

## An Explication of Jonas's Transitional Journey in Louis Lowry's *The Giver*

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### Abstract

This paper examines Jonas's journey from sameness to elsewhere as a journey from innocence to experience in Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*. After receiving memories, Jonas does not want to stay in 'sameness', going 'elsewhere.' This movement is beyond societal expectations. Why does he undertake this arduous and challenging journey? Why must he embark on a journey that leads him towards pain, suffering, imperfection, and ills? Is he happy to be in 'Elsewhere' where he experiences unfamiliarity and uncertainty? The study hypothesizes that his journey from sameness to elsewhere is a critique of the seemingly perfect world that the community of Elders has created. Drawing on Sarland's take on the impossibility of innocence in children, Hunt's focus on ideological perception in children's literature, and Nodelman's explanation on the experience and ideology in the disguise of innocence, the study argues that Jonas's journey from 'sameness' to 'elsewhere' is a journey to multiple experiences, knowledge, and wisdom, unlike the sameness where he knows nothing except storing the memories. It concludes that since children constantly move between the world of innocence and experience—"transitional innocence/experience", they gain knowledge, new insights, and wisdom by going beyond the expectation of social order created by the community of Elders.

**Keywords:** children literature, experience, elsewhere, innocence, and sameness

## Introduction

Jonas, a twelve-year-old boy in Lois Lowry's *\*The Giver\**, problematizes the seemingly utopian world created by his community by crossing its limitations. After being selected as the Receiver of Memory—the highest position in the community—due to his intelligence, integrity, and courage, he chooses to seek more than what is presented through the memories. As the Receiver, Jonas stores all the memories from a time before Sameness without acknowledging differences in relief features, topography, climatic adversities, and the diversity of people. The issue arises when the community attempts to confine Jonas within its constructed criteria of what appears to be a utopian world, which reveals itself to be dystopian and disastrous. Jonas's disagreement with the Elders persists despite being given the prestigious role of Receiver, which underscores his questioning of social codes that he critically observes. Thus, the journey from sameness (the place where he exists before receiving memories) to elsewhere (the destination he intends to reach after receiving the memories) symbolizes the transition from innocence to experience, blurring the lines between reality and illusion and exposing the uncertainties and incongruities embedded in the seemingly harmonious world. He begins his journey from sameness—the world of uniformity—to elsewhere—the world of differences. In this sense, the paper argues that his journey to 'elsewhere' exemplifies resistance, during which he develops subjectivity, maturity, and the ability to question.

Innocence and experience are two contrasting elements for children, and a child's transition from innocence to experience marks a progression in sensibility and maturity. *The Giver* highlights how child protagonists like him are often portrayed as innocent figures viewed through adult perspectives. Nonetheless, children also advocate for justice and equity, possessing their ideologies. Thus, Charles Sarland posits that absolute innocence in a child's psychology is unattainable. Another critic, Peter Hunt, contends that innocence and ideology are two defining traits of children. The theory of children's literature draws insights from three figures in children's literary criticism: Perry Nodelman, Charles Sarland,

and Peter Hunt, which is employed as part of the methodology. The paper argues that these elements significantly influence Jonas's life as depicted in the novel, set in a seemingly perfect futuristic world—a utopian society—where the central character, twelve-year-old Jonas, worries about the impending event known as the Ceremony of Twelve. During this ceremony, the Elevens receive their assignments based on their abilities and interests. The community of Elders selects Jonas to be the next Receiver of Memory. Although he experiences a 'sameness' of perfection, happiness, and bliss, he remains dissatisfied. After receiving the memories, he begins to question 'sameness' and gradually resists it as he seeks elsewhere. His actions and inquiries challenging the existing social norms confront the world of Sameness.

