Performance Guidebook

A Literature to Life® Stage Presentation of

The Giver by Lois Lowry

A Program of Young Audiences New York

presented by

Regions & Tennessee Performing Arts Center
From our Season Sponsor

_REGIONS_

For 135 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our region has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to sponsor TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee (HOT). What an important program this is – reaching over 30,000 students, many of whom would never get to see a performing arts production without this local resource. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves, and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers,

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

2018-19 SEASON
for
Young People
Dear Teachers,

The seemingly utopian community of The Giver has kept this intriguing, award-winning book in circulation for 25 years. This Guidebook is designed to help you prepare students for an authentic and deeply connected experience of A Literature to Life® Stage Presentation of The Giver at TPAC, through immersive activities and useful information about the production.

In addition, you will find the Literature to Life® Teacher’s Resource Guide on the TPAC Education website: https://www.tpac.org/education-community/hot-season-for-young-people/performance-guidebooks/.

We hope you will find both resources useful and meaningful. We thank you for choosing to bring your students to experience this fascinating story through A Literature to Life® Stage Presentation of The Giver at TPAC!

Enjoy!

TPAC Education
A Literature to Life® presentation is a unique ninety-minute theatrical and educational experience comprised of a one hour verbatim solo performance and pre / post show interactive audience discussion facilitated by a Literature to Life Master Teaching Artist.

The Giver
By Lois Lowry
Performed by Aurea Tomeski
Adapted and Directed by Elise Thoron
Costume Design by Debra Otte

Aurea Tomeski has been captivating national audiences with her performance of The Giver since the spring of 2017. A pageant kid from the age of 5, Aurea grew up on stage and in front of the camera. She is a graduate of The New School for Drama’s MFA program with a concentration in Acting. Classically trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London and as a professional intern at A Noise Within in Southern California, Aurea has performed in numerous Shakespearean production on both the East and West Coast as Lady Macbeth, Lady Capulet, and Emilia. She most recently completed a tour with Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey as Titania in "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Aurea also holds a particular passion for developing new theatrical works in concert with writers and directors. She recently had the opportunity to create the role of Regina/Deirdre in "Dead Special Crabs" at The Barrow Group and the role of Carradine in “Tapefaces,” by Jon Kern, a play focusing on the particular difficulties of being an Asian/Caucasian mix in the modern world. You may have seen her on television as a clueless mother-to-be on TLC’s “I Didn’t Know I Was Pregnant,” or as a crime-solving best friend in Discovery ID’s “Scorned”. Aurea also does some work behind the scenes as a producer, with her most recent project being "Man On A Wire," a musical retelling of high-wire walker Philippe Petit's harrowing feat between the World Trade Center towers.

Farbeon Saucedo: Teaching Artist
Farbeon has been a teaching artist with Young Audiences New York’s Literature to Life® program since 2015. As a community-based Hip Hop artist, educator and agent of change, Farbeon works to develop pedagogy that moves beyond high-stakes testing and bridges the gap between the arts, academics and social youth development. He has taught Poetry, Performance, Song-Writing, Digital Media, Photography & Hip-Hop History and Culture at high schools, universities and community centers throughout the United States and abroad. Whether in the studio, on stage, behind the lens of a camera or in a classroom, Farbeon is dedicated to leveraging artistic craft and process to bring about dialogue, peace, understanding and to pave the way for the next generation of young ARTivists.
About this Performance and Company

How do you take a classic book for young audiences that presents a community’s worth of characters in a highly-defined, futuristic setting and adapt it into a compelling one-woman touring show? A Literature to Life® Stage Presentation of The Giver answers this complex question.

The production borrows elements of a memory play, chamber theatre and storytelling. In this stage presentation, one actress draws us into the world of The Giver, serving as both narrator and all the characters. She shares the story from a very minimal set using only stage boxes, a chair and a folder. The lighting and sound effects enhance the production by defining space and location.

