

Messenger
Science Fiction by Lois Lowry
Houghton Mifflin Company
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About the Author:

Lois Lowry, author of over 20 novels and winner of the Newberry Award, is an author who forces her readers to confront our imperfections as a society. Her topics include adoption, mental illness, cancer, the Holocaust, and futuristic societies. She states that she measures her success by ability to “help adolescents answer their own questions about life, identity and human relationships.”



Lois Lowry has written about herself that she always felt she was fortunate to have been born in the middle child of three. Her older sister, Helen, spent much time with their mother and her younger brother, Jon shared many interests with their dad.

According to her, “I was a solitary child who lived in the world of books and my own vivid imagination.”

Because her father was a career military officer, her family lived all over the world, including Tokyo, Japan. At age nineteen, Lois Lowry married a Naval officer and moved quite frequently, living in Hawaii, California, Florida, South Carolina, Massachusetts, Maine and Tokyo. Her five children grew up in Maine where she received her degree at University of Southern Maine and went to graduate school. In 1977 her marriage ended. She now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts wither her Tibetan Terrier, Bandit. Her hobbies include gardening, feeding birds, entertaining friends and reading. It is obvious that she is passionate about life on this earth and our interdependence on one another.

Personal Webpage: <http://loislowry.com>

Random House:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780440229490&view=tg>

Houghton Mifflin Books:

http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press_release/messenger/

Books: *All About Sam*, Anastasia Krupnik series such as *Anastasia Absolutely*, *Gathering Blue*, *The Giver*, *Messenger* and *Gooney Bird Green*

Annotation:

Strange things are happening in Village, a utopian community that has always prided itself on welcoming outsiders. Matty, a young man who was welcomed to the village years ago is now the person who carries messages to others outside the village. He lives under the care of Seer, a blind man who has special powers. Matty has an emerging power that he does not yet understand. This power enables him to travel safely through Forest when others cannot. When, through a democratic vote, it is decided to build a wall to prevent strangers from entering, Matty enters Forest to carry this message to others and bring back Seer's daughter, Kira, before it is too late.

If you have read *The Giver*, it will not take you long to once again immerse yourself in the utopian community Lois Lowry has created. She continues her lessons on consumerism, interdependence and greed through the consciousness of a young person. Ms. Lowry has stated that she realized that she could not talk to both adults and kids at the same time with truth and no platitudes, so she chose kids. How lucky for kids! And how lucky it is for the rest of the world, that she is able to draw thousands and thousands of kids (and adults) into her stories that look at poverty, pain, injustice, power and greed.

Booktalk:

If you liked *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue*, you will enjoy reading *Messenger*. *Messenger* unites characters from these two books. Matty, a young boy who was introduced in *Gathering Blue*, is living with Seer, the blind man in an open and friendly community called Village. It is a community that prides itself on welcoming strangers. However, soon some of the people begin to change and Matty begins to link this to them trading their "deepest selves" for objects such as game machines that give candy. When some of these same people vote to build a wall to keep out strangers, Matty makes an extremely dangerous journey through Forest to carry the message about the wall and to bring back the Seer's daughter, Kira. Matty has been one of the only people to travel through Forest safely. Meanwhile, Forest has been thickening and growing more sinister each day. Will Matty and Kira make it to Village? Will the people in Village continue to build the wall? If you love *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue*, you will love *Messenger*.

Theme: utopias, community life, healing, science fiction, caring for one another, the relationship between humans and our natural surroundings, self-discovery. The title, *Messenger*, is the name Matty is hoping that will be given to him as his "true name." Messages and communication are vital to our existence. I believe Ms. Lowry is continuing her theme of our interdependence upon one another. Ironically, if the people in Village finish building the wall and do not let any strangers in, there will be no need for a messenger.

Setting: A utopian community called Village in the future.

Point of View: Story is told from the point of view of the main character, Matty who is the messenger for the village.

Characters:

Matty: is the main character and a young man who was first introduced in Gathering Blue as a scruffy thief; he lives with the blind man, Seer and is living a carefree existence at the beginning of the story.

Seer: a blind older man whose special power is “seeing” although he is blind; he has raised Matty as his own child

Kira: Seer’s daughter who does not live in Village

Mentor: Village schoolteacher who is a patient and wise teacher until he begins going to Trade Mart.

Jean: Mentor’s daughter and friend of Matty

Ramon: friend of Matty whose family purchases the Game Machine

Gatherer: a cheerful man who loved children and animals but was taken by Forest

Leader: the person chosen to guard and rule the people he loved

Trademaster: leads the Trade Mart

Conflict: The conflict arises when many of the people who live in Village vote to build a wall that will prevent any more strangers from entering and living in Village. This decision appears to be promoted by those who have consistently participated in Trade night. Matty comes to believe that they are trading themselves for objects because they began to change in mysterious ways. For example, the teacher who has always been open to others, especially children is now leading the group to close Village. This conflict is an external conflict although there are several internal conflicts in the story.

Conflict Resolution: The conflict is resolved once Matty and Kira begin to travel through the forest to try to get to Village before the wall is completed. They must travel through Forest which is growing more sinister by the day. In order to save Kira, heal Forest and Village, Matty must use all of his new found healing powers.

Genre: Science Fiction

Interest Level: Grades 5 - 9

Reading Level: 4.9

Read-Aloud Passages:

Chapter 10, pp 83 – 86. This passage describes the dramatic changes in the people of Village after attending Trade night.

Chapter 16, pp. 138 – 141. This passage describes the ominous changes in Forest as Matty and Kira travel through Forest to Village.

If you like Messenger, you will like: *Gathering Blue*, *The Giver*, *Number the Stars* (all by Lois Lowry) and *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle