cockpit of a warplane tore away a piece of my world. But it left me, too, with a wish to honor him by joining the many others trying to find a way to end conflict on this very fragile earth.

I am a grandmother now. For my own grandchildren - and for all those of their generation - I try, through writing, to convey my passionate awareness that we live intertwined on this planet and that our future depends upon our caring more, and doing more, for one another.

**Procedure:**

Look closely at the last paragraph of Lois Lowry’s biography. Imagine that you are a very old grandparent. You have a newborn grandchild. You wish to write a letter to your grandchild to be read when the child is much older. You must convey to your grandchild what you believe is most important and most needed to make the world a better place. Address some of these questions in your letter:

- What have you accomplished in your more than ninety years of life?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you think are the biggest problems in the world today?
- How do you think we might solve some of these problems?
- What advice do you have for your grandchild about how to improve the world?
- How should people treat one another?
- What can people learn from each other?
- What have you learned from the important people in your life?

**Post-Show Activity: The Jonas Journal**

**Bookmark:** Ethical Dilemmas

**Objective:** Students will make personal connections with ethical dilemmas presented in *The Giver* by writing from the perspective of the story’s protagonist. They will evaluate the ramifications and consequences of civil disobedience.

**Common Core Anchor Standards:**

**Writing Standard 3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences/events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Language Standard 1:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**Character Education:** Express their own beliefs, thoughts, and feelings.

**Procedures:**

In *The Giver*, Jonas says the following:

“That night I flee. The community where my entire life has been lived lies behind me now, sleeping. At dawn, the life I had always known will continue again without me, the life where nothing was ever unexpected or incontinent or unusual—the life without color, pain, or past. I bicycle along the road. I think of the rules I have broken so far. If I’m caught, I’ll be condemned. First, I left the dwelling at night. Second, I robbed the community of food. Third, I’ve stolen my father’s bicycle; it was necessary because it has the child’s seat attached to the back, and I had taken Gabriel too.”

Imagine that it is earlier that same day. Jonas has just returned home from school. He enters his room and removes his secret journal from underneath his bed. He is confused and unsure what he should do about his situation. He opens the journal and begins to write his thoughts and feelings.

Students will place themselves in Jonas' shoes, write this journal entry in which you will discuss the rules you might break, your reasons for considering these drastic actions, and the possible consequences of your actions. What are you thinking and feeling about your *ethical dilemma*?

### **Post-Show Activity: Career Time Warp**

**Bookmark:** Goals and Aspirations

**Objective:** Students will compare and contrast *The Giver* with other works in this genre, which explore the career goals and aspirations of young people. They will consider this analysis as they envision their future careers.

**Common Core Anchor Standards:**

**Writing Standard 3:** *Writing narratives to develop real or imagined experiences/events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.*

**Speaking & Listening Standard 2:** *Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, and orally.*

**NYS ART Standard 1: Performance Indicator – Use language, voice, gesture, movement, and observation to create character and interact with others in improvisation, rehearsal, and performance.**

**Character Education:** *Demonstrate an understanding of how to turn ideas into action.*

### **Procedures:**

Lois Lowry's companion books to *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, and *Messenger*, provide opportunities to extend and enhance student learning. Building a dialogue between two pieces of literature can deepen and enrich the themes and resonances of both works.

Likewise, related works of literature by other authors provide opportunities to compare and contrast narrative meanings and writers' unique voices. Lois Lowry's *The Giver* was, in many respects, a trailblazer, introducing young readers to anti-utopian and dystopian themes later explored in books such as Neal Shusterman's *Downsiders*, as well as Jeanne DuPrau's *City of Ember* and its subsequent film adaptation.

Students can view the first scene or entire film of *City of Ember*. Like *The Giver*, *City of Ember* begins with a ceremony in which young people are assigned particular jobs within their communities. Use this context to initiate class discussion.