- **Chamber theatre** is a method of adapting literary works to the stage using as much of the work’s original text as possible and often using minimal and suggestive settings.

- **Narration** is typically included in the performed text and the narration may be shared by multiple actors in the piece. The concept was first introduced by Professor Robert S. Breen (1909-1991) to his Oral Interpretation Classes at Northwestern University in the last 1940s.

- **Memory Play** is a term coined by Tennessee Williams to describe non-realistic dramas, such as his play, The Glass Menagerie. In this play the audience is introduced to the past as it is remembered by a narrator, complete with characters’ thoughts, fears, emotions, and recollections. Because it is memory and non-realistic it can be presented with unusual freedom of convention.

Literature to Life® is the American Place Theatre’s education program, providing performance-based literacy opportunities for students, along with a spark of imagination. Through “verbatim” one-performer adaptations of American literature, Literature to Life® adaptations include much of the story’s narration within the performed text—a key feature of chamber theatre.

This approach provides a feeling of intimacy in the performance, allowing audience members to feel as if the story is being told just for them. This minimalist style also insists that the audience focus on the story being shared and use their own imaginations as they “see” the imagery of story unfold.
Synopsis

*The Giver* is adapted from a 1993 American young adult novel by Lois Lowry. Set in a society which at first appears to be utopian it is gradually revealed to be, in fact, dystopian. The novel is written from the point of view of Jonas, an eleven-year-old boy living in a futuristic society that has eliminated all pain, fear, war, and hatred in favor of “sameness.”

While “sameness” has eliminated prejudice, competition and other problems in the community, it has also eradicated both emotional depth and choice from their lives.

At the beginning, we find Jonas apprehensive about the upcoming Ceremony of Twelve, when he will be given his official life-long assignment as a new adult member of the community. Jonas is selected for the highly honored position of Receiver of Memory, the sole keeper of the community’s collective memory.

As Receiver his responsibility is to store all the past memories of the time before Sameness, for the times when the wisdom gained from history might be needed to aid the community’s decision making. Jonas receives the memories of the past, good and bad, from the current Receiver, a wise old man who is known as the Giver.

As Jonas receives these memories, he realizes how bland and empty life in his community really is and begins to struggle with all the new emotions and concepts introduced to him, wondering whether they are inherently good, evil, or in between, and if it is even possible to have one without the other.

While the memories make Jonas’s life richer and more meaningful, he longs to share what he’s learning with the people he loves. As Jonas gains knowledge, he grows deeply frustrated with the members of his community. The Giver has felt this same way for years and is encouraging to Jonas.

When not with the Giver, Jonas helps his family take care of a problematic new child, Gabriel. Jonas helps Gabriel to sleep by transmitting soothing memories to him every night and begins to develop a relationship with Gabriel that mirrors the family relationships he has experienced through the memories.

When Gabriel is in danger of being released, the Giver reveals to Jonas that release is the same as death. Jonas’s horror at this revelation inspires the Giver to help Jonas devise a plan to change things in the community forever.

Together they plan for Jonas’ escape from the community and a journey to enter Elsewhere. However, Jonas is forced to leave earlier than planned when his father explains that Gabriel will be released the following day.
In order to save Gabriel, Jonas steals his father’s bicycle, some food and sets off for Elsewhere. As they travel, they gradually enter a landscape full of color, animals, and changing weather, in addition to experiencing hunger, danger, and exhaustion.

Avoiding search planes, Jonas and Gabriel continue their journey until heavy snow makes bike travel impossible. Half-frozen, but still comforting Gabriel with memories of sunshine and friendship, Jonas climbs a high hill. Finding the sled from his first transmitted memory waiting for him at the top, Jonas and Gabriel experience a glorious downhill ride on the sled. Below and ahead of them, are the twinkling lights of a village at Christmas. They hear music and Jonas is sure that someone there is expecting them.

...how could you describe a hill and snow to someone who had never felt height or wind or that feathery, magical cold?

