

THE DANGERS OF POWER: GOVERNMENT CONTROL IN THE WORLDS OF  
CONDIE'S *MATCHED* AND LOWRY'S *THE GIVER*

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**Title**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper considers the topic of government control through the context of young adult dystopian literature. The novels *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry and *Matched* (2011) by Ally Condie are specifically considered in their connection to governmental control over an entire society. The novels *The Giver* and *Matched* both provide views into worlds where such basic human experiences as language use and memory are controlled, so that the protagonists—Jonas (*The Giver*) and Cassia (*Matched*)—find themselves torn between trusting what they have been told all their lives by their respective societies and what they have come to understand through their own experiences apart from the controlled environment of the government. Through these novels, we are shown the complete stagnation of the human experience possible when government structures are allowed to control all aspects of life in a culture, society, or country and no one challenges their decisions.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all my friends and family who supported me along this journey and made the completion of this project possible!

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When perusing the shelves of Barnes and Noble, it's nearly impossible to miss the growing section of dystopian novels on the shelves. These novels tell of dramatic adventures, revolution, tyrannical governments, utter chaos, and apocalyptic themes through their pages. M. Keith Booker, a notable scholar of dystopian research, defines this literary movement as "specifically that literature which situates itself in direct opposition to utopian thought, a warning against the political consequences of arrant utopianism" (3). While utopian novels strive to show the possibility for humans (or other creatures) to live in idealistic harmony ("Utopia"), dystopian novels seek to prove the opposite: uniformity and harmony never being possible.

Many dystopian novels begin with a "perfect" utopian society where all work together in unison and the society runs like a well-oiled machine as seen in the beginning chapters of George Orwell's *1984*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*; however, once the plot of these novels is revealed, the entire structure of the novel's world begins to unravel, showing the dangers and complete impossibilities of these social structures. No matter the situation, no culture of people can stand to live in a world completely controlled by another without some form of rebellion or resistance. This phenomenon appears within the final novels in Suzanne Collins's series *The Hunger Games* or Victoria Roth's series *Divergent*, where the entire society is thrown into a war between the government and the controlled citizens. In these two novels, many people died in the final battle, but the government was successfully overthrown, providing the readers with a happy ending. While many dystopian novels don't end in such an extreme manner, some form of rebellion against the society's status quo often helps shape the plot of the novel and provide some hope in an otherwise depressing

story. The control of the government is almost always revealed and challenged, providing the citizens with a chance to speak for themselves.

Within the scope of dystopian novels, a subcategory—young adult dystopian fiction—has risen in popularity. These novels handle the common dystopian themes in a manner better understood by teenage readers by providing relatable plots and characters. As a differentiation between what is considered “traditional” dystopian fiction and what is “young adult” dystopian fiction, there are a few points of comparison. One main difference between these two genre categories is the ending. Most traditional dystopian novels end with little to no hope. In Orwell’s *1984*, the novel ends with Winston left in the torture chamber after betraying his love, Julia. Similarly, Huxley’s *Brave New World* ends with John’s suicide after realizing the horrors which took place previously. These depressing, hopeless endings aren’t as prevalent among YA dystopias. *Hunger Games* ends with Katniss and Peta surviving the war and living with their children in District 12. *The Giver* ends with Jonas and Gabriel sledding down a hill after escaping from the community. The list of hopeful endings could continue. This isn’t to say that all YA dystopias end with happiness—*Maze Runner* ends with Thomas being told there is no cure for the Flare—but there is always an element of hope for a better future.

Continuing with the distinction between traditional and YA dystopias, hope appears in more than just the ending of the novels; it appears as an overall theme. In their book *Utopian and Dystopian*, Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry note the how “younger readers must grapple with social organization” (1), and while this is also seen in the more traditional dystopias, the YA novel “examines the roots of societal behavior and encourages the child to question his or her own society” (1). This theme ties back to the difference in endings. The depressing endings of traditional dystopias focus on showing the need for governmental control and the impossibility



of fighting against it, while YA novels strive to show hope and empower their readers to fight against such power structures because “without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness, the adolescent cannot grow” (Trites x). Through the manifestations of power and power differences in YA novels, young readers observe what difference power structures exist and how much power should be allowed any one institution. These novels aren’t meant to negate the need for power structures, but rather to show the need for limits to be set over the amount allotted within the different social institutions, something which doesn’t appear within all dystopian novels.

Now, when considering the plots of young adult dystopian novel specifically, they tend to follow the similar patterns each time; “each protagonist longs for an end to his or her suffering and soon discovers a new society or the almost tangible knowledge of one in which they are no longer a misfit. By experiencing the contrast between two different worlds, the hero comes to understand the nature of their suffering and of their community of origin as primarily utopian or dystopian” (Totaro 129). The novels tend to focus on specific elements of control which would relate better to younger readers. YA novels are known to “examine the roots of social behavior and encourage the child to question his or her own society” (Hintz and Ostry 1). Through these novels, authors “begin to examine the myriad of dilemmas, dysfunctions, and difficulties that the young people of the day face” (Sturm and Michel 40). To this end, authors strive to provide worlds that speak to younger readers and the struggles and fears they specifically experience. These novels “can offer an improved vision of the future, or address deep and possible unresolved fears” (Hintz and Ostry 6). Two novels in the genre of YA dystopian fiction that provide a focus on teenage struggles and world viewpoints are Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993)

and Ally Condie's *Matched* (2011), with *The Giver* focusing on the teenage fear of deciding on a career while *Matched* focuses on the fear of finding true love.

Set in a futuristic society, *The Giver* tells the story of a dystopian culture where all citizens are provided with their job assignment on their twelfth birthday. Government officials observe the children as they grow and determine the best job for their skills, likes, and dislikes. The main character, Jonas, is chosen for the most prestigious job in the entire culture—he will be the Receiver of the Memory. Essentially, once he fulfills his training requirements, Jonas will be responsible for all memories of the community—a highly respected position because no one else in the community has memories outside of their own lives. Only the Receiver of the Memory holds these experiences. The citizens themselves are given no chance to experience the world for themselves and must instead simply trust the government and what they are told about the world. While his position comes with responsibility, honor, and privilege, Jonas comes to see the dangers of this practice when he learns of such experiences as hunger, death, and pain through the memories he receives.

Another young adult novel which at first appears to depict a perfect society is *Matched*. In this society, the government provides every citizen with their “Perfect Match” once they turn sixteen. The match is decided through an analysis of biological, psychological, and personal markers. Once a match is made, the two individuals are provided with time to learn about each other and build a relationship, all within the confines of the societal structures. However, the set process of “Matching” doesn't work when Cassia—a sixteen-year-old young woman—finds out she has two Matches, something that contradicts everything taught by the government. Through the novel, she must determine if she can trust the Society or if she should trust her own heart and mind.

While the societies in both these novels seem unique and even desirable at face value, a closer look into what is being controlled shows the dangers of these societies. In *The Giver*, no one has any memories of the past. Citizens only know what the government tells them. They have no understanding of death, fear, or even love. The government thought that by eliminating these elements from the human experience life would become easier and all discomfort could be eliminated. While everyone has their own memories in *Matched*, citizens are unable to control what they know and learn. The citizens don't even know how to physically write or create through words. They only know what is allowed by the government-approved curriculum which is taught in the government-approved schools, providing no opportunities for individual growth or experience. Once Cassia, the protagonist, receives a chance to learn writing and creation through words, she understands the power held by the government and strives to challenge them.