**Questions:**

- What jobs are assigned in *The Giver* and what jobs are assigned in *City of Ember*?
- How are job assignments determined in *The Giver* versus *City of Ember*?
- Which approach do you think is most beneficial to society?
- How do the young people in each story feel about their job assignments?
- How are the types of job assignments in *The Giver* similar or dissimilar to those in *City of Ember*?
- What do the types of jobs discussed in these stories say about the societies in each story?
- How do the various jobs offered to young people reflect the values of the societies in which they live?
- How does this compare or contrast to the ways we determine our career paths in the real world?
- What should we take into consideration as we figure out our career paths?

Ask students to identify their desired career or to list a few possible careers that interest them.

Then consider these questions:

- What types of activities or tasks do people do in this career?
- Where do people in this career usually work?
- What excites you about this career?
- What seems most interesting about this career?
- What would be the best thing about this career?
- What would be challenging about this career?
- Which school subjects would be helpful to me in this career?
- Which afterschool activities or clubs might help prepare me for this career?
- Where could I find more information about this career?
- What books, magazines, movies, or television programs would inform me about this career?
- Which adults might I talk with to learn more about this career?
- Where might I do volunteer work to become more familiar with this career?

After this research, each student will write a monologue as their future self speaking to their younger self. Their adult self has worked in their chosen career for several years and offers their younger self “the real deal” about the triumphs and the trials of working in this particular career.

These monologues can be collaged into a classroom performance; students can reflect upon the various aspects of their goals and aspirations that were illuminated through this activity.

**Post-Show Activity: Timeline of Tomorrow**

**Bookmark:** Science Fiction

**Objective:** Students will consider crucial historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and apply that information to literary critical analysis.

***Common Core Anchor Standards:***

***Reading Standard 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.***

***Writing Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences/events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.***

***Speaking & Listening Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.***

***Speaking & Listening Standard 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.***

**Procedures:**

For the sake of the activity, it is determined that *The Giver* is set in the year 2499. It is December 20, 2499 and we are preparing for holiday break. We live in a one-of-a-kind, alternative society located far outside of the Communities, in the beyond of the Elsewhere. We are, however, quite familiar with the tightly controlled world of the Communities.

In recognition of our upcoming New Year and Mid-Millennium (2500) festivities, the teacher asks students to create a timeline tracing major historic events, beginning at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1900) through to the end of the 25<sup>th</sup> century (2499). (Depending upon grade and functioning level, this activity may be limited to individual state, U.S., or world history.)

Students must identify and explain key historic events that have contributed to the type of society depicted in *The Giver*. Students must determine and describe at least 3 critical events that have occurred in each century from 1900 to the year 2500.

After a class brainstorming session about the critical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, students can work in small groups of 3 to 5. Each working group will create its time line on sheets of flip chart paper, using color markers to identify, differentiate, and explain the key historic events in each century leading to the present day in the year 2499. One approach would be for each student in a group to be responsible for a particular century or centuries. However, the group would need to coordinate its efforts to ensure solid cause and effect relationships between the historic events.

The critical question here is: What kinds of events (social, political, economic, technological, cultural, etc.) might be catalysts for the establishment of the society depicted in *The Giver*? Furthermore, students could be required to include references and quotations from the text of *The Giver*. These citations would accompany each historical event to support, defend, and illustrate

the relationships between past and future. Students investigate how, if at all, today's events determine tomorrow's outcomes.

Each working group may then present its timeline to the full class. The teacher can facilitate collaboration amongst classmates to incorporate each group's timeline into one full class timeline, which illustrates and explains the historic events that occurred from 1900 to 2500. This can become a significant classroom installation by attaching historical event descriptions to a three-dimensional timeline using materials such as clothesline, clothes pins, binder clips, and art supplies. Multimedia, arts, and research presentations can be incorporated to approach this learning activity through multiple intelligences. Digital media, video, illustrations, images, photographs, charts/graphs, written analyses, interviews, case studies, artifacts, music, dance, drama, food, clothing, and other cultural artifacts could supplement the installation to create a living timeline that classroom visitors can explore via a gallery walk or performative event.