

## The Giver

**Read the following passage and answer the question that follows.**

From the corner of his eye, he could see his friend Fiona help the old man from the tub and tenderly pat his thin, naked body dry with an absorbent cloth. She helped him into his robe.

Jonas thought Larissa had drifted into sleep, as the Old often did, and he was careful to keep his motions steady and gentle so he wouldn't wake her. He was surprised when she spoke, her eyes still closed. 5

"This morning we celebrated the release of Roberto," she told him. "It was wonderful."

"I knew Roberto!" Jonas said. "I helped with his feeding the last time I was here, just a few weeks ago. He was a very interesting man." 10

Larissa opened her eyes happily. "They told his whole life before they released him," she said. "They always do. But to be honest," she whispered with a mischievous look, "some of the tellings are a little boring. I've even seen some of the Old fall asleep during tellings when they released Edna recently. Did you know Edna?"

Jonas shook his head. He couldn't recall anyone named Edna. 15

"Well, they tried to make her life sound meaningful. And of course," she added primly, "all lives are meaningful, I don't mean that they aren't. But Edna. My goodness. She was a Birthmother, and then she worked in Food Production for years, until she came here. She never even had a family unit."

Larissa lifted her head and looked around to make sure no one else was listening. 20

Then she confided, "I don't think Edna was very smart."

Jonas laughed. He rinsed her left arm, laid it back into the water, and began to wash her feet. She murmured with pleasure as he massaged her feet with the sponge.

"But Roberto's life was wonderful," Larissa went on, after a moment. "He had been

an Instructor of Elevens - you know how important that is - and he'd been on the 25

Planning Committee. And goodness, I don't know how he found the time he also

raised two very successful children, and he was also the one who did the

landscaping design for the Central Plaza. He didn't do the actual labor, of course."

"Now your back. Lean forward and I'll help you sit up." Jonas put his arm around her  
and supported her as she sat. He squeezed the sponge against her back and began 30

to rub her sharp-boned shoulders. "Tell me about the celebration."

"Well, there was the telling of his life. That is always first. Then the toast. We all

raised our glasses and cheered. We chanted the anthem. He made a lovely

good-bye speech. And several of us made little speeches wishing him well. I didn't,

though. I've never been fond of public speaking. 35

"He was thrilled. You should have seen the look on his face when they let him go."

Jonas slowed the strokes of his hand on her back thoughtfully. "Larissa," he asked,

"what happens when they make the actual release? Where exactly did Roberto go?"

She lifted her bare wet shoulders in a small shrug. "I don't know. I don't think

anybody does, except the committee. He just bowed to all of us and then walked, 40

like they all do, through the special door in the Releasing Room. But you should

have seen his look. Pure happiness, I'd call it."



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**Question: What do you find striking about the lives and deaths of the people in the Community? Why? Use TWO PEALs and explain with relevant evidence from the passage.**

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| <b>POINT</b>               |  |
| <b>EVIDENCE + ANALYSIS</b> |  |
| <b>LINK</b>                |  |

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**Suggested Answer:**

Point: I find it striking that the release of old people - which the reader understands to mean death - is a cause for celebration and joy.

Evidence + Analysis: The words “celebrated” and “it was wonderful” highlight the fact that Larissa considers Release to be a joyous occasion. This is striking to me as it is in stark contrast with our world, where a person’s death is a cause for mourning and involves missing them, even while remembering their lives. The word “thrilled” further cements the idea that Release is viewed with excitement and anticipation, rather than the usual human emotions which involve fear or sadness. This is especially striking to me since nobody except the committee knows where one goes upon Release, and yet it is viewed with great positivity rather than fear of the unknown. The words “Pure happiness” further highlight that Roberto’s emotions involve elation, which is striking in that it is the opposite of what one usually might feel at the idea of death.

Link: Thus, I find it remarkable that Release is viewed with positive emotions, even when nobody is aware of what it entails.

Point: I find it striking that despite the culture of ‘sameness’ that the Elders have tried to implement in the community, people continue to be discriminatory.

Evidence + Analysis: The words “She was a Birthmother, and then she worked in Food Production” is said in a tone of disdain towards Edna, suggesting that she was looked down upon because she had been a Birthmother and a Food Production worker - vocations that are considered to be demeaning. The words “She never even had a family unit” also imply that someone who has a family is viewed as having a higher status. Meanwhile Roberto’s life experiences as an “instructor of Elevens”, as a person who had raised “successful children” and as a landscaper is described with awe and admiration. The words “He didn’t do the actual labor, of course” further cement the idea that labourers who did menial work like building and construction were viewed with derision.

Link: Thus, I find it striking that people are contemptuous towards others, and display condescension towards people whom they deem to be of lower status.