### **Children's Literature and Reception of *The Giver***

Since its publication, the novel has received a few critical reviews. However, extensive reviews exist on concepts such as 'innocence' and 'experience.' Discussing the novel, Sartaj Ahmad Lone and Shahila Zafar illustrate how people become docile and subservient through the imposition of rules via language. They argue, "Lois Lowry's dystopian text *The Giver* demonstrates that language is a discursive construct. In the text, the totalitarian state teaches its subjects the precision of language from childhood. Language plays a vital role in maintaining the control and stability of society" (45). They interpret the novel as dystopian, where the language of citizens is regulated. Jonas is also subject to the state's control, revealing a dystopia disguised as a utopia. They note, "As soon as the novel begins, the reader finds that Jonas, the protagonist, is bewildered by two incidents. First, Jonas is astonished to notice the pale eyes of an infant lying in a basket, as everyone in the community has dark eyes" (46). Jonas's distinct nature and eyes are problematic in the utopian world of his community, where people have dark eyes in contrast to Jonas's pale ones, symbolizing his potential rebellion. Lone and Zafar further emphasize Jonas's act of picking an apple: "Second, he steals an apple from a recreation park for which he is harshly reprimanded by the recreation officer. The next day, he apologizes to the recreation officer for his

wrongdoing; he is perplexed not by the public display of remorse but by the incident itself" (46). Jonas's community is devoid of color, and people assume that everything shares the same color (sameness), indicating ignorance. However, he perceives red in the apple due to 'his ability to see beyond.' Thus, he picks it up, violating school rules. His confusion leads him to uncertainties.

Jonas is confused by two things or events. He has to hate pale eyes simply because the members of the community have dark eyes and he has to say sorry for taking the apple. This innate ability to see beyond has been snatched by the state. *The Guardian* writes: "*The Giver* is a morally driven and interesting story about a young boy called Jonas who lives in a society free of crime and sadness" (The Giver by Lois Lowry - Review"). The novel presents a character called Jonas who lives in a society devoid of crime and criminals. Jonas is a young boy who never experienced vices in society. It is a questionable issue if he is living in a world devoid of crimes or memories. Another scholar Silfia Afni has read the novel from post-traumatic stress disorder. After receiving memories, Jonas suffers painful experiences. Afni argues, "These memories made Jonas stressed and depressed. These memories were the cause of Jonas experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. One of the training experiences that hurt his daily life was when he was stung by the hot sun. As he undergoes training, he is given memories of the climate" (18). One after another, he receives all the memories of the past. He is more anxious to know more about his past life. Afni mentions, "When he returned home, he still remembered how painful it was to be stung by the direct sun. Apart from getting a memory of the climate, he also got another painful memory from the Giver of that day" (19). The memory he receives broadens his mind, and he begins to critique the so-called perfect world of sameness.

The world of innocence and experience has drawn the attention of creative writers and scholars. These worlds if studied from the perspective of children's literature are two contrasting ones. Charles Ryskamp in his study of William Blake says that he was inspired by children's literature in the creation of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and his analysis of

childhood as a state of preserved innocence where he argues a child needs to reach the world of experience with the images of lamb and tiger. Charles Ryskamp shows this relationship hinting out the contrasting elements, “. . . the states of disappointment and sorrow contrary to the lyrical joy of the earlier” (151). Everyone has to face both realities, a state of innocence and experience, in his or her life as a part of reality.

Similarly, W. B. Yeats also talks about radical innocence which is “self-delighting, Self-appeasing, self-affrighting” (62), the child is exposed to the violence outside from the cradle which opens the journey to experience: “That, all hatred driven hence, the soul recovers radical innocence” (62). The innocent world that her father fears is the result of the violent world he is experiencing. This is similar to the idea of transition from innocence to experience. In the same way, literary theorists working in the field of children's literature have come up with the idea that innocence and experience are two inherent faculties of human psychology. In this regard, Perry Nodelman states that there are two perceptions of innocence and experiences. One view is that children's literature tends to see things from the viewpoint of innocence—as children theoretically see them. At the same time, adult writers/ critics are the people who enjoy imaginatively experiencing the freedom of innocence they no longer possess because they are constructed ideologically by adult writers. Thus the very notion of innocence is the experience itself, “Children's literature criticism thus tends to maintain an innocence of its own by hiding—or completely forgetting—any awareness of its past adulthood” (136). Thus, the child character stands at the liminal position between innocence and experience.