-Lois Lowry, The Giver
Note: Teachers may want to consider the “Objectivity” activity in the Literature to Life® Resource Guide prior to the activity below.

LESSON ONE  

The Art of Storytelling (40 – 50 minutes)

Objective: Students will explore what it takes to be an effective storyteller and actor.

Materials: Copies of The Giver excerpt (page 8 in this guidebook)

What do you know about Storytelling?
Begin by asking students what they know about storytelling and acting. You may want to include some of the following prompts:

- What do you want to see in a performer sharing a story from the stage?
- Is there a difference between experiencing an actor in a role and someone reading aloud from literature? Responses might include, POV, narrative, dialogue, embodying the role vs. simply telling the story, etc.
- What do you think are the qualities of a great story and storyteller?
- Do you have a friend who shares the stories of their life in a way that is so entertaining you can’t wait to hear about their latest adventure?
  - Can you can hear their voice and style telling you a story even when they are not there?
  - Are you that great storyteller?
- What are some of the ways a storyteller might use their body, voice, tempo and emotions to help convey the story.

Activity: Let’s Tell a Story!
Provide each student with a copy of The Giver excerpt, found on page 8 in this guidebook. Allow students a couple of minutes to read the excerpt to themselves.

- Briefly discuss the passage to ensure comprehension.
- Have students gather in groups of 4 – 6. Make sure each group has a space in which to work.
- Instruct students to divide the text amongst their group so that each person has a section for which they are responsible. Ask them to think carefully about how to divide the text. What choice will best serve the storytelling?
- Explain that they will work “round-robin” style, taking turns reading the passage out loud to their fellow group members.
- Allow time for the groups to rehearse before performing for the rest of the class. Give them time to experiment and refine their performance choices. Side coach as needed and share the Rehearsal Tips with students.
- Have each group perform for the rest of the class.

Now, too, he could feel cold air swirling around his entire body. He felt it blow against his hands where they lay at his sides, and over his back.

-Lois Lowry, The Giver
Final Thoughts
Following all the performances take some time to process the experience with the students:

- What were the challenges of developing a performance of this descriptive memory passage? How did it differ from playing a role in a play?
- How were you able to distribute and coordinate the performance across all the group members?
- Did you feel you were successful? What made you successful?
- What changes would you make if you could do it again?

Rehearsal Tips
As you prepare to share your group interpretation with the class:

- Explore the ways in which each reader might use their voice to convey the action and emotions.
- How can your body also add meaning to the narrative? Practice different postures, gestures and movements for the greatest impact and variety.
- Imagine the sight and feel of the snow for yourself. Use your own personal memories and impressions to help the audience experience snow for the first time.
- Be bold with your choices!
Jonas felt nothing unusual at first. He felt only the light touch of the old man’s hands on his back.

He tried to relax, to breathe evenly. The room was absolutely silent, and for a moment Jonas feared that he might disgrace himself now, on the first day of his training, by falling asleep.

Then he shivered. He realized that the touch of the hands felt, suddenly, cold. At the same instant, breathing in, he felt the air change, and his very breath was cold. He licked his lips, and in doing so, his tongue touched the suddenly chilled air.

It was very startling; but he was not at all frightened, now. He was filled with energy, and he breathed again, feeling the sharp intake of frigid air. Now, too, he could feel cold air swirling around his entire body. He felt it blow against his hands where they lay at his sides, and over his back.

The touch of the man’s hands seemed to have disappeared.

Now he became aware of an entirely new sensation: pinpricks? No, because they were soft and without pain. Tiny, cold, featherlike feelings peppered his body and face. He put out his tongue again, and caught one of the dots of cold upon it. It disappeared from his awareness instantly; but he caught another, and another. The sensation made him smile.

