

Example of Close Reading from Lois Lowry's *The Giver*

"Father? Mother?" Jonas asked tentatively after the evening meal. "I have a question I want to ask you."

Comment [M1]: The formality of the question's phrasing emphasizes how worried Jonas is about seeming rude or breaking the rules, further demonstrating how rigid his society is in terms of anything out of the ordinary.

"What is it, Jonas?" His father asked. He made himself say the words, though he felt flushed with embarrassment. He had rehearsed them in his mind all the way home from the Annex.

Comment [M2]: Using this term implies that Jonas's face likely turned red, showing his emotion and how he (unlike his parents) can feel, but also pointing to the connection of "red" (his first color) and his ability to feel... color/emotion, etc. This description further detaches him from his parents.

"Do you love me?"

Comment [M3]: Although Jonas has moved away from the attitude of precision and gained insight, Lowry uses language that emphasizes that he is still reliant on an organized, precise view of the world, in which he feels that if he rehearses and decides carefully what to say, it will be more effective.

There was an awkward silence for a moment. Then Father gave a little chuckle. "Jonas. You, of all people. Precision of language, please!"

Comment [M4]: "Giving a little chuckle" seems that the Father is embarrassed by the awkward and unusual situation... showing how separate he has become from Jonas's way of thinking.

"What do you mean?" Jonas asked. Amusement was not at all what he had anticipated.

Comment [M5]: So much is expected of Jonas, not only because of his place in this society, but as a soon to be leader, he more than anyone should see the importance of their way of life.

"Your father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete," his mother explained carefully.

Comment [M6]: The reader may be meant to feel conflicted by questioning why the parents are amused, which seems odd, but then also why Jonas would not expect this, if precision of language is such a part of daily life.

Jonas stared at them. *Meaningless?* He had never before felt anything as meaningful as the memory.

Comment [M7]: The specific choice of the word "meaningless" implies by definition something that is void of meaning, whereas meaning is reliant upon choice, which is a crucial theme of Lowry's text. Here, her use of the word "meaningless" points to that necessity of choice.

"And of course our community can't function smoothly if people don't use precise language. You could ask "Do you enjoy me? The answer is Yes," his mother said.

Comment [M8]: This phrasing of meaningless and meaningful draw attention to the sharp contrast—void of meaning versus the most meaning he has experienced.

Or his father suggested, "Do you take pride my accomplishments? And the answer is wholeheartedly, Yes."

Comment [M9]: "Function" seems like a mechanical term with specific purpose, playing from "rehearsed the m in my mind" to focus on the idea of a society that is robotic, perfect, precise, but flawed. Also, "of course" emphasizes how it is expected, the norm.

Comment [M10]: Lowry may have chosen "enjoy" and "pride" because they can relate to people, but can also be separate from emotion and humanity. They are close, more formal, but also very different in that they exist only in the now—there is not reflection or anticipation that might come with other expressions of love.

Comment [M11]: The idea of feeling "wholeheartedly" implies a rush of emotion, and also meaning, which seems seemingly strangely contradictory to what the father is saying about specific language and disuse of the word love.

“Do you understand why it’s inappropriate to ask a word like love?” Mother asked

Jonas nodded, “Yes, thank you, I do,” he replied slowly. It was his first lie to his parents.

Comment [M12]: This phrasing seems a return to the formality—the status quo—but also demonstrates a change and shift in Jonas, whereby the formality is not genuine, but has edge—he is different.

Comment [M13]: This reference to the “first lie” is bring up many other moments in the text and his uncertainty, confusion, fear, as well as how the society has cracks. This is striking not only because he has never lied, but why is this the moment where it is so imperative to do so... it is a significant lie.