The novels *The Giver* and *Matched* show the complete stagnation of the human experience possible when government structures are allowed to control all aspects of life in a culture, society, or country and no one challenges their decisions. Other scholars have examined the importance of control and power structures in Dystopian novels; I examine the way that knowledge, language and experience are limited in *The Giver* and *Matched*, so that the protagonists—Jonas (*The Giver*) and Cassia (*Matched*)—find themselves torn between trusting what they have been told all their lives by their respective societies and what they have come to understand through their own experiences apart from the controlled environment of the government. I argue that the repercussions we see in *The Giver* and *Matched* are not limited in scope to worlds of fiction but have an impact on our education system and overall social structure today.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Historical Overview

While the history of the dystopian genre can be traced back to the French Revolution or even back to the Greeks who coined the term, the genre itself gained traction in the mid 20th Century with the publications of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1920), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *1984* (1948). These three novels rose to popularity during the turmoil caused by the World Wars and overall political chaos that followed. People searched for meaning and a rationale for the chaos they saw in the world around them. No longer could a country be certain of their leader and government having their best interests in mind. Enter the dystopian genre: a genre that questions the authority granted to governments and portrays the ruin that ensues when these governments are allowed free reign. As the world's political climate shifted, the literature produced mirrored said changes. M. Keith Booker notes "the turn toward dystopian modes in modern literature parallels the rather dark turn taken by a great deal of modern cultural criticism" (5). Societies became more aware of the dark side all humans and cultures possess, a shift evident in the literature of the era. The impact didn't end with the World Wars.

During the Cold War era, the dystopian genre continued to gain traction and public acceptance. In fact, "From 1945 to 1989, dystopianism was an expressly Cold War literary mode and, far from having 'little direct engagement' with geopolitical currents, proved reluctant to engage with anything else" (Hammond 664). Authors noted the acceptance of this genre and began flooding the market with novels emphasizing unstable governments, revolution, and danger. Such classics as *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), *Lord of the Flies* (1954), and *The Guardians* (1970) were products of this literary time period. People appreciated these novels because of

their ability to embody an “admonitory genre, which imaginatively intensifies contemporary trends in order to caution against them, stemmed from the flourishing in the period of idealistic blueprints for political change” (Hammond 664). Struggle seen in politics of the time period were exaggerated within the novels, but became icons for political change and critiques of the social structures.

As seen in many dystopian novels, authors provided “the themes over which future novels would continue to obsess: political capital, the meaning of free will, and, perhaps most significantly, fear of the state and the unchecked power of government” (Shiau). Thomas Huxley, a supporter of Darwin’s theories of continual evolution, argued that “society was developing in ways which were antithetical to human nature, leading to a gradual increase in human misery that would eventually lead to the downfall of civilization” (Booker 6). Through this school of thought came the novel *Brave New World*: a dystopian novel build around a pain-free, technology-run, meaningless society. The themes of limiting human experience and allowing technology to control lives became common place in dystopian literature and are still evident in novels published just a few years ago.

### **The Theoretical View of Dystopia**

The concepts of dystopia vs. utopia have not come without both critique and support from scholars through the years. One scholar to whom many look when discussing utopias and dystopias is Karl Marx, respected philosopher and sociologist, whose theories revolve around the exploitation of the working class at the hand of the ruling class. He explains in his essay, “The German Ideology,” “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force” (Marx par. 20). Marx circulated the belief of control happening through intellect. If a people’s

education and knowledge is controlled, then the entire culture can be placed under subjection, something which clearly appears in many dystopian novels on the shelves today. These theories, and others by Marx, provide an explanation for the core issue of most dystopian novels: a disconnect in the division of power.

Another scholar of governmental structure and power distribution, Louis Althusser—noted Marxist philosopher—in his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, explains connections between the concepts of ideology and governmental control. He describes ideologies as “the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (Althusser par. 92). According to Althusser’s theories, these ideologies are the controlling factor within dystopian systems: one social class using its ideologies to control the lower classes. Althusser describes this experience as how “under the leadership of the representatives of the classes in power executing the politics of the class struggle of the classes in power, the unity of the different Ideological State Apparatuses is secured, usually in contradictory forms, by the ruling ideology, the ideology of the ruling class” (Althusser par. 69). Through the indoctrination of the ideology of the ruling class, the lower classes have no other options and continue in the life of control and repression. This pattern of the lower classes being manipulated by the ideologies of the upper class has become a staple in dystopian novels.

Some scholars see the point Althusser made through his theories, but feel he didn’t capture the entire essence of the human experience. Such theorists as Simon Clarke, Warren Montag, and Alex Callinicos all question the extreme stances Althusser takes without embodying the entire system. The main questions posed by these critiques can be summarized as “where is the sense of the revolution in a critical stance that says the battle is already lost?” (Campbell 13), a point which can’t be fully answered through the Marxist and Althusserian schools of thought.

Warren Montag attempts to explain this dilemma as “how to diminish the forces that individuate and separate us and thus prevent us from uniting with others in order to act and to think more efficiently and with greater strength for our liberation” (77). The goals of revolution, according to Joseph Campbell, should not be an overthrowing of all ideological systems, but rather, “a revolution that moves us from the predominant ideological positions that we experience daily into more humane ideological positions within the sphere of possibility” (15). An overthrowing of all ideologies would only provide more confusion, creating the need for a goal which emphasizes quality of control rather than complete collapse of all governing structures.

While concerns about these theories do exist, there are truths found within which help to better understand the main theme found in dystopian literature: uneven division of power. In *The Giver* and *Matched*, clear ideological state apparatuses—as explained by Althusser—are seen through the governmental control over the education system in both novels and the specific control over memories in *The Giver*. These power differences also connect well back to Marx and his theories of the overzealous ruling class. Both novels clearly show the control held by the upper class and the struggles experienced by those under their control. Through a baseline of information about these theorists, the themes of government control are clearer and shown in a more serious light for the reader.

### **Specific Novels and Their Purposes**

As noted, themes of control are the driving factor of most dystopian novels. Readers are often entranced by the suspense and entertainment while glossing over the deeper themes of governmental control and limited freedom. Authors of these novels have found “by focusing their critiques of society on imaginary distant settings, dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or

considered natural and inevitable” (Brooker 3). While we might wish to ignore the truths behind the plots of these novels and read only to be entertained, we can’t overlook the truth written on the heart of authors, scholars, and readers: “what happens in a society is reflected in its literary works in one form or another” (Dubey 84). Through the literature produced, a clear view of societal critiques appears. Authors have found ways of personifying the theories of Marx, Althusser, Montag, and others through literature, while adding their own spin on the political dangers we see in the world around us.

Novels such as *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Circle* (2013), and *The Sandcastle Empire* (2017), are all newer in the world of dystopian novels. They depict such societal issues as corporation control, reintroduction of diseases, and a world-wide war over natural resources, embodying the belief that “these are works in which society is shown in totalitarian extremes” (Campbell 82). These novels serve as a warning, sharing how the authors see the world moving; however, the practice of warning society through fiction is not a new one.