One part of his consciousness knew that he was still lying there, on the bed, in the Annex room. Yet another, separate part of his being was upright now, in a sitting position, and beneath him he could feel that he was not on the soft decorated bedcovering at all, but rather seated on a flat, hard surface. His hands now held (though at the same time they were still motionless at his sides) a rough, damp rope.

And he could see, though his eyes were closed. He could see a bright, whirling torrent of crystals in the air around him, and he could see them gather on the backs of his hands, like cold fur.

His breath was visible.

Beyond, through the swirl of what he now, somehow, perceived was the thing the old man had spoken of—snow—he could look out and down a great distance. He was up high someplace. The ground was thick with the furry snow, but he sat slightly above it on a hard, flat object.

Sled, he knew abruptly. He was sitting on a thing called sled. And the sled itself seemed to be poised at the top of a long, extended mound that rose from the very land where he was. Even as he thought the word “mound,” his new consciousness told him hill.

The sled, with Jonas himself upon it, began to move through the snowfall, and he understood instantly that now he was going downhill. No voice made an explanation. The experience explained itself to him.
LESSON 2
Defined by Our Memories

Objective: Students will explore the ways in which memories define us by writing a memory monologue suitable for performance.

Materials needed: pen or pencil and notebook paper

Note to teacher: This lesson has two parts. You can choose to do only Part A, or, continue with Part B in the same class period, if time permits, or on another day.

Part A – (30 minutes)
Do You Remember?
Discuss the role of memories in our lives with your students. You may want to include some of the following prompts:

• How many of you think of yourselves as having a good memory?
• What makes you think you have a good memory?
• In your memories, what stands out the most: the sights, sounds, smells or emotions attached to events in your life?
• How would you say our memories contribute to the way we define ourselves or our families? Our community or culture?
• Have students take a couple of minutes to write down some memories that may be bubbling up for them based on the discussion.
• Ask students to focus on a favorite memory in which they felt particularly happy, excited, or accomplished. Maybe it was a special event or adventure of some kind. Perhaps they have a memory they think of as defining who they are today.
• Ask students to consider why the memory they’ve selected is one of their favorite memories. Is it because of the people involved, the activities, the location, or something else? Model: Share one of your own favorite, defining memories with your students.
• Once students have selected a memory invite them to close their eyes and see it taking place again; visualize it in all its details.

Writing a Memory Monologue
• Once students have had time to visualize, invite them to write out their selected memory on notebook paper, from their own point of view.
• Guide students to write their memory as if it were a monologue to be performed and shared with an audience from a stage:
  o Ask students how they might share that memory in a way that would be interesting, entertaining, helpful, or meaningful to someone in the audience?
  o Is this memory monologue best told by you or do you need to create a character to tell this memory more effectively?
  o Allow your responses to shift the way you write this memory.

“If you were to be lost in the river, Jonas, your memories would not be lost with you. Memories are forever.”
— Lois Lowry, The Giver
Final Thoughts
At the conclusion of the writing assignment ask students:

- What they think the impact would be on their lives if the memories they wrote about had never happened? How would they be different?
- What would it be like for an entire community or society to have no shared memories, no knowledge of their own history? How might that impact the way the community defines themselves?

Part B (30 – 40 minutes)
Bringing the Monologue to Life
Students will use the memory monologues they wrote in Part A for this activity. Please be sure to share the definition of a memory play on page ___ with your students.

- Have students pair up and decide which partner will be A and which B? Have all the Bs read their memory monologue aloud to their respective As. Then switch and have all the A’s read their memories to their respective Bs.
- Allow time for revisions before having partners swap their written memory monologues with one another.
- Thinking about these written memories as monologues, Partner A will now direct Partner B in a performance of Partner A’s memory story.
- Partner B will then direct Partner A in a performance of Partner B’s memory story.
- Instruct students that they are to direct their partner to deliver this memory monologue for the greatest impact on the audience:
  - What do they want the audience to understand or feel after experiencing the monologue?
  - How can they bring the story and images to life?
  - How can they use body language, facial expression, gesture, voice, etc. to communicate their ideas?
  - How can you embody someone else’s story?
  - How does an actor make the picture/images come alive for the reader/audience?

