Have you ever imagined what it would be like to live in a perfect society? If you could create a utopia to live in with all of your family and friends, what would it look like? Creating a perfect utopia is much easier said than done. Many books have been written about the problems that can arise in trying to create the perfect society, such as Fahrenheit 451, Lord of the Flies, Brave New World, and 1984. In each of those books, the "utopian" society actually turns out to be quite the opposite—a dystopia. In Lois Lowry's novel The Giver, Jonas lives in what appears to be a utopian community: no war, no crime, no poverty, no sickness, no unemployment, no fear, and no pain. Even the climate is controlled. However, after he is assigned to become the new Receiver of Memory at the ceremony of Twelve, Jonas discovers that his community is not nearly as perfect as it seems. As the Giver transfers memories to Jonas he learns the truth about his community, that the pursuit of "sameness" comes at the price of freedom, and that pain is often necessary in order to appreciate pleasure. In this WebQuest, you will explore the major themes of The Giver and design a utopian society of your own. Good luck!

Tasks

Working individually or in teams you will: Analyze The Giver, paying close attention to characters, symbols, and themes. Identify at least two major themes in The Giver.

Explore the notion of security (no war, no crime, no poverty, etc.) and analyze if it can really be achieved. If so, how?

Respond to the relationship between pain and pleasure. Discuss the topics of "Release," the "Ceremony of Twelve," the importance of memory, and the role of government.

Design a utopian society and describe its government (the laws and rights for your citizens).

Process

In order to complete the task, you will need to do the following:

Read The Giver. If you have already read it, review the plot here or here. Individually or with your team, complete the Major Works Data Sheet. The first few portions have already been completed to get you started. Remember to identify at least two major themes found in The Giver. Take the following short quizzes and record your score for each:

- Quiz 1 - The Giver Themes
- Quiz 2 - The Giver Symbols

Discuss (or personally respond to, if working alone) the following questions:

- Can total community security (no war, no crime, no poverty, etc.) ever be achieved? If so, how?
- What is the relationship between pain and pleasure? For example, do your bad memories help make the good times better?
- If you ate cake for every meal of every day, would it keep tasting sweet?
- How do you feel about "Release"? Would you like your career to be assigned to you at a "Ceremony of Twelve"?
- What should the government's role be in our lives?
- Do we really need it?

Individually or with your team, design a utopian society and describe its government (the laws and rights for your citizens). Remember the themes of The Giver, and what you would improve upon Jonas' community as you design your own. To see how the United States' founding fathers designed our country, watch the video below on the Bill of Rights. For an extensive list of questions to consider when designing your utopia, click here.

Evaluation

Each student will be assessed individually according to the following rubric:
Congratulations! I hope you enjoyed The Giver and feel more comfortable thinking about a book's theme as you read. I'm sure it was difficult to think of the different laws, rules, freedoms, and rights you wanted in place as you created your utopian community. If it was easy to create a utopia we'd all be living in one! If you enjoyed The Giver's style and want to step up to another similar book, you might like to read one of the books listed below. These are all classics and should be available in any library or bookstore. Thanks! Fahrenheit 451, Lord of the Flies, 1984, Brave New World

Dystopian literature is a great genre for our modern age. It provides a stern political warning of what can happen when justice and freedom become suppressed. The Giver is one of my all-time favorite books. It does a great job of introducing the important ideal of personal liberty as well as interdependence to a middle school audience that is largely feeling around the boundaries of their own freedom and learning to relate to others as young adults.

**Standards**

**Credits**

**Other**