Through his novel *1984* (1948), George Orwell warned of governmental surveillance through the experiences of Winston and Big Brother, the governmental symbol of leadership and control. The motto of the entire novel was “Big Brother is watching you” (Orwell). Today we see a rise in governmental surveillance on our streets, through our social media accounts, and through general technology use. While most current government structures are not to the level of Big Brother, the rise in control is something Orwell warned about through his work, having seen the beginnings of this government structure over 70 years ago.

Another novel that directly mirrors societal trends is Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985). She worked to portray the dangers of female oppression through her novel and “its depiction of a near-future dystopia in which women are forced into reproductive slavery to bear



the children of the elite” (Armstrong). When asked about the novel, Atwood mentioned how “The book mirrored the United States’ embrace of conservatism, as evidenced by the election of Ronald Reagan as president, as well as the increasing power of the Christian right and its powerful lobbying organizations the Moral Majority, Focus on the Family and the Christian Coalition – not to mention the rise of televangelism” (Armstrong). She saw the rise in conservatism as a potential danger and created her novel to portray a possible outcome if such attitudes and reactions would continue through general society. While some readers might see Atwood’s description of having the red-cloak clad surrogate mothers bear children for the upper-class families to be a bit extreme, a form of this forced surrogacy is recorded as having happened in Argentina when “a military junta seized power in 1976, subsequently ‘disappearing’ up to 500 children and placing them with selected leaders” (Armstrong). Atwood recognized the increased oppression of women and chose to speak through the avenues open to her.

The list of dystopian novels which critique a specific social issue could continue on with the *Hunger Games* and power disparity or *Divergent* and societal division; however, these societal critiques are always shown in extreme cases. They are not meant to send the reader into a panic, but rather to simply “warn us of what might come” (Campbell 82), if we don’t pay attention to how the world around us is changing. Hintz and Ostry note “a common trope in such literature is the emphasis on the lie, the secret unsavory workings of the society that the teen hero uncovers” (9). As reiterated by Ursula Le Guin, an American author known for writing speculative fiction: “Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive” (xiv). Through both science fiction and dystopian novels, the future of our societies isn’t predicted, the current state is described.

While the question of the differences between adult and young adult dystopian novels appears a valid question for some, many scholars argue that “young adult dystopias are remarkably similar to those written for adults” (Sargent 230). Because these novels are written for a younger audience, they focus more on providing a “context for students to become conscious of their operating world view and to examine critically alternative ways of understanding the world and social relations” (Glasgow 54). Coinciding with the thought of Glasgow, Campbell writes, “One of the purposes both young adult science fiction and young adult dystopian literature share is to reflect adolescents’ own culture back to them” (9). Through these novels, young adult readers experience a new strategy for understanding and interpreting the world around them. As specified by Kay Sambell, “Above all, children’s dystopias seek to violently explode blind confidence in the myth that science and technology will bring about human ‘progress.’ They achieve this by working through the application of sciences in worst-case scenarios” (“Carnivalizing the Future...” 247-48). These novels provide a critique of the advances in science and technology as being always viewed in a positive light and challenge young readers to better consider the world around them.

### **Who is in Control?**

An emphasis of many YA dystopian novels is the process of growth and self-awareness of the often-adolescent protagonists—Jonas (*The Giver*), Katniss (*Hunger Games*), Tris (*Divergent*), Thomas (*The Maze Runner*). Alternatively, within many novels, “while some characters seem to gain power within the structure of the novel, in the end it is most often the state that gains control by normalizing the adolescent character” (Campbell 39). Essentially, while the struggle for power appears in the novel, the center for control often remains or returns to the state through a maturing of the adolescent character. This helps explain the sections of

such series as *Divergent* or *The Hunger Games* that show the fight against the government never ending, with the conclusion only changing who is in power rather than the entire system being changed for the better. Positive endings are rarely provided through these novels. The cruel government is always overthrown, but they are often replaced with a system not much better, thus continuing the cycle of uneven power and overall control.

This phenomenon explains how “any definition of growth for a character (or indeed, for a reader) can only be accomplished within the bounds of institutions—any ‘escape’ from one institution’s power leading only to the grasp of another institution” (Campbell, Trites 39). The position of control in these novels is often shifted from the government to the citizens of the society through the course of the novel; however, the protagonist often doesn’t completely escape the impact of control, trading one form of control for another. True freedom from the institutions of control is impossible, and it’s this truth that many authors have struggled to depict. While in a perfect society, no institution of control would be needed, this isn’t a reality for our world today. However, this is not meant to leave us without hope. While the novels show the continual need for some form of governing structure, the form of the structure can change and shift the entire narrative, as seen in many dystopian worlds.

### **What is Being Controlled?**

Every dystopian novel displays some aspect of extreme control in the way the specific culture and government is organized, but the object of control often changes. This one aspect helps set each novel apart from the other dystopian novels on the shelves. In *the Giver* (1993), the main focus of control is the jobs citizens are provided with, while in *Divergent* (2011), citizens are categorized by personality-type and placed within factions (governmental structures). In *Hunger Games* (2008), individual lives aren’t as controlled, but the entire world within the

novel is separated into Districts that produce various resources, while *Matched* (2010) focuses on government-controlled love lives by providing citizens with their “perfect match.” All these aspects of control could seem random, but they all revolve around the concept of human experience and how it appears within these different cultures.

One term used to describe the experience of control that appears in many dystopian novels is mind control. Many people consider mind control to be a form of hypnosis, but this term has shifted across the years. It has been noted by Patrick Jones as “a technique used in dystopian societies to exert control over the population” (Jones). By limiting how citizens see and interact with the world, the government structures are able to better control the reactions and belief systems of their citizens, thus controlling the entire societal system. This level of control could be desired for a variety of reasons such as military advancement or monetary gain among others.

Through these power structures, the government is able to control all aspects of human life. They can control how many children are born—seen in both *The Giver* and *Matched* with the limiting of children allowed in each family—and they can also control when people die—also clear in both novels. This controlling of both life and death is simply another demonstration of the power held by the ruling class of these novels. But this power is not simply a stagnant entity, but rather something that “emerges from the actions of people within a network of power relations” (Kelly par. 41), as explained by the theories of noted theorists Michel Foucault. The connection between power and knowledge appears in the theories of both Marx, as mentioned previously, and Foucault, but while Marx connects the belief of power changing knowledge, Foucault argues for a system in which “there is no pure knowledge apart from power” (Kelly par.33), thus connecting the true knowledge with the power structure of any given culture.

Through these systems, the flow of knowledge can be controlled and the entire system can be manipulated through control over the culture's view of the world.

Once an entire population is controlled through their view of the world, the control of individual citizens happens almost naturally. However, these elements of control limit the overall human experience, a phenomenon which many scholars, such as John Russon and Max Weber, agree is essential for a fulfilling life. Through the control of basic human experiences such as birth, death, and family, the government has complete control over its citizens by taking away the chance for individuality and overall enjoyment.

On the topic of overall control, the main concern which dystopian novels address is the reality of a government that has no concern for its citizens or their individual experiences. Once all concern for individual citizens is gone, the government no longer considers the best interests of the citizens, creating a cold, controlled society governed by fear: a world where human life and experience isn't cared for and life simply becomes a type of formula perfected by the government, a phenomenon which clearly appears in both *The Giver* and *Matched*.

