

## Power (or) Control as the Central Motif in *The Giver Quartet* of Lois Lowry

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### Abstract

As the readers flip the pages of Lois Lowry, they can notice the elements of power articulating within the plots in all the four books of Lois Lowry which structured in the form of series under the title *The Giver Quartet*. *The Giver Quartet* consists of books entitled *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, *Messenger* and *Son*. Each book has its own protagonist but the mainstream of the plots is setup under the same futuristic era. This paper deals with the articulation of power and its functions as portrayed in Lois Lowry's *The Giver Quartet*.

**Keywords:** Control, Council of Edifice, Patriarchy, Power, Utopia

### Introduction

Power is generally associated with the act or authority which a person instills on another person. In human relationship power is generally associated with domination which inculcates authoritative relationship in human society. Knowledge plays a vital role with accordance to power. According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, power is something which goes hand in hand with knowledge. Power is constituted out of knowledge and power generates knowledge by molding it according to its needs and uses. The phrase "Knowledge is power" which is popularly associated with the terms of power and knowledge, is popularly attributed to an English philosopher and statesman named Sir Francis Bacon. A man of Knowledge during his lifetime can make people obey and follow him and he is usually praised and is venerated after death. When one probes into the biblical context, one can notice that power is the ultimate element which functions between the Supreme God and people. Power is an inherent quality of God which is seen in all of His creations.

Lois Lowry is an American writer and winner of two Newberry Medals for her works titled *Number the Stars* in 1990 and *The Giver* in 1994. She was born on 20 March 1937 in the capital city of Hawaii namely Honolulu. She is remarkably known for the complicated subject matters and themes which she employs in most of her writings. She is one of the predominant writers whose focus lies mainly on young audiences. Lois Lowry says that her motive for writing for young people is that she relishes the act of recollecting her own life as a child while writing. Her experiences with her Children have made her to realize the significance of “Treating Young People with sensitivity and compassion”.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this paper is to describe the elements of power portrayed in Lois Lowry's *The Giver Quartet*. Lois Lowry is one of the world's most beloved and versatile writers of Children Literature. Lois Lowry's *The Giver Quartet* is a collection of four books titled *The Giver*, *Gathering Blue*, *Messenger* and *Son*, which altogether talk about Lois Lowry's model of Utopian world. Each book has its own protagonist but the mainstream of the plots is setup under the same futuristic era. The world which is depicted by Lois Lowry in her *The Giver* is enormously seductive innature:

“Lowry has intentionally constructed its society to solve many contemporary problems, particularly those likely to be of significance of Twelve years old and their parents” (52).

The novel *The Giver* surrounds around the protagonist who is 12 year old namely Jonas. The world of Jonas is perfect. Everything is under control. There is no war, fear or pain. By definition, this is like Utopia, an ideal place where no problem exists and where humans co-exist happily. In the novel *The Giver*, every person is assigned a role of work. No one is able to choose his/her choice of work, marriage, vocations, having children etc. So power plays a vital role in the novel *The Giver*. The power which is laid down by the elders in the village should be obeyed by all the people. A small group of people or officials known as the Council of the Guardians rules the populace. They administer the laws of their people, while maintaining their history by performing the rite.

In the Novel *Gathering Blue*, power is laid by the elders in the village. In this novel, Kira the story's main character is born with a deformity in a society which euthanizes the sick and the crippled. There is a class distinction in the society where Kira and her mother have lived in and the men have all power and women are viewed as second class citizens, forbidden from learning to read and write.

The Twelve members of the Guardian Council are all men and they represent the most significant link to the readers, modern-day society. The Twelve Members of the Council mirror the structure through their powers which extend beyond deciding the outcome of simple trials. They are the rulers of Kira's people and the keepers of their history. Even the power plays a strong gender role which clearly exists in Kira's Village, a patriarchal society. When a man's wife dies, her children are taken and given to other women to raise. The men are for hunting and governing, and the women are for raising the children and tending the family garden.

After the death of her mother, Katrina, Kira is taken to live in a compound called the "Council of Edifice". The Edifice is a remnant of an ancient society and is the only modern building in the village. Jamison is appointed to represent Kira.

Jamison is familiar with Kira's family and is aware that she possesses an extraordinary skill in needlecraft. A poor class living in a place called Fen and a ruling class called Guardians are referred but not yet explored.

In the Village, the instruments of control are the Council of Guardians and the bell in the tower of the Council Edifice. The bell tells the people when to start work, when to stop, when to gather for meetings, when to celebrate and when to arm against danger. The Council of guardians is the governing body of the village. The Guardians control the tower bell, interpret and enforce the way, mediate disputes, and preserve the history of the people. The Guardians live and meet in the Council Edifice, an ancient stone structure in the center of the village. The Edifice is the only structure known to survive the ruin. It was once a church, and the Guardians have adopted a role similar to that of clergy.

Kira is alone while her mother was dead, and is taken to the elders. The Council decides what she should do. Here the power of the Council is brought out in

these words: ““Kira”, he said, looking toward her, “demonstrate your flow for the Council of Guardians. Let us see your walk. Go to the door and back””. So after having all these demonstrations, she is assigned to do the needle craft work in the singers robe.

The characters from both the novels entitled *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue* are brought back into the third novel titled *Messenger* and the novel acts as a strong continuity of the first and the second novels. The plot demonstrates the lives of an isolated community which is simply named as village. The storyline surrounds around a boy namely Matty who is the messenger-bearer of the lethal forest where the isolated community lives in. The character Matty is brought back from the second novel *Gathering Blue*. Matty possesses a special unique ability, which he is unaware of, which makes him mentally fury and drives him mad. Towards the end of the novel, by putting his hands on the ground at the risk of his own life, he manages to restore the integrity of the Forest and the people who are dependent on the forest for their livelihood. At the end of the novel, Matty’s soul is drifted deep into the earth by saving the forest and the villagers. Matty’s powers switch the chaos into peace which fetches him the title of “the Healer”.

In the fourth novel entitled *Son*, Claire is assigned as a vessel, which means she should carry the child in her stomach. After that she is not ready to carry the second child, so she is assigned to work in the farm or in the factory or for food delivery, which is not her wish, but the village people assign that work to her. This proves that the power plays an important role.

### **Conclusion**

All of the books from *The Giver Quartet* series highlight the articulation of power which functions in the society. Power gives birth to the concept of domination and influence of one community over the other. It determines and formulates the workings of the various communities in the society. Lois Lowry has demonstrated such strong characteristics of power in her storylines and has highlighted the scenario of how such power influenced the lives of the people.

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