Final Thoughts
Have students respond to the performances:

- What did they notice about the memory monologues?
- What choices helped bring the stories to life?
- In what ways were each pair’s performance choices the same or different?
- If you had an opportunity to do it again, what would you change?
**LESSON 3**  
One-Person Verbatim Adaptation  
*(45 – 60 minutes)*

**Objectives:** Students will edit an excerpt of *The Giver* with many characters to create a verbatim adaptation to be performed by one person.

**Materials needed:** A copy of *The Giver* excerpt, pen or pencil, notebook paper. (To print the excerpt, print pages 15-16 of this PDF document.)

**Introduction:**

*Is it a book or a play?* Have a discussion with students about a one person show and verbatim adaptation. You may want to include some of the following prompts:

- What are some of the ways one performer could bring *The Giver* to life?
- What will be some of the challenges the performer faces?
- How can one performer play all the characters?
- What’s the difference between a one-person show and a larger cast?
- How might one adapt a novel for the stage to be performed by one individual.
- What do you think it means to create a “verbatim” adaptation? Very important that students understand this concept before moving to the activity that follows.
- Would we want to put the entire book on stage verbatim? Why or why not?
- If not the whole book, then how would an adapter choose what to keep and what to edit out?
- Introduce the vocabulary Verbatim, Adaptation and Verbatim Adaptation.

_**Verbatim** means in exactly the same words as were used originally._

_**Verbatim Adaptation** as used by *Literature to Life®* means that everything the performer says is in the exact words as they appear in the original book. It does not mean, however, that everything in the novel appears on stage. There is much editing and distilling down of the novel in the stage production, yet everything heard on stage does appear in the book and the order of events remains the same, as well._

**Activity:**

*You are the Adapter*

Explain to the students that they will create their own verbatim adaptation of *The Giver* excerpt they are receiving.

1. Begin by pairing off. Each student will need a copy of *The Giver* excerpt included with this lesson. Have students read the excerpt individually and then discuss the plot points with their partner.
2. In this activity, students will work with their partner to create their own adaptations of this excerpt. Students may mark up the text by crossing out what they no longer need, etc. They may want to rewrite the sections they are using for easier reading.

3. Consider:
   - Which portions of the excerpt must stay, and which they can edit out and still maintain the main ideas of the excerpt?
   - How can one person can embody all these characters and tell this story?
   - How can the adaptation and/or direction and set design be incorporated to assist the performer?

4. Prepare to share:
   - When they are satisfied with their written edits, each pair will decide which person will direct and which will become the actor/storyteller.
   - If a sturdy box or platform strong enough to sit on is available, let students know they may use one box and one chair for their set pieces. Two chairs will work in lieu of a box, if not available.

5. Allow students time to rehearse and refine their choices. Side coach as needed.
   - Have each pair share their performance with another pair.
   - If time permits, ask for a few pairs to volunteer to perform for the full group.

**Final Thoughts**
Following the performances ask students about their experience:
- What were some of your challenges in adapting the excerpt?
- Was it difficult to keep it verbatim? Did you want to make another choice regarding the text itself?
- How did you overcome these challenges?
- Did preparing the performance add a new set of challenges?
- How did you work on this adaptation differ from your work performing the first snow?
“Who wants to be the first tonight, for feelings?” Jonas’s father asked, at the conclusion of their evening meal. It was one of the rituals, the evening telling of feelings. Sometimes Jonas and his sister, Lily, argued over turns, over who would get to go first. Their parents, of course, were part of the ritual; they, too, told their feelings each evening. But like all parents—all adults—they didn’t fight and wheedle for their turn.

Nor did Jonas, tonight. His feelings were too complicated this evening. He wanted to share them, but he wasn’t eager to begin the process of sifting through his own complicated emotions, even with the help that he knew his parents could give.

