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**From the
Newbery Award-winning
book by Lois Lowry**

The Giver

Adapted by Eric Coble



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The Giver

Drama. Adapted by Eric Coble from the Newbery Award-winning book by Lois Lowry. Cast: 4m., 4w., extras as desired or 4m., 2w. with doubling, extras as desired. "A grand morality tale with a magical quality." (*Pegasus News*, Dallas) Jonas' world is perfect. Everything is under control and safe. There is no war or fear or pain. There are also no choices. Every person is assigned a role in the community. But when Jonas turns 12, he is chosen for special training from The Giver—to receive and keep the memories of the community. The Giver is the only person who holds the memories of real pain and real joy. Now Jonas will learn the truth about life—and the hypocrisy of his utopian world. Through this astonishing and moving adaptation, discover what it means to grow up, to grow wise, and to take control of your own destiny. *The Giver* has played to sold-out audiences at such theatres as: Oregon Children's Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, The Coterie Theatre, People's Light and Theatre Company, Dallas Children's Theater, Stages Repertory, Nashville Children's Theatre, Lexington Children's Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Florida Repertory Theatre, and Indiana Repertory Theatre. "An absorbing production that asks both children and adults compelling questions about how we want our world to be." (*The Oregonian*) "There are lessons for those of every age in this compelling adaptation." (*Sarasota Magazine*) "Questions are imaginatively, sensitively, and deftly explored in a gorgeous tale." (*Lexington Herald Leader*) *Unit set. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: G91.*

Cover photo of *The Giver*: Lois Lowry. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.

ISBN-10 1-58342-662-0

ISBN-13 978-1-58342-662-3



9 781583 426623



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Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

www.dramaticpublishing.com

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THE GIVER

A Play by
ERIC COBLE

Based on the book by
LOIS LOWRY



Dramatic Publishing

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(THE GIVER)

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Harold Ober Associates, Inc., 425 Madison Ave., Suite 1001,
New York NY 10017 • Phone: (212) 759-8600

ISBN: 978-1-58342-662-3

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In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“Originally commissioned by
Oregon Children’s Theatre in March 2006.”

The Giver premiered at Oregon Children’s Theatre (Stan Foote, Artistic Director) on March 5, 2006. Stan Foote was the director, with scenic design by Mark Haack, lighting design by Peter West, costume design by Margaret Louise Chapman, sound design by Mark LaPierre, and prop design by R. Dee.

CAST

Jonas’ Father	Andrés Alcalá
Jonas’ Mother	Kelley Marchant
Lily	Gracie Starr
Jonas	Ryan Stathos
Asher	Blake Wales
Fiona	Lauren Hasson
The Giver	Steve Smith
Chief Elder	Sue Parks-Hilden
Rosemary	Madeleine Rogers
Voice of Speaker	Laura Faye Smith

THE GIVER

CHARACTERS:

FATHER Jonas' good-natured father

MOTHER Jonas' good-natured mother

LILY Jonas' 7-year-old sister
(may double as ROSEMARY)

JONAS an 11-year-old about to grow older

ASHER Jonas' best friend, 11 years old

FIONA another friend of Jonas', also 11
(may double as ROSEMARY)

THE CHIEF ELDER the master of the ceremony

The GIVER (OLD MAN) an old man about to change

ROSEMARY a young girl from the past

VARIOUS VOICES

(as many extras as desired as members of the community)

PLACE: In and around the community.

TIME: Soon.

PRODUCTION NOTES: The play can be performed by as few as six actors: 4 men (Father, Jonas, Asher, the Giver) and 2 women (Mother / Chief Elder, Lily / Fiona / Rosemary).

The play must move quickly, using light shifts and sound as Jonas is pulled from place to place, as opposed to elaborate sets that take time to bring on and off. There should be NO blackouts. All residents of this world, including the adults, should speak in natural contemporary ways, NOT as emotionless robots. The strangeness of this society appears in word choices and what is not said, rather than in “science fiction” behavior.