It is a debate if children are only innocent people. Even if they are innocent, they are not ignorant. Jenny Huberman mentions, “Anthropologists and historians have repeatedly demonstrated that children are not universally regarded as innocent beings” (68). Children are not universally recognized as innocent beings. He further claims, “Innocence was the defining characteristic and even essence of childhood” (68). Children, by their age factor, virtues, and nature are innocent creatures. It is a time for them when their creative faculty best works. Huberman further

argues, "Innocence was also intimately linked to play. Perhaps more than anything else, playfulness was taken to be the sign of an intact child; that is, a child who, despite being introduced to an adult world of work and responsibility, was still perceived as being spontaneous, free, creative, and who possessed an almost kinetic appeal" (73-74). A child though looking innocent, undergoes a massive transformation possibility when he or she is introduced to the adult world. The child is innocent but not ignorant though the key feature of childhood is within the psychology of the child, "the innocence of the child is still there" (74). The 'playfulness' indicates the possibilities of developing a true self akin to identity where the child has the potential to challenge or assimilate into the culture. On the other hand, Charles Sarland argues, "But wider than this, the books themselves and the social practices that surround them will raise ideological issues" (40). Children are, for him, ideological humans.

Lone and Zafar's depiction of children as docile and subservient creatures justifies the dystopia in the world of Jonas. His state is a totalitarian state which uses language as a vital function in docility. In the same way, Afni discusses Jonas's exposure to the memories as necessary for understating the larger world waiting for him. The issue of Jonas's journey from sameness to elsewhere needs to be critically observed. This issue is based on the gap between innocence and experience in children. The above reviews of the novel do not significantly bridge the shifting position of children between innocence and experience. Thus, this paper addresses this gap.

### **Jonas's Shift to Unfamiliar World**

Jonas lives in a seemingly perfect world, a utopian world. This world of perfection is a dystopia in masked utopia because he lives in a colorless world of similar traits which he realizes after receiving memories. His community is rule-bound. For example, one member of the community takes responsibility for certain things. This time, he has been assigned the job of 'Receiver' of memories. He fulfills his responsibility of upholding memories for all the communities. This provides an opportunity for him to

know the limitations and shortcomings of living in the so-called perfect society where people are compelled to live in hard surveillance without knowing about it by people who live giving up their true self of being. He has a strong desire to extend the limited world of innocence to experience. As a mature and grown-up man, he cannot bear the injustice. The final action he chooses is to escape the community to experience a beautiful life consisting of pleasure and pain, light and shadow, and many more. Thus, Jonas's journey from sameness to elsewhere is a journey from innocence to experience.

The giver (the old receiver) transmits the memories to Jonas. He is no longer an ideologically free human. He is exposed to experience and ideology. The old Receiver asks Jonas to call him the Giver as he is going to hand over the memories to him. The old man says to Jonas, "Call me the giver" (87). The role has been transferred to Jonas since he is selected as the receiver of memory. Then, he begins to receive the memories one after another. He begins to see colors, adverse climates, and differences. This is where he has transformative possibilities. This is realized in the lines, "He heard people singing. Behind him, across vast distances of space and time, from the place he had left, he thought he heard music too. But perhaps it was only an echo" (180). His arrival elsewhere is a key to realizing the vast universe in existence. He realizes that if his friends and family would receive memories, it would be different. Their painless, colorless, routine life is questioned by Jonas. Thus, there is an impossibility of innocence as suggested by Charles Sarland who focuses on the impossibility of innocence in children. Thus, Jonas is not an innocent child as perceived by the community of Elders because he moves from one journey to another. The story of innocence of Jonas (sameness) connotes a history-less and memory-less community, where changes are almost impossible without developing consciousness and ideology. However, Jonas is determined to challenge social and communal conformity by embracing the ideas of differences in 'Elsewhere'. The study significantly valorizes the ability to critique the familiarity (sameness) of experiences (elsewhere).

Children's books are written for relatively inexperienced children. This inexperienced position of children in such books has raised concern for a debate if it is innocence that only prevails in such literature leaving ideology beyond. It is also argued that though children look innocent, they are not ignorant and the books written for children are replete with ideological nuances. In this regard, Charles Sarland often argues that there is an impossibility of innocence in children and children's literature. He states, "All writing is ideological" (41). He further adds, "All writing either assumes values even when not overtly espousing them or is produced and also rad within a social and cultural framework" (41). The entry point of ideology is children's exposure to experience. Jonas's experience of the world is his ideological position to embark on a journey in the quest for knowledge.

The perfection seen in the community of older is questionable for Jonas. He is not happy to live this kind of perfect life. It is a dystopia in the utopian mask. The old people have their living as per the rule. They live in homes known as dwellings until they are required to go and live with the childless adults who finally make their way to the House of the Olds where they are supposed to be released. Having enjoyed their lives, the people will be released to go (to) Elsewhere. Thus, the cycle of life following their stay at the House of the Olds (peaceful and comfortable houses where the old people live and are cared for) completes. To be released is the final decision. Community rules are hard to change. Though there is no evidence that disease, hunger, poverty, war, or lasting pain exists in the community, there is no real sense of freedom either. The narrator mentions, "It was almost December, and Jonas was beginning to be frightened. No. Wrong word, Jonas thought" (1). The seeming perfection of society is questioned with the use of the word 'frightened.' He is afraid to see a plane over his house. This fear indicates that children are not innocent. He learns to perceive things in different ways. In this regard, Peter Hunt's focus on ideological perception in children and children's books is relevant. These books, according to Hunt, expose the world of ideology in children. Jonas, by the same token, is guided by the ideology of freedom.



Fear supports the dystopian world of Jonas. He realizes that the plane came there due to a wrong turn, and the government's decision to pilot's death sentence horrifies him. The pilot mistakenly made a wrong turn in the training flight towards that area, and he was sentenced to death. The narrator mentions, "Needless to say, he will be released, the voice had said, followed by silence" (2). He is killed or completed due to a small mistake. Such things terrify people including Jonas. The innocent children are ideologically empowered to follow the community rules. It creates suspense and foreshadows the possible resistance. The family of Jonas seems ideal, and the entire community appears to be a utopia at the surface, but it is inherently dystopian. In this context, Perry Nodelman highlights experience and ideology in the disguise of innocence. For Perry Nodelman, it is difficult to define the genre called 'Children Literature.' Children literature is for children if not for children. There is always a hidden adult in such books. Nodelman states, "Children literature tends to see things from the viewpoint of innocence" (135). The issue of innocence and ideology revolves around children literature as both are the basic features of such books. In this regard, Nodelman again mentions, "Children literature thus tends to maintain an innocence of its own by hiding or completely forgetting –any awareness of its past adulthood" (136). The innocence, thus, is forceful rather than spontaneous.

The December Ceremony is important to Jonas because he is an Eleven and will be participating in the Ceremony of Twelve for his lifelong career. Entire people attend the ceremony, "The entire community attended the Ceremony each year. For the parents, it meant two days' holiday from work; they sat together in the huge hall. Children sat with their groups until they went, one by one, to the stage" (41). The quote tells that the entire community participated in the Ceremony every year. Parents could stay two days there; they sat together in the huge hall. Children have to sit with their groups until they are assigned different jobs which they must accept. This is a well-regulated society where humans have no choice. This is a feature of dystopia.

The dystopian theme revolves around the story of Gabe as well who is a child with physical abnormalities. Jonas' father is a Nurturer. He looks after babies. He has taken extra care of Gabe who has some problems with his physical growth and the community plans to kill him but Jonas resists this after developing consciousness or his ideology of freedom based on justice. His father takes the infant, named Gabriel (Gabe), home with him each night for extra nurturing. Jonas observes, "Father had gone before the committee with a plea on behalf of Gabriel, who had not yet gained the weight appropriate to his days of life nor begun to sleep soundly enough at night to be placed with his family unit. Normally such a new child would be labeled Inadequate and released from the community" (40). The child not getting developed timely is considered inadequate and is to be released (killed) to make the community free of burden.