### CHAPTER 3: *THE GIVER*

*The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry is a young adult novel that tells the story of Jonas, a twelve-year old boy who lives in a society completely controlled by governmental rules and traditions. The novel is set within a futuristic, dystopian, post-apocalyptic society in an unknown location, created through a necessity for human survival. The community is governed by a set of rules, regulations, and traditions meant to create a unified, consistent society where all citizens can live, work, grow, and thrive. While the government structure and format for life might seem perfect, Jonas comes to see the dangers of this societal structure and works to change his community for the better.

Within the novel, the government—the Committee of Elders—hopes to do away with class, social status, and general confusion by creating strict rules which govern every element of life for the citizens. Everything is decided by the Elders, from the jobs held by citizens to how many children each family unit is allowed, creating a world best suited for idealistic human survival. Rules about rudeness govern everyday interactions and discussions about dreams at the breakfast table emphasize openness and clarity within the Society. All these rules are meant to create a structured, controlled environment where the citizens don't just survive, but never need to experience the reality of pain or suffering.

At face value, the world of *The Giver* seems like a dream come true. In the Society, “there is little conflict or inequality, no poverty, and no apparent injustice. Family values of a sort predominate, politeness is universal, and teenage rebellion is unheard of” (Levy 51). Going further into the structure of the Society itself, “everyone knows their place in the community and no one needs to be alone; everyone has meaningful work and no one goes without necessities” (Levy 52). Through her descriptions of this community, Lowry creates a

world which many people today would describe as ideal and some might even call it perfect; however, not everything is as it seems. A world running this smoothly must have a catch. Even in the many worlds of literature, there is no perfect world. Lowry knows this and explains the catch of *The Giver* as sameness.

Within the Society, there are no elements of uniqueness between citizens. Through the set rules and technological advances, “scientific progress has managed to erase difference and so, with the exception of very few, everyone is the same” (Davis 53). Sameness is described as a positive for the citizens. They are able to work and live in harmony because there isn’t the struggle of class, racial, or political differences. However, the emphasis on sameness goes beyond just eliminating cultural or political differences. Through the government regulations, all forms of uniqueness were eliminated, even down to physical appearance. When experiencing the past, Jonas learns, “there was a time...when flesh was many colors. That was before we went to sameness. Today all flesh is the same” (119). Everyone appears to have the same skin color and except for a select few—Jonas included—all citizens have dark eyes (25). Jonas and a few others are noted as having “the pale eyes” (25), however, “no one mentioned such things; it was not a rule, but was considered rude to call attention to things that were unsettling or different about individuals” (25). Everyone wears the same colorless clothes, lives in the same style of dwellings, eats the same foods, and essentially lives the same way, with no obvious differences.

Continuing with sameness, no color appears anywhere in the world. This isn’t to say that color doesn’t exist, but rather that color is suppressed. The decision to relinquish color was a conscious one as explained by the Giver, the Society’s historian and keeper of memories, “our people made that choice, the choice to go to sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away

with differences.’ He thought for a moment. ‘we gained control of many things. But we let go of others” (120). As the novel progresses, “Jonas, the protagonist and Receiver of Memory, is the first person to discern robotic/mechanical order in the society which is transformed into ‘sameness’ eliminated all individual differences and emotions such as pain, happiness, cold, colors, and so on” (Cengiz 18). Due to the decision to forgo color, a step towards sameness was achieved, but at the cost of joy for the citizens.

The decision to choose sameness was made many generations ago, with the current population of citizens not making the actual choice to give up uniqueness for the calm, consistent sameness. According to the Giver, “we really have to protect people from wrong choices” (124). Because all major decisions were made by the Society, the citizens themselves weren’t seen as capable of making their own decisions. Because the wrong decision could be made, allowing choice is “defiantly not safe” (124). The Committee of Elders fears the chaos which would plague the Society, should people be allowed to make their own decisions, thus creating the rationale for sameness. However, not all citizens are pleased with the decision. Once Jonas realizes what was given up through the shift to sameness, he comments “if everything is the same, then there aren’t any choices! I want to wake up in the morning and decide things! A blue tunic or a red one?” (123). Jonas realizes the importance of choice, even when a possible wrong choice could be made. What is chosen isn’t the point, but rather, “It’s the choosing that’s important” (123). The Giver explains the purpose of sameness and no choice, but Jonas isn’t satisfied. He “found he was often angry, now: irrationally angry at his groupmates, that they were satisfied with their lives that had none of the vibrance his own was taking on” (124). Jonas is satisfied with his life, until he sees what he has given up, and he wants more, showing the key to sameness: ignorance. Everyone in the Society is fine with their lives because they don’t know



any different. Once Jonas realizes what is missing from life in the Society, he becomes angry and unsatisfied with his life, something the Society hoped to eliminate with sameness.

To create a concise, smooth-running Society, children are categorized by age. For each year, from Four to Twelve, the citizen receives some ability, job, or freedom. Sevens receive jackets which button in the front (52), and Nines receive a bicycle (17). For a Twelve, they receive their job assignment (20). When Jonas reaches Twelve, he is assigned the role of Receiver of Memory. The Giver explains it as “everyone in the community has one generation of memories” (117), however, none of the memories are the past before sameness. Memories must be cherished for the good of the community, but they are seen as too much of a burden for all the citizens to carry. Through the Receiver of Memory’s experiences, the memories aren’t lost, but they are kept from the entirety of Society. The Receiver of Memory is given a place of honor in the Society, but they must experience the struggles, pain, and isolation which comes from being the only one who understands such things as starvation, guns, war, or death.

As mentioned, the struggle for Jonas comes when he realizes the lack of understanding and choice which plagues every citizen. Words such as “snow” or “sunburn” are explained to Jonas for the first time by the Giver, the previous Receiver of Memory. Jonas is taught not only through words, but through the concepts and experiences for which they stand. The Giver explains “sunburn” to Jonas by transmitting the memory and feeling of a burn received on the arm from a hot summer’s day (108-109). Similarly, the word and concept of snow is transferred by a memory of sledding down a hill in winter (105-107). Jonas’s job is to keep all memories safe and provide council to the Elders, should they ask for past experience consideration as they prepare to make revisions to life in the Society. The Elders themselves haven’t experienced the past and must rely on the Giver and Receiver of Memory to remind them of the past as they

make decision for the future. Thus, a lack of experience even in the lives of the Elders is seen. These individuals control the experiences of their citizens when they themselves haven't experienced what is being withheld: color, choice, human experience. The Society is stuck in a cycle of ignorance, kept alive by the rules and traditions set years ago which no one challenges, until Jonas. Once Jonas begins receiving memories from the Giver, he recognizes the limitations which have been placed on the citizens through sameness. However, he lacks the ability to fully describe what he has come to understand.

One such example comes when Jonas learns about color. As mentioned, the citizens don't have the capacity to see color, however, Jonas is the exception to the rule. He is noted as seeing the color red on multiple occasions. He sees color in an apple and also notices a change in his friend Fiona's hair. He later recognizes how human skin displays hues of red. The Giver and Committee of Elders refer to this as having the "Capacity to See Beyond" (79). For each Receiver of Memory, their Capacity to See Beyond appears differently. In the case of Jonas, he can see color; in the case of the Giver, he could hear music (197). Once the Giver recognizes that Jonas can see the color red, he tells Jonas about how "back in the time of the memories, everything had a shape and size, the way things still do, but they also had a quality called color. There are lots of colors and one of them was called red. That's the one you are starting to see" (119). When Jonas is told about color, he begins to see it everywhere, but is unable to describe it to others because the words aren't available. In his frustration, Jonas states, "Oh, I wish language were more precise! The red was so beautiful!" (120). However, the language used by the citizens is limited and precise due to their limited life experiences. Because they couldn't see color, no word describing the concept was needed, and the word was lost from the language. Due to this

correction, Jonas can't share the joy he experienced when learning about seeing the beauty of color.