THE GIVER

AT RISE: *In the darkness, the sound of a jet plane ROARS overhead. Pause. Then a CALM VOICE echoes around us.*

ANNOUNCER (V.O.). Attention. There is no cause for alarm. The low-flying airplane seen over the community today was not a threat. A pilot-in-training merely misread his navigational instructions and made a wrong turn. Realizing he was breaking the rules, he was trying to find his way back before his error was noticed. He apologizes for any alarm he may have raised. *(Beat.)* Needless to say, he will be released.

(Silence. Then lights come up on a family eating at a simple table: FATHER, MOTHER, 7-year-old LILY and 11-year-old JONAS. They all wear comfortable gray clothes and eat cheerfully in a harsh white light.)

FATHER. Who wants to be the first tonight for feelings?

LILY. I felt very angry this afternoon. My childcare group was at the play area and we had a visiting group of Sevens, and they didn't obey the rules at all. I was so angry at one male, I made my hand into a fist, like this. *(She demonstrates.)*

FATHER. Where were the visitors from?

LILY. Some other community. I don't remember.

MOTHER. How did you feel when your group of Sixes visited another community last year?

LILY. Strange. They were learning usages my group hadn't learned yet, so we felt stupid.

FATHER. Do you think that the boy today felt strange and stupid, being in a new place with rules he didn't know about?

LILY. ...yes.

MOTHER. I feel a little sorry for him.

LILY. Me too. And sorry I made a fist. Thank you. (*They continue eating.*)

FATHER. Well, I'm feeling a little worried. One of the newchildren isn't doing well.

LILY. What gender is it?

FATHER. He's a sweet little male, but he's not growing as fast as he should and he doesn't sleep soundly. The other Nurturers and I have him in the extra-care section, but the committee's beginning to talk about releasing him.

MOTHER. Oh no. I know how sad that must make you feel.

FATHER. I think he just needs something extra. I may ask the committee for permission to bring him here at night, if you don't mind.

MOTHER. Of course.

LILY. Maybe we could even keep him!

MOTHER. Lily—

LILY. I know. Two children to each family. Very clear.

FATHER. Thank you.

MOTHER. Jonas?

(JONAS has been staring at his food.)

FATHER. Jonas.

JONAS. What?

FATHER. We're sharing feelings. Anything you want to share?

JONAS *(beat. He looks at them)*. I'm feeling...apprehensive.

FATHER. Why is that, son?

JONAS. ...it's almost December. *(They look at each other.)*

LILY *(almost whispered)*. The Ceremony of Twelve.

FATHER. ...I'm glad you told us your feelings.

MOTHER. Lily, go get on your nightclothes. Father and I are going to talk to Jonas for a while.

LILY. But—

FATHER. Lily.

LILY. Privately?

MOTHER. Yes. This talk will be a private one with Jonas.

(LILY gives her brother a final look...and walks out. FATHER takes a sip of coffee.)

FATHER. When I was an Eleven as you are, Jonas, there wasn't the suspense there is for your Ceremony of Twelve. I was already fairly certain what assignment the Council of Elders was going to give me.

JONAS. How? It's a secret—

MOTHER. Yes, how'd you know?

FATHER. I knew what my gift was. When my friends in my age group were holding bike races or building bridges with their construction sets, I spent all my volun-

teer hours at the Nurturing Center with newchildren. The Elders knew that.

JONAS. They've been watching me a lot at school. They watch all the Elevens and take notes.

FATHER. They don't make mistakes. So when my assignment was announced as Nurturer, it wasn't a big surprise. It was what I most wanted.

JONAS. But I don't know what I most want. I don't know what my gift is. What if I'm disappointed with my assignment?

MOTHER. They'll find exactly the right assignment for you. Don't worry. *(She rumples his hair.)* And after your ceremony you'll be training with your new assignment group—

JONAS. But Asher and I will always be friends, right? And we'll still be in school—

FATHER. Absolutely. There'll just be changes.

