

## Film Review: 'The Giver' Takes Too Much From Young Adult Formula

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 15, 2014 - 6:19am

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CHICAGO – “The Giver” must have seemed a lot newer back when it was written than it does now. The Newberry Medal winning, middle school staple predates many other Young Adult series about oppressive big brother-ish societies. But its filmed adaptation, coming on the heels of “Divergent” and “The Hunger Games,” can’t help but feel like it’s riding their coattails.



Rating: **3.0/5.0**

The film follows a teenager named Jonas (Brendon Thwaites) in a seemingly perfect, peaceful society. The ruling elders have eliminated all war, pain, arguments and conflict – and wiped out free will, choice, art and emotions along with it. Children are assigned which families they will live with, then when they grow up to maturity they are assigned roles within the society, while old people are released to a magical retirement home known as “elsewhere.” However, Jonas is chosen to become the new receiver of memories, and learn from the current office holder (Jeff Bridges).

Bridges holds court in a multi-level library in a home on the edge of society looking out over a ledge into a misty realm. Sounding a bit like a cross between Marlon Brando in “The Godfather” and Foghorn Leghorn, Bridges teaches the young prodigy about the awful past so he can advise future leaders to learn from those mistakes.

This – for reasons known only to the author and director Phillip Noyce – requires Bridges and Thwaites to go through some acting gymnastics trying to make pensive hand clasping look interesting. And those memories of the past come off more pedestrian than profound. We are asked to find a deep meaning in the sight of Jonas sledding down a hill, or attending a raucous family wedding. We darn well better enjoy scenes like that because that – and one solitary punch between friends – is about all the action we’ll get in the entire movie.

*“The Giver” opens everywhere on August 15th. Featuring Brenton Thwaites, Oyeda Rush, Meryl Streep, Jeff Bridges, Alexander Skarsgard, Kaite Holmes and Taylor Swift. Screenplay adapted by Michael Mitnick and Robert B. Weide, from the novel by Lois Lowry. Directed by Phillip Noyce. Rated “PG-13”*



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Jonas (Brenton Thwaites) and Fiona (Odeya Rush) in ‘The Giver’

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company



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