Considering Jonas's inability to describe the color red to other citizens, language itself provided an avenue of control for the Society. When the experiences of the people are limited, they are unable to describe what they are missing from their lives because they don't understand what is missing and don't need words to describe what no longer exists, thus creating the necessity for a simplified, precise language. In the schools, "precision of language was one of the most important tasks of small children" (65). When the younger generations are taught to uphold precise language, the cycle of control through language is continued.

The practice of controlling through language is not a new one. Historical accounts tell us how "Totalitarian regimes of the 20th century showed that control of the language is one element in maintaining control over the people. Deprived of an adequate complement of words, the people are unable to express thoughts contrary to the standards imposed on them and become helpless and easily managed" (Kagarlitsky par. 8). By limiting the words available to citizens, the Committee of Elders could limit their experiences and perceptions of the world simply through them not having the words to talk about new experiences or concepts. Through this practice, life in the Society stayed the same for generations with no new words appearing or changing the accepted language, that is until Jonas understood the control. To clarify, the words Jonas learned—red, sunburn, snow, sled—existed in the Society at one point, evidenced by the Giver knowing them, but the experiences and concepts associated with the words were lost, which lead to the loss of the words due to a need for precise language. The rationale for precise language was "to ensure that unintentional lies were never uttered" (89). Clarity is the focus for the Society and this is only a reality through intense scrutiny and molding of language, however,

the emphasis on clarity and precise language limited the array of words available for citizens to use in daily conversations.

The most confusion about words and preciseness of language in the novel appears when emotions are discussed. The opening scene of the novel shows Jonas distracted and worried about finding the right word to describe his emotions, “this evening he almost would have preferred to keep his feelings hidden. But it was, of course, against the rules” (12). In these moments, Jonas prepares for the evening telling of feelings (6), when everyone in a family unit would share about their day and emotions, but as he neared his family dwelling, “Jonas was beginning to be frightened. No. Wrong word, Jonas thought. Frightened meant that deep sickening feeling that something terrible was about to happen” (1). He knew the word didn’t match his emotion, but struggles to find an appropriate one. After some reflection, he shares with his family unit “I’m feeling apprehensive,” he confessed, glad the appropriate descriptive word had finally come to him” (12). The interesting part of this scene, in the context of the entire novel, is Jonas’s intuition about the wrong word. He connected the word “frightened” to past experiences and understood the misuse in his particular context. Through this exchange, it becomes clear that the Committee of Elders didn’t wish to eliminate all emotion from their citizen’s experiences, only specific ones. The citizens understand pain, fear, or sadness within the structure of their one-generation memories, but they don’t understand these in the context of the history of their existence as a people. As the Receiver of Memory, Jonas possesses this historical knowledge, which causes him stress once he recognizes the miss-interpretation of emotions which happens everywhere, but specifically in his own family unit.

As mentioned above, every family unit is expected to participate in the evening telling of feelings. While Jonas never enjoyed this ritual, he dislikes it all the more after he begins

receiving memories from the Giver. Through his training, Jonas is given memories of war, hunger, pain, and thirst, better understanding the emotions connected to these human experiences. He begins to realize his family's lack of understanding about the words they use on a daily basis. At one family dinner, his sister Lily tells how she was angry when someone broke the play rules (165), however "Lily had not felt anger, Jonas realized now. Shallow impatience and exasperation, that was all Lily had felt. He knew that with certainty because now he knew what anger was" (165). In her limited experience. Lily was unable to properly use the word "anger," but for Jonas, "he had the memories, experienced injustice and cruelty, and he had reacted with rage that welled up so passionately inside him that the thought of discussing it calmly at the evening meal was unthinkable" (165). He recognized the connotation and definition of the word as it connected to the emotion, understanding incorrect use. However, only he and the Giver could truly understand emotion in connection with language, something kept from the rest of society with the limitation of memory and experience.

The citizens themselves have no memory of the Society's past—life before the rules were set—and they have no connection between extreme emotions like starvation, anger, or sorrow. Due to their lack of memory and experience, the citizens have no point of reference for basically any emotion, leading them to use words like "hunger" or "anger" without understanding the true connotation of the word. While the decision to keep memories of the past from the general public was made to protect citizens, the lack of experience creates a detriment in their ability to connect with others and fully understand both emotions and relationships as seen through their use of language.

In a world where precise language is the goal of all communication, only two people in the entire Society can truly use precise language, but the uniqueness of the Giver and Jonas is not

only limited to language, but also to human relationships. Through their shared experiences of the memories, “Jonas’s bizarre relationship with the Giver is the only thing representing a real or humane connection because the rest of the society is not able to think, remember, love and so on” (Cengiz 20). While the other citizens care for each other and possess some connection with their family units, they have no concept of love. Jonas is introduced to this word when he asks the Giver about a favorite memory. The Giver provides him memory of a family Christmas in a little log cabin the woods surrounded by snow. Jonas sees a large family—parents, kids, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles—all crowded around each other, laughing and enjoying spending time together. They unwrap presents, give hugs, and sit around a fire (154). When Jonas comes out of the memory, the Giver explains what Jonas saw and what everything represents. Jonas has no concept of grandparents because they aren’t included in the set family units. The individuals in the Christmas memory looked like the Old who are placed in the House of the Old, but these individuals were living with a family. In his confusion, Jonas calls them “parents of the parents” (155), which leads to a discussion about family connections.

The format of such a large family is new to Jonas. In the Society, each family is made up of one man, one woman and two children—a male child and a female child. For a family to receive a child, they had to submit an application, noting if they wanted a female or male child (15). Every “normal” personal connection in the family is dissolved in this world, with the only purpose of the family unit being to raise children. The children are born via a Birthmother, are raised in the Nurturing Center until they are assigned to a family, and have no connection to their biological family—no one in the Society does. Once the children in a family unit are grown, the family unit is dissolved, with the parents moving to the House of the Old until their release.

Through this format, no child in the *The Giver* would know their grandparents, creating a confusing situation for Jonas to understand.

As the conversation moves, Jonas comments, “I certainly like the memory, though, I can see why it’s your favorite. I couldn’t quite get the word for the whole feeling of it, the feeling that was so strong in the room (157). No word he knows fits the emotion in the memory. The family structure and relationships in the Society negated a need for a word to describe this emotion. Jonas wanted to talk about the feeling which resonated from this memory, but didn’t understand how.

The Giver provided the word by telling him, “Love” (157), a completely new word and concept to Jonas (157). Within the Society, “the word love is never used because it’s vague and unclear, but in fact because the people are incapable of feeling anything more than affection” (Levy 53). Through the fragmented family structure and limited emotion, love never appears. Excited to share his new knowledge, Jonas asks his parents about this new word, asking if they love him and Lily. However, they are just as confused as he had been about a new word with no context. They simply respond with “Jonas. You of all people. Precision of language, please!” (159). They don’t understand what Jonas is asking and once the word is described they continue to not understand what he is talking about, explaining “you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it’s become obsolete” (160). The citizens are so compartmentalized and governed that they lost the ability to understand, give, or receive love. This term has become of no effect to them, lost in the transition to sameness. In their efforts to create a concise, perfect world, the Committee of Elders created a situation where the citizens lost elements of basic human interaction, showing the reader dangers of such a society as Jonas comes to recognize.

Jonas becomes isolated from his family once he receives memory. They can't understand his view of the world and he in turn "can never explain to his family that they are shallow" (Totaro 131). Their family unit will never fully understand each other again, as seen with the discussion about "love." Because his parents and Lily have missed the experiences which would explain the word to them, they can't understand Jonas, creating a divide between all of them. For Jonas, the only person left in the community who truly understands him is the Giver.

The novel itself ends with Jonas leaving the Community under the cover of night as part of a scheme to force the community to experience the of the past. After watching the Release of a New Child, he realizes a Release is simply death by medical injection. Jonas is unable to cope with the extreme lack of care for human life and decides to leave the community. He looks to the Giver for help formulating an escape plan. Within the Society, memories must be possessed by someone or they are released to the general public (180), however, when memories are just released—following the unexpected Loss of a Receiver of Memory—the general public is unable to handle the emotions and memories. This experience is entirely new to them and causes mass panic. Jonas understand this, and knows the memories will be released into the community if he dies, but he explains that the Giver could help everyone understand the memories if something happened to Jonas. Once the idea is posed, the Giver realizes, "if you floated off in the river, I suppose I could help the whole community the way I've helped you" (181). Jonas and the Giver begin formulating a plan which would allow Jonas to leave, forcing the community to understand the memories. However, they are forced to change the plan when the life of a toddler is put at risk.

When Jonas eats dinner with his family one night, after the plan was coming together, he hears that Gabriel, the Newchild living with his family, is going to be released because of a lack



of development. Because Jonas has witnessed a Release and knows a Release means death, he understands the gravity of this decision and chooses to leave the Society early, taking Gabriel with him, a representation of the love still possible in the Society. Through the flight from the community, Jonas will “rely on his memories of a better world to pull them both [himself and Gabriel] forward out of dystopia” (Totaro 131). The novel ends rather abruptly with Jonas and Gabriel sledding down a hill towards a flickering light having made it outside the community safely, providing an ambiguous ending which has plagued academics since its publication. While the ending itself is inconclusive, the disastrous state of the community and warning provided by Lowry is clear.

As readers work through *The Giver*, “Lowry half-convinces us that her world would indeed be an improvement of our own, but then she gradually begins to reveal some of the darker sides of sameness” (Levy 52). In the novel, we see a society which seems to work together beautifully. Everyone appears happy and healthy, with fulfilling lives. However, once Jonas begins seeing the dangers of the Society, we are shown the dangers of extreme government control. The citizens were all deprived of the most basic human need: love. They also lost the chance to experience life, living only within the formula allowed by the Committee of Elders.

## CHAPTER 4: *MATCHED*

Another instillation in the world of young adult dystopian literature is the *Matched* series (2010) by Ally Condie, which follows the story of Cassia, a teenager living in a futuristic, post-apocalyptic world who finds herself stuck between trusting the government that controls every aspect of her life or acknowledging the dangers she sees in the society surrounding her. Cassia is told to trust the structured, controlled way of life, but questions the purpose and validity of the rules and regulations once she is provided with a taste of freedom and individuality through an introduction to poetry by her grandfather. Through the novel, Cassia learns to write and appreciate the beauty of the written word, while also learning about herself and the structured society in which she lives. The *Matched* series is comprised of three novels, but for the scope of this project, I will be focusing only on the first, and title book.

As mentioned, a common theme for dystopian novels is control, specifically in respect to one aspect of life. *The Giver* shows particular care given to jobs held by citizens; *Matched* focuses the control on the citizen's love lives. At the age of 16, citizens are provided with their Society-chosen "Perfect Match" at the Matching Ceremony. The expectation for the Matched couple is for them to court until their 21st year, when they will marry and create their own family unit. The struggle for Cassia begins when she receives not one, but two matches through her Matching Ceremony, going against the expectation of everyone having one "Perfect Match." She must decide whether she will trust the Society or trust her heart as she struggles to choose between her two "perfect matches."

The novel is marketed toward teenage girls with an emphasis placed on the love story. Different reviewers note the love triangle story emphasis. With this novel appearing not long after the *Twilight* novels concluded, many teenage readers would recognize the ever-impending

love triangle and enjoy reading about the struggles facing Cassia as she must choose who to love. However, other reviewers note the dystopian cultural critique undertones. As explained by Darienne Stewart of Common Sense Media, “this could easily turn into just another hand-wringing love triangle, or a ho-hum story of teen rebellion. Instead, it’s a great coming-of-age story, one that encourages readers to think long and hard about their relationships -- to people, to technology, and to authority” (par. 4). The novel provides a critique of totalitarian governmental structures and also highlights the power of poetry in self-expression, providing its readers with more than simply an otherwise repetitive love story.

Within the world of *Matched*, the government structure is known as the Society. This overall system is controlled by the “Departments of Society” which each run a different aspect of life within the Society (44). The main population is called “Citizens” (5). They live their lives within the confines set by the Society, working where they are told, learning what they are taught, eating what they are provided, and not questioning anything. A lower level of Citizen is an Aberration, one who is found guilty of an Infraction—a known breaking of Societal law (46). This status is passed from parent to child, so different Citizens are Aberrations not by their doing, but by the choices of their parents. These individuals live among the general population, but have more rules they must adhere to, such as not being allowed a Match and working the most dangerous jobs in the Society. Aberrations “are protected, their identities aren’t usually common knowledge” (46). Citizens don’t know if their neighbor is an Aberration—they could simply be a Single, someone who chooses not to be Matched (46). The lowest level of Citizen is Anomalies “who have to be separate from Society” (46). This structure set was thought to provide the best environment to cultivate a successful, healthy community for all involved, with little to no room provided for rebellion or change.

At face value, the process of “Matching” seems like a decent one. Who doesn’t want to be matched with their perfect mate and avoid going through the struggles of awkward dates, one-night stands, weird dating apps, and the ever-looming breakup? According to the official Matching materials provided to the teenagers, “the goal of Matching is twofold: to provide the healthiest possible future citizens for our Society and to provide the best chances for interested citizens to experience successful Family Life. It is of the utmost importance to the Society that the Matches be as optimal as possible (44). However, in Cassia’s case, the Matching process isn’t successful when she learns she has two Matches—Xander and Ky—breaking the rule of everyone having one perfect Match. She learns of this through the micro card which she was given to tell her all about her Match—Xander. When Cassia inserts the chip into her computer, she is shown not one face, but two—Xander and Ky—which begins the entire plot of the novel. Who is her Perfect Match? Cassia struggles with the possibility of the Society making a mistake in her Match because everyone has been told from a young age that “the Society doesn’t make mistakes” (36). If the Society made a mistake in Cassia’s Matching process—a very serious and drawn out process—then what else could they be wrong about?