“You go, Lily,” he said, seeing his sister, who was much younger—only a Seven—wiggling with impatience in her chair.

“I felt very angry this afternoon,” Lily announced. “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. One of them—a male; I don’t know his name—kept going right to the front of the line for the slide, even though the rest of us were all waiting. I felt so angry at him. I made my hand into a fist, like this.” She held up a clenched fist and the rest of the family smiled at her small defiant gesture.

“Why do you think the visitors didn’t obey the rules?” Mother asked. Lily considered, and shook her head. “I don’t know. They acted like . . . like . . .” “Animals?” Jonas suggested. He laughed.

“That’s right,” Lily said, laughing too. “Like animals.” Neither child knew what the word meant, exactly, but it was often used to describe someone uneducated or clumsy, someone who didn’t fit in.

“Where were the visitors from?” Father asked.

Lily frowned, trying to remember. “Our leader told us, when he made the welcome speech, but I can’t remember. I guess I wasn’t paying attention. It was from another community. They had to leave very early, and they had their midday meal on the bus.”

Mother nodded. “Do you think it’s possible that their rules may be different?”

Excerpt from *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
And so they simply didn’t know what your play area rules were?”
Lily shrugged, and nodded. “I suppose.”
“You’ve visited other communities, haven’t you?” Jonas asked. “My
group has, often.”
Lily nodded again. “When we were Sixes, we went and shared a whole
school
day with a group of Sixes in their community.”
How did you feel when you were there?”
Lily frowned. “I felt strange. Because their methods were different.
They were learning usages that my group hadn’t learned yet, so we
felt stupid.”
Father was listening with interest. “I’m thinking, Lily,” he said,
“about the boy who didn’t obey the rules today. Do you think it’s
possible that he felt strange and stupid, being in a new place with rules
that he didn’t know about?”
Lily pondered that. “Yes,” she said, finally.
“I feel a little sorry for him,” Jonas said, “even though I don’t even
know him. I feel sorry for anyone who is in a place where he feels
strange and stupid.” “How do you feel now, Lily?” Father asked. “Still
angry?”
“I guess not,” Lily decided. “I guess I feel a little sorry for him. And
sorry I made a fist.” She grinned.
Activities for Additional Exploration

- Have students explore the nature of a community with very specific and proscribed ceremonies and rituals. Have them create families of 4 and demonstrate a ceremony or ritual. To add the experience of what it means to be an outsider, have one member of each “family” shift groups with the expectation that they will pick up their new family’s ritual without explanation.

- What is the role of music in student’s life? Explore what it would mean to live in a world where there is no color, no music, no choice. Have students create a family unit that either lives with music or not and then randomly switch them to the other parameters.

- Have students explore the relationship between personal choices and career decisions? What jobs and careers are available to meet individual and societal needs locally, regionally, and nationally? What if society dictated your job by the time you were 13 based on who you’ve presented yourself to be to date?

- Explore the different POVs in The Giver along with an assessment of the jobs selected for each person by The Elders. Ask students to consider what power society should have to promote or limit freedom, choice, and desire.

- Shifting from character to character – how can distilled acting choices help the actor transition quickly between each character, repeatedly.

- Explore the Resource Guide from Literature to Life® where you will find activities across a broad range of curriculum.

Links and other info:

* Literature to Life
  http://literaturetolife.org

* Literature to Life® Teachers Resource Guide (on TPAC’s Performance Guidebook webpage)

* More about The American Place Theatre
  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_American_Place_Theatre

* Lois Lowry Interview on Reading Rockets
  http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/lowry
Special Thanks

Tennessee Performing Arts Center's nonprofit mission is to lead with excellence in the performing arts and arts education, creating meaningful and relevant experiences to enrich lives, strengthen communities, and support economic vitality. TPAC Education is funded solely by generous contributions, sponsorships, and in-kind gifts from our partners.

Additional Acknowledgements

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