Speaking and Listening – Level 8

Sample 1 Group discussion: Life lessons in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

Note: Students have been numbered left to right from 1 to 6.

STUDENT 4 What is *The Giver* about?

STUDENT 6 So, *The Giver* is a novel written by Lois Lowry and it depicts the journey of a young adult named Jonas. And he lives in a society where it’s controlled entirely by the government, led by some elders and the Chief Elder, as well as the Receiver of Memory who … He’s basically controlling them, but like not controlling them at the same time.

So … He lives in a society where everything is controlled and so no-one gets to pick their jobs, pick who they … who they’re in a relationship with. So there’s, like, no freedom of choice or anything.

STUDENT 4 Um, so what are the life lessons within *The Giver*?

STUDENT 3 So, you and I, we did, um … we did the lesson of how important art, culture and tradition is to the community or Jonas’s community in particular.

So, um, Jonas’s community, when we read the novel, when we watch the movie, we can see that they're very robotic. It’s controlled very robotically and there’s manipulation to how these people grow up and how these people live their lives. So they’re basically spoon-fed every single detail about how their life is going to be, like, in the future.

And Jonas’s community is stripped of all these things like art and culture, music. Everything that lays the foundation for our society in our present day. So, if we were going to imagine ourselves in his, um, in his place, it could be, like, really depressing. It could be really, like, just really empty in general.

STUDENT 4 Our next life lesson that we’ve done, which is …

STUDENT 3 The differences of living and surviving.

So, like, in Jonas’s community, the way they’re growing up, they don’t really have any meaning to how they’re living. There’s no, um, feeling of fulfilment. You know?

So, um, it just … It’s … Similarly, it’s just like eating without a sense of taste. You can … It … You know, it helps you to survive, but there’s still not that same flavour that we, like, enjoy and crave for in our society today.

So, it shows how ... Because they’re rid of all these things that brings them hobbies and brings them, um, you know, enjoyment, there’s no actual reason for them to live, other than to just work as one part of a society.

STUDENT 4 That’s exactly right, and it’s very systematic.

They don’t get to choose their job, they don’t get to choose who they love, and so they will never experience the downfall of choosing a wrong choice or the heartbreak or developing love, feelings for somebody. They will never experience that because they’re trapped in their own mind.

STUDENT 3 Yeah, they’re enslaved to this sort of thinking because this is the only thing they’ve ever known in their life.

STUDENT 1 We believe that another important life lesson is the importance of perspective.

STUDENT 2 Yes.

And the … Lois Lowry’s allegory, *The Giver*, is … shows perspective in a way where the society Jonas lives in is very manipulative and the people of the community were … their perspective and their point of view and how they view things was taken away from them completely.

They didn’t get to choose, as everyone said, what they do. They don’t get to choose what they see, because the Chief Elder has taken that away from them and said, ‘No, this is what you see, this is how you see it, and this is what must happen.’

And perspective is a very important thing in life—our life—in general. It is how we view things. It is how we interpret things. And it, um … puts a …

STUDENTS LAUGHS

STUDENT 3 It just puts, like … It gives us, you know, freedom.

STUDENT 2 And it kind of governs how we do things and how we act and their right to do that was just completely taken from them.

And, like, [name redacted], for an example. His perspective on climate change is that it doesn’t exist and that is just completely wrong and…

STUDENT 3 It steals, like, from our future as well.

STUDENT 2 Yeah.

STUDENT 3 If you don’t think that climate change exists, what is it going to do for Australia’s, you know, future generation?

STUDENT 4 So, you’re saying that our world, their world, is in jeopardy because no-one is able to have their own view on things?

STUDENT 2 Yeah, yeah.

STUDENT 1 Jonas, the main protagonist, has the ability to see beyond. This basically allows him to view our world as it is right now, with colour, music and emotions. It separates him from the rest of the community because instead of seeing black and white, both metaphorically and literally, he sees colours and has the ability to experience, um …

STUDENT 3 What we see today.

STUDENT 2 Yeah.

And perspective decides how we function, but it also decides how we, um … how we choose to benefit society with generating new ideas and opinions and thinking for ourselves, giving us freedom to decide how we live and how we work. Um …

STUDENT 5 Can I add to that?

STUDENT 4 Yeah, sure.

STUDENT 5 Like, the people of the community, their perspective of the community is just that their community is perfect. It’s a utopia. They don’t see it as, like, they're in prison. So, like …

STUDENT 4 Yeah …

STUDENT 5 It’s not really the same as …

STUDENT 4 That’s another reason why Jonas left so that the people of his community could have perspective.

Moving on to our next life lesson.

STUDENT 6 Which is the importance of history and truth.

And the importance of history is if you have history, you know what happened, so you won’t really do it again. It’s like using your prior knowledge to act upon … like, make decisions right now based on what has happened before so it doesn’t happen again.

So, it’s like when you do something wrong, you won’t do it again because you know that it’s, like, the wrong thing and there’s always gonna be, like, a consequence. So if there’s no history, how can you improve? So there’s no way that a society can improve or benefit …

STUDENT 3 Develop.

STUDENT 6 Yeah, develop, or … So, there’s no benefit … benefits to having no history or anything like that.

STUDENT 5 Um … There is a movie of *The Giver*. It’s not very successful but it was … it did show … explain life lessons very well throughout it, especially at the end, when the memories are released. A lot of the citizens realise that their actions, like, need to be, like, recognised. They need to look back at history and, like, see, like, what was wrong and how they can improve. And they realise that their community is a dystopia, because they may realise in the future that the elders are killing innocent people.

So … And another life lesson that is taught throughout it is having good and bad experiences, um ... like, experiencing, like, heartbreak, um … and, like, just any bad experience, and to learn from that bad experience.

STUDENT 4 To make good experiences. Yeah.