While dealing with her two Matches, Cassia must also cope with the death of her Grandfather. In the Society, people are only allowed to live until their eightieth birthday, providing another layer of control in the lives of the Citizens. Not only are they not allowed to live as they wish, they must also die when instructed. Citizens are told, “all studies show that the best age to die is eighty. It’s long enough that we have a complete life experience, but not so long that we feel useless” (69). Once someone reaches their eightieth birthday, they die by lethal injection, which happens in the case of Cassia’s grandfather. Before a Citizen dies, they are allowed a final time with family where they can exchange gifts and final moments together

because “no one should die alone” (70). For her Grandfather’s final gift, she created a letter on the port, highlighting one of the Hundred Poems which came from the decade he was born. Once she gives her gift, Grandfather, although thankful for the sentiment, tells her “none of these words are your own, Cassia” (81). She worries she let him down with the poem and letter, but she hears, “You have words of your own, Cassia,” Grandfather says. ‘I’ve heard some of them and they are beautiful...I want you to trust your own words” (81). Grandfather understood the power of words and creation, something downplayed by the Society through the restrictions placed on educational practices. During his final goodbye to Cassia, he slips her a folded, worn piece of paper. Cassia doesn’t understand the importance of the paper, but accepts it, trusting her Grandfather’s decision. She hides the paper in her compact, away from the cameras and watchful eyes of the Officials, knowing it’s against the rules to keep old papers which aren’t approved by the Society.

Written on the piece of paper gifted by her Grandfather is an unfamiliar poem. Cassia is no stranger to poetry. In her family, her “great-grandmother was one of the cultural historians who helped select the Hundred Poems almost seventy years ago. Grandfather told me the story a thousand times, how his mother had to help decide which poems to keep and which to lose forever” (29). One glance at the poem in her hand told Cassia, “this poem is not one of them” (96). This poem could only have been saved through great risk of her great-grandmother and her grandfather, but to what end? “What poem could be worth losing everything for?” (96). The question continues in Cassia’s mind as she hides the poem and decides her next step.

The origin of the Hundred Poems came from the decision the Society made years ago to simplify every aspect of life. Through this process, “they created commissions to choose the hundred best of everything: Hundred Songs, Hundred Paintings, Hundred Stories, Hundred

Poems. The rest were eliminated. Gone forever. For the best, the Society said, and everyone believed because it made sense. How can we appreciate anything fully when overwhelmed with too much” (29). This indoctrination plagues Cassia as she considers the old poem in her hands. Technically, owning anything outside the official Society-allotted knowledge was illegal. She would be cited for an Infraction if anyone discovered the poems in her possession, but poems weren’t the only things cut from life in the Society.

When the Society simplified life, they cut out all supposed unnecessary aspects of life. One of the cut aspects of the educational system was physical handwriting. Through the use of advancing technology, physically writing words and numbers became unnecessary. When Cassia’s Grandfather makes mention of the poem she gives him not being her own words, she looks down at her hands, “my hands that, like almost everyone else in our Society, cannot write, that merely know how to use the words of others” (118). Even if she wanted to, Cassia is unable to write and create her own poems having never learned how to even hold a pencil. But this inability to write doesn’t apply to all Citizens as Cassia believes.

During one structured afternoon hike, Cassia is discovered reading the poem by Ky, her second Match. He promises not to tell her secret and tells her one of his own—he is able to physically write. Cassia asks him to teach her and thus begins the afternoon hiking lessons. Through these experiences, she finds herself drawn to Ky, “I live to sort; he knows how to create. He can write words whenever he wants. He can swirl them in the grass, write them in the sand, carve them in a tree” (170). She sees Ky as possessing some great skill which has been lost, and appreciates the opportunity to learn. After a few lessons, “Ky finished teaching me to write my name in the soft dirt underneath one of the fallen trees...it takes me a little while to learn s but I like the way it looks—like something learning into the wind. The clear line and dot

of the *i* is easy to master, and I already know how to write *a*” (214). Cassia loves her new found skills and practices whenever she has a chance, but she struggles with how she is contradicting everything she has been told since childhood.

The Society focuses on limiting the amount of knowledge held by each individual citizen. They provide the amount of appropriate lessons and knowledge which they feel each citizen should learn. Through their analysis of education before the introduction of the Hundred everything, writing was identified as an unnecessary skill. With the technology advancements happening, the Society felt it more important for Citizens to learn typing rather than physical writing. It’s not just Cassia that can’t write, but in the Society, “no one can. All we can do is type” (170). The Citizens learn the lessons and skills deemed relevant to life and complete their Society-approved lessons. However, once the lessons are learned, no continual education or learning is provided or even encouraged. In Cassia’s case, she grows to love learning through the introduction of poetry into her life. Once she receives the poems and learns to write, she confesses “Two desires struggle within me: the desire to be safe, and the desire to know. I cannot tell which one will win” (255). She knows her learning to write goes against the rules set by the Society, but she is drawn to both Ky and the new knowledge.

One characteristic of Cassia’s new obsession with knowledge is her appreciation of poetry. It’s the poem her grandfather gives her that piques her curiosity near the beginning of the novel and continues to impact her learning. The poem clearly explained is one given to Cassia by her grandfather: “Don’t Go Gentle” by Dylan Thomas. The rationale for this not being included in the Hundred is never provided, but Cassia’s great-grandmother saw this poem as worth keeping safe despite the dangers involved with going against the Society’s decision to only allow the Hundred Poems. This love of poetry connects Ky and Cassia and creates a relationship not

based off the Match guidelines set by the Society, but by a shared love of words. Ky even brings Cassia a copy of a new poem—not from the Hundred—as a late birthday present, another poem by Dylan Thomas, “Poem in October.” While the Departments restrict everything as they see fit, Cassia appreciates these poems which were saved from destruction. If the government was wrong when they limited the number of poems allowed, could they be wrong about other aspects of life?

The main plot line in the novel considers whether the Society knows best, specifically in their “Perfect Match” pairings. Cassia struggles with choosing between Ky and Xander, and sees positive characteristics in both. However, she describes both young men in completely different lights, “Xander is my Match and my oldest friend and one of the best people I know” (228), while in comparison, “Ky is not my Match, but he might have been. He’s the one who taught me how to write my name, how to keep poems, how to build a tower of rocks that looks like it should fall but doesn’t” (229). For Cassia, Xander represents the strict structure of the Society. He was her assigned Match and proof that the Matching system works. Citizens can learn to love someone chosen for them, marry, and live a fulfilling life within the guidelines set by the Society. In comparison, Ky represents freedom, learning, and opposition to everything the Society stands for. He creates, writes, and seeks for knowledge, something the Society sees as a threat. Cassia understands Ky shouldn’t even be a consideration for her; Xander is her Match, but throughout the novel, she reflects on how, “I didn’t expect to love his [Ky’s] words. I did not expect to find myself in them” (196). Cassia finds herself stuck between these two young men and what they stand for, but her leaning towards Ky at the end of the novel provides hope. Cassia’s love for these two men goes beyond just loving a person, but rather loving knowledge, something which abounds through her relationship with Ky and her direct opposition to the rules



set by the Society. She is attracted to the option of life without such rules and regulations, something impossible should she chose Xander—the poster child for the Society.