Jonas goes through a series of uncomfortable situations in which his innocent world cannot react to the very moment he experiences. For example, when he sees different colors in apples, while he is playing with his school friend Asher using an apple as a ball, he plans to take the apple home rather than saying something about it at school. Then he also saw changes in apples due to his rare ability to see beyond. However, he was rebuked at school; "Attention. This is a re- minder to male elevens that objects are not to be removed from the recreation area and that snacks are to be eaten, not hoarded" (23). He is rebuked for this. He also internalizes different community rules, "Attention. This is a reminder to females under nine that hair ribbons are to be neatly tied at all times" (22). Jonas also apologized for picking up apples at home.

At the ceremony, different roles are assigned to each child aged twelve. Asher and Fiona (friends of Jonas), volunteer in the House of the Old (where the community's elderly people live while awaiting their release) as they are seven. Asher, a cheerful boy is assigned to be Assistant Director of Recreation. Fiona becomes a Caretaker of the Old. Jonas while bathing Larissa (an elderly woman) in the House of the Old, develops a romantic stirring on his own which he must tell to his parents because

secrets do not exist or should not exist in his community. When he dreams about wanting to bathe his friend, Fiona, his mother gives him pills to stop the romantic feelings. This pill is an indication of a barrier to freedom. The narrator mentions, "But his mother laughed again in a reassuring, affectionate way. 'No, no,' she said. 'It's just the pills. You're ready for the pills, that's all. That's the treatment for Stirrings'" (70). The mother's act of giving pills to her son (Jonas) is a continuous degradation of his innocence. Everyone in the community attends the December Ceremony. The Ceremony begins with the Naming and Placement of newborns. Recycling of names takes place when an elderly person is released from the community; the released person's name is put on a list and is used again. The age-wise ceremony takes place. Jonas has been "selected" to become the new Receiver of Memory, the most honored position in the community. He has a Capacity to 'See Beyond.'

The transmission of memories begins with happy experiences and shifts to the painful ones. The first memory that Jonas receives from The Giver is a sled ride down a snow-covered hill. While receiving these memories, his sensations are unexplainable because he has never experienced them in the community before. Then, he begins to question the rule-bound community of elders; he seeks the option to choose/freedom. After he receives a memory of sunshine, he knows he has sunburn (pain). In his dream, Jonas is going downhill on a sled in the snow toward a certain destination. He gains insights/wisdom from the many memories that the giver (ex-receiver of memory) transmits to him. The giver transmits a painful memory of an elephant hunt. Jonas learns he has broken his leg while riding downhill on a sled and he experiences physical pain. Jonas gives water to a wounded boy in the warfare memory and sees the boy dying along with the wounded horse. Gaining knowledge from the memories is what makes the memories invaluable. This is how he goes to Elsewhere from sameness. But before Jonas goes to Elsewhere, he is selected to receive the memory. The old receiver (the giver) states, "Simply stated, although it's not really simple at all, my job is to transmit to you all the memories I have within me. Memories of the past" (77). Jonas learns

about memories where he sees the vast difference to what he has been living in sameness. The ideological structures are also the structures of experience. These structures prevail in children literature. Peter Hunt asserts, "Just s children's books are part of the ideological structures of the cultures of the world, their history is constructed ideologically" (5). Children's books carry ideological meanings as well as layers of experiences. Such books expose the tension between a sense of freedom and the politico-cultural exercise of power.

During receiving the memories, Jonas, at first seems happy with this community, but gradually he does not like his community and goes away returning the memories to the people in the community which is a sign of strong resistance. The world that Jonas lives in is depicted as a utopian one where a family unit consists of four members: father and mother, and son and daughter. Every year, fifteen children are born and children are given to needy parents as per the rule. It is accepted that the people in the community entrust the Committee of Elders – the ruling body – who also assign them spouses or life partners.

