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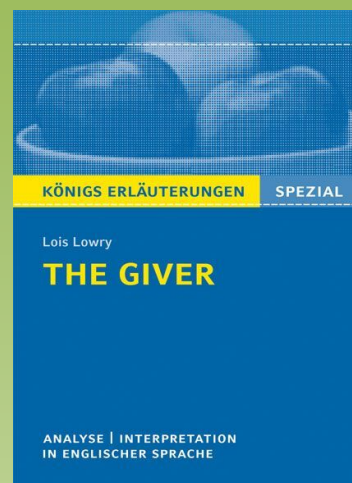
Unterrichtsmaterialien in digitaler und in gedruckter Form

Auszug aus:

Lois Lowry: The Giver - Textanalyse und Interpretation

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1. AT A GLANCE – THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS

This study guide to Lois Lowry's *The Giver* is designed to provide an easy-to-use overview of the structure, context, themes and characters of the novel. Here is a quick rundown of the most important points.

Part 2 takes a brief look at **Lois Lowry and her career**.

- ⇒ p. 9 → Lowry was **born in Hawaii in 1937**. Her father worked for the **US military**, so like many other military families they moved around the world a lot from base to base.
- ⇒ p. 11 → She wrote her first novel in 1977 and *The Giver* in the early 1990s. Its **contemporary background** is interesting but actually less relevant to the book itself than is frequently the case, in particular for dystopias or SF.

Part 3 provides analyses and interpretations of the novel.

***The Giver* – Origins and Sources:**

- ⇒ p. 23 We have in Lowry's 1994 *Newbery Medal* acceptance speech an unusually detailed and open discussion of the precise influences and inspirations which combined to form *The Giver*.

Summaries:

- ⇒ p. 30 Jonas is about to turn 12, at which point he and all other children his age will be given their Assignments, telling them what their future role in society will be. He is selected as Receiver of Memory, an unique and mysterious position. He trains with an old man called The Giver who is the only person in the community who has access

to the knowledge and memories of the past. Jonas learns that his world has decided to give up on or control everything which can potentially cause conflict or limit efficiency. This includes many bad things, like war, hunger, unemployment or chaotic social systems, but also things like colours, weather, love, family and individuality. Jonas becomes increasingly sceptical about the nature of this society until he finally sees that euthanasia is used to kill all unwanted or “inadequate” citizens in the community. He takes his baby brother Gabriel and escapes from the community.

Structure:

The Giver is a linear, chronological narrative told from Jonas’ perspective. The book is short and divided into 23 chapters. ⇒ p. 42

Characters:

There are really only two characters in the book, **Jonas and The Giver**. All other characters are limited by the social conditioning and the medication they take and are more like robots or pets than real individuals.

- **Jonas** – becomes 12 years old at the start of the book. An intelligent, brave boy with a great capacity for empathy. ⇒ p. 50
- **The Giver** – an old man who is feeling the burden of the memories he must keep and the pain he must carry alone. He is tired and sad. ⇒ p. 53
- **Jonas’ family** (mother, father, his sister Lily and baby Gabriel) ⇒ p. 54
- **Further characters:**
 - Fiona and Asher** (childhood friends of Jonas), **Rosemary** and **the Chief Elder**. ⇒ p. 56

Themes:

- ⇒ p. 60 The major themes we will look at in this study guide are **control, pain, Sameness and diversity, memory** (history and the past) and **choice**. Another major theme is **human connections**.

Style and Language:

- ⇒ p. 87 This is a particularly important aspect of the novel, because one of the major methods by the dystopian society in the novel to control the people is “precision of language”. The horrific secrets are hidden by euphemisms: truth and the very nature of reality is hidden or manipulated by the use of specific language.

