English 1201: The Giver

Model Demand Essay Response

In the novel *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry, one of the major themes developed involves the realization that the choices we make in life have serious consequences both for the individual making the choices, as well as those around him/her. There is a great responsibility associated with one’s ability to make choices. In the novel, Jonas, the Giver, and Rosemary are three characters who make decisions that have positive and negative implications, both for themselves and the citizens in the whole Sameness community. It is through the choices of these characters that the audience learns more about the characters and what motivates them to act in particular ways.

To begin, it is essential to first look at Jonas’ choices in the novel as they are arguably the most significant. This is because this novel follows the growth/maturity of a young boy, Jonas, as he comes to terms with the reality that his “perfect” community of Sameness is not so perfect after all. As Jonas embraces his position as the new Receiver of Memories, he naively accepts a great burden of responsibility. Throughout his training, one of the most important choices Jonas makes comes when he offers to take away some of the Giver’s pain. It is through this compassionate choice that Jonas receives the memory of war. As a consequence of this decision, Jonas must endure both physical and emotional pain as he lies cold, scared, and dirty on the battlefield with a broken arm. He hears young men screaming for their mothers, screams of horses whinnying with fear, and a young injured boy (who is Jonas’ age) pleading for some water. It is through this memory that Jonas witnesses the cruelest, most inhumane image of humanity. Upon receiving this memory, Jonas must make another choice. He must decide whether or not to return to his training, as it is his duty to do so. When he does courageously return, it becomes apparent to the audience that Jonas will continue to protect his fellow citizens from these memories, at least until another opportunity presents itself. This opportunity does indeed arise at the end of the novel when Jonas must decide whether or not to escape the community. In doing so, Jonas would knowingly release all of the memories that had been transferred to him to the citizens. Consequently, Jonas knows that his escape will initially cause the community pain, ultimately Jonas knows this is the right choice because it will allow the community to break free of the oppression of Sameness. This oppression represented by the “stirring” pills, lack of color, job assignments, arranged marriages, and absence of emotions is a majorly deceptive problem in Jonas’ eyes, and he acts because he knows they will live better lives as a result; lives that may one day even include love. Evidently, through both of these choices, Jonas affected his community in both positive and negative ways.

Similarly, the choices that the Giver makes throughout the novel also have positive and negative implications for himself and the rest of the community. One of the most significant choices the Giver makes throughout the novel is to suggest and encourage Jonas to watch the release of the smallest identical twin that is being carried out by Jonas’ father. In making Jonas aware that he is allowed to watch the release and encouraging him to do so, the Giver reveals to Jonas the true cruelty of humanity in their community of Sameness, and the absolute ignorance of the citizens as they go about their merry way mindlessly doing what the Elders have supported as “normal”. This experience is particularly traumatic because Jonas becomes aware that his father is just as naively inhumane as everyone else. “He did it! He did it!” Jonas cries out in shock. This experience convinces Jonas more than anything that Sameness needs to change and he comes to realize that he must be the one to change it. Another decision that has far reaching positive and negative consequences is when the Giver decides to help Jonas escape. The Giver sees Jonas’ bravery and innocent determination to help the community as an opportunity for positive change. Though he may get in trouble with the Committee of Elders, he knows that this is the right thing to do. He knows the citizens will experience terrible emotional and physical pain, so he chooses to sacrifice himself and his happiness by remaining in the community to help the citizens cope with the memories. It is his duty to protect and serve his community, and by staying home, he does just that.

Paragraph 3: Rosemary … TRY IT YOURSELF!

* Decision to choose release…how did it affect the community?
* Decision to be the one to release herself… how did it affect the community?

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It is quite apparent that the characters developed in the novel *The Giver* were burdened with the immense responsibility of making significant choices that not only affected themselves, but the community as a whole in both positively and negatively. Jonas was able to mature through his choices to remain the Receiver, and then escape the community for the betterment of the Sameness citizens. So too did the Giver’s decision to reveal the release and remain in the community have positive and negative effects. Likewise, Rosemary’s decisions to choose release and free herself had far-reaching implications. As a result of the evidence presented by Lois Lowry, it is critical that the audience walks away from this novel understanding that there are serious consequences associated with the choices they make as well.