Jonas's innocence is an innate state of childhood period where consciousness to resist has not yet developed. Huberman further argues, "Innocence was also intimately linked to play. Perhaps more than anything else, playfulness was taken to be the sign of an intact child; that is, a child who, despite being introduced to an adult world of work and responsibility, was still perceived as being spontaneous, free, creative, and who possessed an almost kinetic appeal" (73-74). A child though looking innocent, undergoes a massive transformation possibility when he or she is introduced to the adult world. The child is innocent but not ignorant though the key feature of childhood is within the psychology of the child, "the innocence of the child is still there" (74). The 'playfulness' indicates the possibilities of developing a true self akin to identity where the child has the potentiality to challenge or assimilate into culture. Ellen Marie Snyder argues that "the concept of childhood innocence was beginning to be highly valued" (11). The innocence of children is valued throughout history against "its separateness from the marketplace and the adult world of

insincerity” (12). Snyder asserts that the adult world is corrupted but children's world is innocent. However, since, the adult write about children, they are also ideologically constructed.

Jonas's situation of dilemma (sameness or elsewhere) is what Ann Phoenix discusses about children's insecurity. Ann Phoenix develops his ideas of insecurity that the children undergo or experience as they encounter ambiguity in their roles in the family and society. He argues, “The hopes and fears of adults' imagined futures for younger generations coincide with conceptualizations of children as vulnerable, innocent and in need of protection – but also as ignorant, irresponsible and in need of education. Children's perspectives, and their agency within family and wider social and political structures, are situated in the context of this sticky affective mix” (142). Though children as vulnerable, innocent, and in need of protection, in their perspectives, they develop their agency within family and wider social and political structures, where the question of vulnerability, innocence, and protection is questioned. As seen in the novel, Jonas develops his agency and identity. He is gradually an ideological child; “memories need to be shared” (154). This is a development of Jonas's agency. He cannot do anything on his own in his world where he lives an innocent life. So, he must give up this life. Jonas was rebuked because he took an apple home from the Recreation Area: “Snacks are to be eaten, not hoarded” (23). He apologized for this. This is a form of domination that children cannot resist. For this, they have to enter the world of experience. He also recalls a series of events which he realizes are unfair. For example, the community has birth mothers who are entrusted with the task of reproducing babies that are given to the parents if deemed eligible. According to the rules, three babies are born to each birth mother. They accept it happily as a community ruled by a Committee of Elders.

Similarly, the newly born babies are carried to the Nurturing Centre from Birthing Centre where the distribution of babies to eligible parents is made possible. The children according to Rousseau go on doing what society asks them to do. They show their obedience to the law which people have prescribed as liberty. William Kessen bringing the reference from

Rousseau states, “For Rousseau, at sixty, freedom came to mean the submission to a strict and inviolable law which the individual erects over himself” (159). The submission to the state or parents limits children from their rights which Jonas has understood after receiving memories. Jonas is defined from the perspective of older people. In this regard, Perry Nodelman argues that a child’s innocence is defined by adult people. He argues:

Adults who find themselves attracted to it as a field of interest might well tend to be people who enjoy imaginatively experiencing in it the freedom of an innocence they themselves no longer possess—an innocence manifested not only by the assumption that they are ever and always pioneers breaking new ground but also by the replication in their work of the qualities of and assumptions about childhood they themselves produce in the texts they write or find in the texts they explore. (135)

The quote asserts that adults experiencing the freedom of innocence that they no longer possess define children from their perspectives. This is seen in the novel because Jonas's interests, hobbies, and capacities are measured and defined by the community leaders. The narrator asserts, “How could someone not fit in? The community was so meticulously ordered, the choices so carefully made” (48). The community is organized in such a way that the seed of resistance cannot be planted easily.

Jonas and the Giver talk about how sameness in their community is maintained; “Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with difference. We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others” (95). The choice to make no choice is a difficult option that Jonas likes to break. The community people made that choice to remain in sameness, the choice to go to similarity. They gave up color when they relinquished sunshine and made a difference disappear. They gained control of many things including people. However, they agree to do something for

people to feel the differences. Thus, Jonas is not limited to his parental guidelines. Kitzinger (1988) argues, “Childhood is presented as a time of play, an asexual and peaceful existence within the protective bosom of the family. This image is both ethnocentric and unrealistic” (78). For him, innocence is a problematic term because a child is inclined toward experience.

