

Dear Lois Lowry,

I wonder what the laugh of someone who has never felt pain is like. I wonder if it is light and airy. Your book forced me to reflect upon the concept of laughter without pain.

In your book, The Giver, Jonas hears laughter without pain. Jonas lives in a sheltered world that is bare of decisions, love, and pain. Until I read your book, I have been ignorant of the blessings that ride on the shoulders of decisions. I have the right to decide on my job, spouse, lifestyle, and interests later in life. Without these choices I could be lost and miserable in this world. With them I can go anywhere I want. Some nights, before I go to sleep, I think, smiling, about all these amazing opportunities.

No one loves anyone in your book. Without love, I believe we would all crumble underneath all the pain and the suffering. Before reading this book, I couldn't grasp how many people I needed and desperately wanted in my life. I am now frequently telling loved ones I love them or friends I appreciate them. Even people that I only secretly loved or appreciated I have told. When I tell my grandfather that I love him, as I often forget to, he beams and tells me that he loves me so much as well. There is no reason to be afraid of love.

At first, I thought that it was nice how there was no pain Jonas's world. Then I came to know that if there was no pain or suffering anywhere, there could be no appreciation for love. I used to avoid my bad memories. They included death of loved ones, disappointing my parents, fighting, humiliating moments, and anger. Now I don't block these bad memories. Instead I laugh about the humiliating moments, take comfort in the fact that I am not fighting or angry, and draw strength from my sorrow.

I wonder what a laugh without the memory of pain is like. I bet it is cold and lifeless and gray and empty. A laugh without pain is empty of love.

Love,  
Dakotah Murphree