Interpretation:

- ⇒ p. 99 → The book can be interpreted in the context of at least three genres to which it belongs – Young Adult fiction, science fiction and dystopian fiction.
- ⇒ p. 105 → There has been a major film adaptation (in 2014), which allows us a different perspective on the story and its themes.
- ⇒ p. 107 → Other ideas about interpretations of *The Giver*

2.1 Biography

2. LOIS LOWRY: LIFE & WORKS

2.1 Biography

YEAR	PLACE	EVENT	AGE
1937	Honolulu/ Hawaii (USA)	20th of March: Lois (originally Cena) Lowry is born. She is the middle child of three. Her parents are Norwegian (father) and German, English, Scots-Irish (mother).	
1939	Brooklyn/New York (USA)	Her father was a dentist in the US military and like many military families, they had to move often. This was the first relocation of Lois' life.	2
1942	Carlisle/ Pennsylvania (USA)	When her father had to serve on a hospital ship in the Pacific during World War 2, the rest of the family moved back to Lois' mother's hometown.	5
1948– 1950	Tokyo (Japan)	Her father was stationed in Japan and the family lived on a military base for a couple of years. Lois returned to the US to attend high school.	11–13
1954– 1956	Providence/ Rhode Island (USA)	Lois studied at Pembroke College for two years until she married Donald Lowry.	17–19



Lois Lowry
(*1937)
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Moore¹

1 2016 Larry D. Moore CC BY-SA 4.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lois_Lowry_2016.jpg

2.1 Biography

YEAR	PLACE	EVENT	AGE
1956– 1972	Many locations	Donald Lowry was also in the US military and the young family (Lois was to have 4 children during the early years of their marriage) moved often during this period, as he was stationed at different military bases around the country. They eventually settled after his retirement in Portland, Maine, where Lois finished her studies and graduated from the University of Southern Maine with a degree in English Literature.	19–35
1963	Washington D.C. (USA)	Lois' older sister Helen dies of cancer, aged 28. This event inspires her first novel.	26
1977	Maine (USA)	Lowry is commissioned by the publisher Houghton Mifflin to write a book, which becomes her first published novel, <i>A Summer to Die</i> . Lois and Donald divorce.	40
1979	Boston/ Massachusetts (USA)	After her divorce Lois moved to live and work in Boston.	42
1990	Chicago (USA)	<i>Newbery Award</i> for the novel <i>Number the Stars</i> .	53
1993	Boston (USA)	<i>The Giver</i> is published.	56
1994	Chicago (USA)	Second <i>Newbery Award</i> for <i>The Giver</i>.	57
1995	Spangdahlem Air Base/ Rheinland-Pfalz (Germany)	Her second son Grey, a pilot in the US Air Force, is killed when his plane crashes. Lois describes this event as the most difficult day of her life.	58
2014	New York	Film adaptation of <i>The Giver</i>.	77
2018	Massachusetts and Maine (USA)	Lowry currently lives in the US states of Massachusetts and Maine.	81

2.2 Contemporary Background

Capitalism vs.
Communism

What is true of the period, however, is that with the end of the Cold War a universal sense of dread and doom was suddenly gone – the world no longer seemed to be a potential battlefield between nuclear-armed superpowers representing capitalism and Communism. This sense of dread and monolithic antagonism had fuelled a lot of pop culture, from British pop band *Frankie Goes to Hollywood*'s song *Two Tribes* (1984) to the spy novels of John le Carré and successful, but deeply chauvinistic **America = good / Russia = bad** films like *Red Dawn* (1984) and *Rocky IV* (1985). With the collapse of the Russian “evil empire” (a term used by US President Ronald Reagan in 1983 to describe the Soviet Union²) and the apparent “end of history”, pop culture changed as well.

It became much less political: the eras of Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1979–1990, and Ronald Reagan, US president from 1981–1989, were both very conservative and pro-capitalism. **Their administrations were both extremely polarising** in their respective countries, and triggered energetic subcultural and alternative culture movements, including punk, US hardcore punk, the social-realist cinema of filmmakers like Mike Leigh and Ken Loach, and a general willingness and need for art and pop culture to engage actively and confrontationally with politics. With the end of the era of the Cold War and Cold Warriors like Thatcher and Reagan, this political energy vanished from pop culture, and an era of curiosity, fusion, and non-political hedonism began.

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do0x-Egc6oA>

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