Returning memories to society is a challenging job but it is Jonas and the Giver discuss it. They devise a plan to return the memories to the community which is an outburst of bitterness and despair. He states, “There’s nothing we can do. It’s always been this way. Before me, before you, before the ones who came before you. Back and back and back” (154). Here, they discuss how they are in sameness which is not a historical moment to be preserved. It has no beginning and an end, it is ongoing forever, it is an endless, changeless state as the community people have decided to follow it without any question, something beyond time and space and human interference. Nobody thinks to question the systems and structures of this ancient time which seem perfectly natural, and even though Jonas and the Giver know that life existed before and beyond Sameness, they cannot convince people. The phrase back-back- back connotes a history-less, memory-less community, where changes are almost impossible without developing consciousness and ideology. However, Jonas is determined to challenge social and communal conformity. He gives up his innocent state as Nodelman asserts, “As I have been claiming, children’s literature tends to see things from the viewpoint of innocence—as children theoretically see them” (135). He claims that children’s literature tends to see things from the viewpoint of innocence. Again, Nodelman asserts, “the freedom of innocence they themselves no longer possess” (135). Though children are defined by adults, they share diverse experiences beyond adult imagination.

The difficulty of Gabe, the slow development, is painful to Jonas. The community wants to inject (kill) him due to this but Jonas wants to save him; “Things could change, Gabe. Things could be different. I don’t know how, but there must be some way for things to be different. There

could be colors. And grandparents. And everybody would have memories. You know about memories" (128). He is hopeful that Gabe will be fit and fine unlike what community people have assumed. He wants to escape with Gabe. Jonas felt something new, "Jonas felt a ripping sensation inside himself, the feeling of terrible pain clawing its way forward to emerge in a cry" (151). He has developed feelings that go against the community. It is here Jonas problematizes the concept of innocence suggested by Perry Nodleman.

The ideology of Jonas 'to be saved' and 'to save others' expands his understanding of the world: "If he had stayed in the community, he would not be. It was as simple as that. Once he had yearned for choice. Then when he has had a choice, he had made the wrong one: the choice to leave" (174). His decision to leave the house is to go to a new house waiting for him for a broader perspective. As a part of a larger understanding of the world, he escapes the house by stealing his father's bicycle because he needs the infant seat attached to it for Gabe whom he wants to save without letting it be killed, who now symbolizes new life and the future. He runs away, he leaves home without permission. He stole food, "He thought of the rules he had broken so far: enough that if he were caught, now, he would be condemned" (165). He broke the rules to confirm the freedom to resist social conformity. While escaping he saw a variety of things; Changing landscapes; changing weather, the air getting colder, snow, and steep hills which indicates his uncertain journey to Elsewhere. He still reflects, "But perhaps it was only an echo" (180). At the top of the hill, Jonas finds a sled. They sit on the sled to go downhill. Jonas sees colored lights in the distance, hears music, and knows that love and joy are at his destination. Thus, he moves beyond the expectation of elders from the community without even fearing possible 'release.'



## **Conclusion**

The movement of Jonas is beyond societal expectations. He undertakes this arduous journey to feel newness in his life. Thus he must embark on a journey that leads him towards pain, suffering, imperfection, and ills to have better experiences in life. He is not happy to remain with the feelings of ‘sameness’—the experiences the familiarity and certainty. Rather he wishes for unfamiliarity. This journey from sameness to elsewhere is a critique of the seemingly perfect world that the community of Elders has created. Jonas’s journey from sameness (colorless, changeless society) to elsewhere (changing landscapes, changing weather) disillusion him moving away from the seemingly perfect society where he lives with (un)happiness. The study problematizes the perceived perfection and completion representing the innocence of children. The paper concludes that an experienced child questions the wrong trends which could be taken as a liberating event, a waiting moment for a child. When he receives the memories, he gains knowledge and insights. After receiving the memories, he experiences that the ‘sameness’ of perfection, happiness, and bliss is in vain because he realizes that the important parts of life are missing. He questions the ‘sameness’ and gradually protests against it, and moves towards ‘Elsewhere’. His journey from sameness to elsewhere is a challenge to the society. Jonas’s determination to challenge social and communal conformity is his venture to dive into a state of perfect freedom and bliss.

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