



Lois Lowry

TeachingBooks Original Movie Transcript

Lois Lowry, interviewed by Houghton Mifflin in her Cambridge, Massachusetts home.

This is a transcript of the movie available on TeachingBooks.net. It is offered here to give you a quick assessment of the program topics, as well as to enable people with auditory disabilities access to the words.

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I know that there are writers who are very organized and who make outlines, and they know when they type page 1 what's going to happen on page 17 and page 133. I'm not one of those people. I know only what the general theme is going to be. The rest of it I make up as I go along. Each thing that happens depends upon the previous things that happen. That's what a plot consists of. Like putting a puzzle together. It's a complicated and it's a time-consuming procedure, but for somebody like me who loves to sit in a room all by myself, and play with words, it's the most rewarding kind of thing I could do.

Creating *The Giver*

I had always been interested in the subject of memory. I began to think about my father, who had forgotten all the sad things that had ever happened, and my mother who remembered them so vividly. And I began to think, as a writer does, the phrase, "What if?" What if there were a way that we could give someone a pill or an injection, perhaps, and cause them to lose all their sad memories. Would that be a good thing?

I had first to create a protagonist. I decided it would be a boy. I named him Jonas. He is almost 12 years old. Something is about to happen to him. He lives in a place... "Uh oh," I thought, "It's got to be in the future." Because I had decided that he would live in a place where people, maybe the leaders of his world, had found a way to manipulate and control memory, it had to be set in the future. That unnerved me, for a moment, because I've never been a writer, or even a reader, of science fiction. However, what I do love doing is creating a world. So I did away, in the world of Jonas, with crime, war, poverty, divorce, drugs. I did away also with discrimination, with racism, all of the things that cause our world to be troubled and frightening. I tried to seduce the reader, to lure the reader into thinking this was a terrific place, and it wasn't until maybe a third of the way through that I began dropping hints that something was wrong, that there was an underbelly to such a world.

I left the ending ambiguous. People are mad at me about that. I've tried to compensate for it by the book *Gathering Blue*, and a new one called *Messenger*, which explains, in fact, what has happened to Jonas and to Gabriel and to the girl, Kira, from the book *Gathering Blue*.

Reaction to *The Giver*

Once the Newbery Medal was awarded, the letters began to come in — thoughtful, provocative letters from people to whom the book had meant something enormous. And the mail kept coming and coming, and it began to come from other countries when the book was published in other languages.

[Reading a sample letter.] “Your book means so very much to me. It changed my life when I read it for the first time in seventh grade. It changed my life when I read it in high school. It changed my life when I read it freshman year of college, and it changed me again when I read it last year, my sophomore year. I look forward to reading it again this year. I look forward to reading your book for the rest of my life.”

Certainly, it’s fair to say that *The Giver* has changed my life as well, and it’s very gratifying to know that it has done that for others.

Books by Lois Lowry

All titles published by Houghton Mifflin.

- GOONEY THE FABULOUS (illustrated by Middy Thomas), 2007
- GOSSAMER, 2006
- GOONEY BIRD AND THE ROOM MOTHER (illustrated by Middy Thomas), 2005
- MESSENGER, 2004
- SILENT BOY, THE, 2003
- GOONEY BIRD GREENE (illustrated by Middy Thomas), 2002
- GATHERING BLUE, 2000
- ZOOMAN SAM (illustrated by Diane de Groat), 1999
- LOOKING BACK: A BOOK OF MEMORIES, 1998
- STAY!: KEEPER’S STORY (illustrated by True Kelley), 1997
- SEE YOU AROUND, SAM! (illustrated by Diane de Groat), 1996
- ANASTASIA, ABSOLUTELY, 1995
- GIVER, THE, 1993
- ATTABOY, SAM! (illustrated by Diane de Groat), 1992
- ANASTASIA AT THIS ADDRESS, 1991
- YOUR MOVE, J.P.!, 1990
- NUMBER THE STARS, 1989
- ALL ABOUT SAM (illustrated by Diane de Groat), 1988
- ANASTASIA’S CHOSEN CAREER, 1987
- RABBLE STARKEY, 1987
- ANASTASIA HAS THE ANSWERS, 1986
- ANASTASIA ON HER OWN, 1985
- SWITCHAROUND, 1985
- ANASTASIA, ASK YOUR ANALYST, 1984
- US AND UNCLE FRAUD, 1984
- ONE HUNDREDTH THING ABOUT CAROLINE, THE, 1983
- TAKING CARE OF TERRIFIC, 1983
- ANASTASIA AT YOUR SERVICE (decorations by Diane de Groat), 1982
- ANASTASIA AGAIN! (decorations by Diane de Groat), 1981
- AUTUMN STREET, 1980
- ANASTASIA KRUPNIK, 1979
- FIND A STRANGER, SAY GOODBYE, 1978

- SUMMER TO DIE, A (illustrated by Jenni Oliver), 1977

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