MOTHER. Good changes, though. After my ceremony, when I entered my training for Law and Justice, I found myself with new friends who shared my interests—

JONAS. Did you still play after Twelve?

FATHER. I still do! Every day in the Nurturing Center. Peek-a-Boo, Hug the Teddy. Fun doesn't end when you become Twelve.

(LILY walks in wearing a gray nightgown, with a stuffed elephant.)

LILY. This is certainly a very long private conversation.

(MOTHER and FATHER laugh and begin clearing the table.)

FATHER. I'll come help you remove your hair ribbons,
Lily-Billy.

LILY (*looking at her stuffed animal*). Are all comfort objects imaginary creatures?

FATHER. I think so. Yours is an "elephant," right?

LILY. Right.

JONAS. Mine was a "bear."

(FATHER, MOTHER, LILY are gone as 11-year-old ASHER charges on stage in a gray tunic, awkwardly. Lights shift.)

ASHER. Mine was a "dolphin."

ANNOUNCER (*V.O.*). Twelve days until the ceremony.

(JONAS and ASHER pass a basket of gray apples.)

ASHER. Throw me an apple.

JONAS. Asher—

ASHER. What? I need to improve my hand-eye coordination, don't I?

JONAS. No doubt. (*JONAS scoops up an apple and tosses it to ASHER as they spread out, playing catch.*)

ASHER. You know what I don't want to be assigned? I could never be an Instructor of Threes. (*JONAS laughs.*) Can you imagine me teaching them precise language?

JONAS. Every one of them would be asking for a smack when they want a snack!

ASHER (*drops the apple, scoops it up and tosses it to JONAS*). You'd think after the fourth round of the discipline wand, I'd have learned not to say "I want my smack" at mealtime—

JONAS. Remember the lashes on your legs?

ASHER. Remember when I stopped talking altogether?

(And as ASHER throws the apple, for a moment—only a moment—it changes. It flashes red...then it lands in JONAS' hand. He pauses...looks at it. It's gray again.)

JONAS. Did...

ASHER. What?

JONAS. Nothing. *(ASHER throws the apple—again, only for a second it flashes red in the air. ASHER fumbles and drops it.)* Ash? Does anything seem strange to you? About the apple?

ASHER. Yes! It keeps jumping out of my hand onto the ground. *(He laughs and throws it back, jogging off.)*

(JONAS looks at the gray apple in his hand a moment longer...then puts it in his tunic pocket as—

A BABY cries. JONAS turns to see LILY, MOTHER and FATHER walking to the dining table carrying a crying bundle. Fluorescent light glares.)

LILY. Look how tiny he is! And he has funny eyes like yours, Jonas!

(JONAS walks over and looks at the baby.)

MOTHER. Lily, it's rude to point out differences.

LILY. I apologize, Jonas.

JONAS. Apology accepted.

LILY. But they're light! Like yours! Maybe he has the same Birth Mother as you! (*JONAS stares at the baby.*) What's his comfort object called?

FATHER (*looks at a tag on the animal*). "Hippo" it says.

LILY (*giggles*). "Hippo"! (*JONAS walks away, getting his homework out on the table.*) I think newchildren are so cute. I hope I get assigned to be a Birth Mother.

MOTHER. Lily! (*LILY recoils.*) Don't say that. There's very little honor in that assignment.

LILY. But Natasha does her volunteer hours at the Birthing Center, and she told me that the Birth Mothers get wonderful food and they play games—

MOTHER. For three years, Lily. Three births and then they're Laborers for the rest of their lives until they enter the House of the Old. Is that what you want?

LILY. Well, no. I guess not. (*JONAS finds the apple in his pocket—takes it out and looks at it. The baby cries.*) I wish we knew his name.

FATHER. I feel a little guilty about this, but I saw this year's naming list in the office today. Number 36—this little fellow—if he makes it to the Naming without being released—he's to be Gabriel.