Cassia realizes the limbo she lives in, “I read things I shouldn’t and learn things I’m not meant to know and I might be falling in love with someone else” (195). The Society also notices her straying from their set ideals. They send an Official to meet with her and remind her of the ideals set for life in the Society. Through these meetings, Cassia learns that her double match was also controlled by the Society, as a test for seeing how someone responds when provided with choice. Cassia is told by the Official, “We decided to put Ky in the Matching Pool. Now and then we do that with an Aberration, simply to gather data and watch for variation. The general public doesn’t know about it...it’s important for you to know that we were in control of the experiment all along” (342), which provides the only logical reason for two names appearing on her Society-issued micro card. Cassia is hurt by the thought of being used only as an experiment, but she does recognize her growth through the process. She discovers a love of learning and a desire to live outside the expectations set by the government which has controlled every aspect of her life since birth. What the Society meant to be simply a social experiment changed Cassia’s entire outlook on life.

The novel itself doesn’t come to a full conclusion because it’s the first book in a trilogy, but it does make some interesting points about government control and interaction into both the educational and love lives of their Citizens. When allowed to choose, Cassia found the decision both stressful and freeing. She also learns about the destruction caused by the Society and the rules set over the individuals which keep the Citizens from learning and growing as individuals. At the end of *Matched*, Cassia is sent to one of the Outer Provinces working in the fields for three months as a precaution requested by her own father because she was showing signs of

rebellion (363). She spends the time only thinking of Ky and the words he taught her, but she still struggles with feeling guilty for having feelings for someone other than her Match, Xander. This dynamic is addressed in the further instalments of the *Matched* story.

While a governmental structure might strive to control all aspects of life, not everything can be dominated. As seen through the story of Cassia, Xander, and Ky, choice is hard. There are many aspects which add to decision which can be eliminated by government control; however, it is through the decision process that individuality is appreciated and cultivated. Knowledge is also something which can't be fully suppressed. Throughout the novel, Cassia receives an appreciation for knowledge once she is given the chance to learn for herself, something which continues to appear in the rest of the series. While the Society tries their best to control life through the Hundreds, Departments, and Officials, the human experience of choice, knowledge, and life in general finds ways of growing and overtaking any rules set.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

When considering the connections between *The Giver* and *Matched*, both differences and similarities arise. Lois Lowry published *The Giver* in 1993, while Ally Condie didn't publish *Matched* until 2010. Yet even with 17 years in between their publications, the stories provide similar themes, similar characters, and similar reactions to the realization of control at the end of the novels. In choosing two novels from different authors, different times, and different focuses, the similar themes demonstrate the seriousness of the issues discussed in the novels. As mentioned in the introduction, "what happens in a society is reflected in its literary works in one form or another" (Dubey 84). When these themes appear through multiple avenues, it's clear they need to be discussed and considered as real possibilities in our lives today.

Reviewing these novels through the context of theory, historical context, and the overall genre provides the reader with a view of government control which goes past these themes simply being an interesting plot in some novel on the shelves of Barnes and Noble, but as something which appears in our world today. In certain countries across the world, limitations and control over the education and world views of citizens in a normal occurrence. As explained by Jerrold Post, the director of the political psychological program at George Washington University, world leaders are "able to rule with more practical tools, such as fear and control of information" (Niller, par. 8). One specific example where these forms of control are prevalent is North Korea. Similar to the worlds of both *The Giver* and *Matched*, the leaders of this nation work to control citizens through knowledge limitations: "Television sets and radios are fixed to state-run channels — being caught with an unfixed device, or worse, foreign DVDs, is a severe offense that often leads to time at a labor camp — and for all but a handful of the elite, there is no Internet" (Fifield, par. 11). The only information citizens receive about the world or even their

own country comes through government-controlled avenues. Children are told from a young age that “On his [Kim Jong Il] desk there are piles and piles of reports that he has to read and approve. He works so hard for us, the people” (Fifield, par. 2). Citizens are taught to be thankful for this level of control. Because every piece of information given to them is government approved, they never know anything different, a phenomenon which also appears in both *The Giver* and *Matched*.

While some might see the scenarios in these novels as complete impossibilities for most of the world, I would ask them to consider our culture in the United States today. Yes, we have public libraries and open access to the internet, but what is being taught in our schools? According to a list compiled by Keri Wiginton in August of 2019, the top texts taught in high schools today include *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. Of the fifty texts mentioned, only twelve were written by women and seven of the fifty are plays by William Shakespeare, with only three being written by a person of color. Additionally, not one text appeared from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Now this only accounts for one list of texts taught, but others show similar patterns. A list created by Stephen Merrill in 2017 listed the top four novels taught as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *1894*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *Animal Farm*. Again, from a list of twenty texts, only five were written by women and only one was written by a person of color. I could continue with other lists, but they show similar patterns. Students are simply being taught from within the safety of the literary canon.

As explained by high school teacher Michelle Waters, “As a teacher, I walk a fine line between advocating for my students and telling them what they should think. But through literature, I can enable my students to experience the lives of marginalized people and draw their

own conclusions about humanity” (par. 13). Through literature, we can show students the truth of humanity. They can experience different cultures, viewpoints, and lives. However, when the literature they are taught only contains the thought and experiences of dead white men, students aren’t engaging with all literature has to offer. Through normalizing the teaching of the literary canon, our educational system is controlling how our students experience the world, something warned about in both *The Giver* and *Matched*.

Considering the world of education as a whole, which aspects of education are being devoid of resources and which departments within our university systems are scrambling for funding? The answer to both is the Humanities: studies of language, history, literature and more. It is through the humanities that “one has the opportunity to get to know oneself and others better, the opportunity to become better able to understand and grapple with complex moral issues, the complexities and intricacies of humanity” (Strauss, par. 18). Both Jonas and Cassia experience a limitation of the humanities—with the control over memory (views of the past) and control over language use—but both experience freedom when they discover what is kept from them. Our system today is not set to the extreme as seen in these novels, but more and more we are seeing how “university officials, deans, provosts, and presidents all are far more likely to know how to construct a Harvard Business School case study than to parse a Greek verb, more familiar with flowcharts than syllogisms, more conversant in management-speak than the riches of the English language” (Stover, par. 3). Government structures are failing to see the power provided through these schools of thought, thus controlling them through the most logical medium: funding.

The lack of funding for the humanities appears on both the state and federal level. For the 2020 fiscal year, President Trump has demonstrated his lack of appreciation for Humanities in

his decision to cut funding again for both the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities (Cascone, par. 1). Through this decision, not only would these two organizations be affected, but also the Institute of Museum and Library Services. When asked about these decisions, the White House stated “The Administration does not consider NEA or NEH activities to be core Federal responsibilities” (Cascone, par. 3). However, I would argue that these activities should be considered Federal responsibilities. I’m not stating that the government should control all aspects of these organizations, but these organizations should be supported in their mission and goal for the American people.

Through *The Giver* and *Matched*, Lowry and Condie show what can happen when life becomes less of an experience and more of just a formula for survival. Once life stoops to this level of basic survival, the joy and overall human experience is eliminated. Through these two novels, the dangers of these experiences appear and serve as a warning for those who recognize the dangers. While the danger might appear through the normalization of literature being taught, what keeps the control in check? We can see through literature what is possible if we allow the educational system or the government to control our perception of the world. If we are those who understand the danger, may this be our call to arms to advocate for those freedoms we hold dear and strive to keep these warnings within the pages of our books.

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