

Symbolism in The Giver

Symbol	Purpose of Symbol in Story	Examples of Symbol in Story	Main Idea/Summary
1. Color Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows Jonas as separate from community because he can see the color Shows strong emotions – love, hate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apple toss with Asher – shows Jonas’ ability to see as a separation between friends Fiona’s hair – symbolizes Jonas’ desire to feel emotions The Giver’s books – shows wisdom denied to the community Lights on the house in Elsewhere – shows ideas of freedom/escape 	Color is necessary to illustrate Jonas’ separation from the community
2. Gabriel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represents Jonas accessing emotions (particularly love) denied by community rules Represents purity because he is untainted by the community’s rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gabriel can’t sleep or adapt to life in the Nurturing center so he is brought into Jonas’ home; everyone has to sign something saying that they won’t become attached (typifying the community’s rules and morality). Jonas is unable to resist caring for Gabriel despite the societal expectations Becomes Jonas’ Receiver during his stay at the house and the escape Becomes the reason that Jonas escapes ahead of the Giver’s time frame 	Gabriel is necessary to give Jonas a reason to achieve emotional maturity/security and a reason to break ties with the community
3. Sled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving downhill on the sled symbolizes the transfer of memories from the Giver to Jonas Symbolizes rescue when Jonas needs to mentally and physically escape the community’s reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First memory given to Jonas by the Giver Shows Jonas what cold is so that he can use those memories to protect Gabriel and himself from the heat-seeking airplanes during their escape – he makes them both cold. Jonas finds the sled at the end when he and Gabriel are about to give up. They use the sled to go toward the lights of the house in Elsewhere 	Sled is used to illustrate receiving memory and Jonas’ escape.
4. Light Eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbolizes the ability to see deeply, which allows Jonas to be the Receiver (he has depth of vision) Symbolizes separation from the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lily points out that Jonas and Gabriel both have ‘funny’ eyes which angers Jonas because he wants to be part of the community in the beginning of the book. Light eyes allow colors to refract more easily allowing Jonas to see colors more clearly Symbolizes separation from the crowd 	The light eyes symbolize a person’s ability to think and see more clearly and deeply.
5. River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbolizes the boundary between the community and Elsewhere which stops people from leaving Symbolizes change – river continues to move away, not static Symbolizes death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caleb’s death by drowning in the river introduces the negativity of death, which can be compared to the attitudes of the community to release. Jonas crosses the river to escape to Elsewhere 	The river represents a block between the community and free thoughts and actions