(*JONAS looks at them.*)

LILY. Hello, Gabriel.

FATHER. I call him Gabe, actually.

JONAS. Gabe. (*They all look at him.*) It's a good name.

ANNOUNCER (*V.O.*). Attention. This is a reminder to male Elevens that objects are not to be removed from the recreation area and that snacks are to be eaten, not hoarded. Thank you.

(JONAS looks at the apple, still gray in his hand. His family looks at him.)

JONAS. I just wanted to look at it... *(They watch him uncomfortably. He throws it in the trash.)*

(Lights shift as his family walks out and an 11-year-old FIONA runs on behind JONAS. She's in a gray tunic, followed by ASHER, both eating sandwiches.)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.). Six days until the ceremony.

FIONA. Hello, Jonas.

JONAS *(turns to see her)*. Hello, Fiona.

FIONA. I just found out. Our family is getting a New Child at the ceremony. I'm so excited.

ASHER. I'm just scared.

FIONA. Are you sure "scared" is the right word?

ASHER. I heard about a guy who was absolutely certain he was going to get assigned Engineer, and instead they gave him Sanitation Laborer. He went out the next day, jumped into the river, swam across, and joined the next community he came to. Nobody ever saw him again.

JONAS *(laughs)*. Somebody made that story up, Ash. My father said he heard that story when he was a Twelve.

ASHER *(looking into the distance)*. I can't even swim very well. My swimming instructor said I don't have the right boyishness or something.

FIONA. Buoyancy.

ASHER. Whatever, Fiona. I don't have it. I sink.

JONAS. Have you ever once known of anyone—I mean really known for sure, Asher—who joined another community?

ASHER. No. But you can. It says so in the rules. If you don't fit in, you can apply for Elsewhere and be released—

JONAS. How can someone not fit in?

FIONA. We're all going to get just the right assignments. You'll see.

(JONAS and FIONA watch each other. Lights shift as ASHER and FIONA leave and FATHER and LILY walk out with Gabriel in a basket.)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.). One day until the ceremony.

LILY. —and there I was on Mother's bicycle against the rules and suddenly there were two security guards—I was so terrified!

FATHER. Do you think it was a warning dream?

LILY. I guess. Not to take other people's things.

(JONAS joins them at the table.)

FATHER & JONAS. Thank you for your dream, Lily.

LILY. How about you, Father?

FATHER. No dreams last night. *(To baby.)* Gabe? Any dreams? *(They laugh.)* Jonas?

JONAS. I did dream last night.

LILY. For once!

JONAS. I think I was in the House of the Old.

FATHER. Didn't you and your friends volunteer there yesterday?

JONAS *(nods)*. But it wasn't really the same. There was only one tub in the dream. And Fiona was there.

FATHER. Asher too?

JONAS. No. It was only me and Fiona.

(MOTHER enters prepping her work materials.)

JONAS *(cont'd)*. I think I was trying to convince her that she should get into the tub of water. I wanted to bathe her. But she wouldn't. She kept laughing and saying no. *(They look at him.)* That's all.

FATHER. Can you describe the strongest feeling in your dream?

JONAS. ...the wanting. I knew she wouldn't. And I think I knew she shouldn't. But I could feel the wanting all through me.

MOTHER. Thank you for your dream, Jonas. *(MOTHER and FATHER glance at each other.)*

FATHER *(standing)*. Lily, will you walk beside me to school this morning? We need to be certain the newchild doesn't wiggle himself loose.

(LILY and FATHER start out with Gabriel. JONAS moves to join them.)

MOTHER. Wait, Jonas. I'll write an apology to your instructor so you don't have to speak one for being late.

(JONAS sits as LILY and FATHER leave. MOTHER sits across from him. Pause. They look at each other.)

MOTHER *(cont'd)*. Jonas. The feeling you described as the wanting? It was your first Stirrings. It happened to Father when he was your age. It happened to me—

JONAS. Do I have to report it?