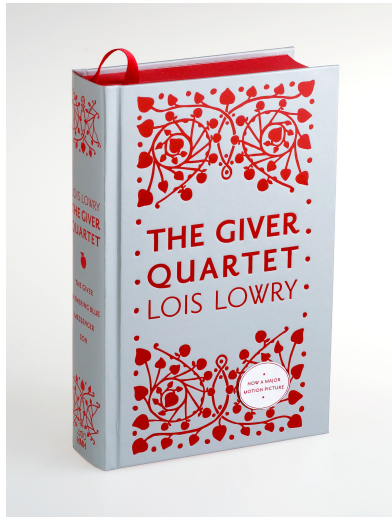


## *Son*

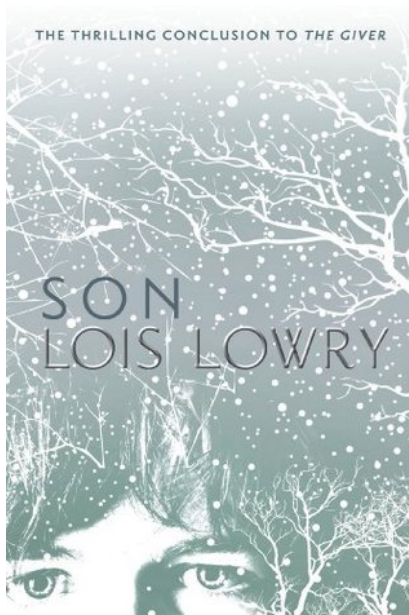
By Lois Lowry

Author website:

<https://loislowry.com/>



<https://www.hmhbooks.com/shop/books/the-giver-quartet-omnibus/9780544340978>



<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13324841-son>



Lois Lowry lost her son, Grey, when he was killed in a plane crash. She wrote *Son* to cope with the loss of her son. The book also says that it was written in the memory of her late second husband, Martin Small, who died a year before it was published. Lowry thought it would also give readers closure on what happens to Gabriel in *The Giver*.

The novel is the fourth and final sequel of *The Giver* and is divided into three sections; “The Beginning”, “The Between”, and “The Beyond”

Lowry Initially intended to center the book on Gabriel and his desire to know more about his past. However, Lowry instead found herself being drawn to write more about Claire.

Lowry stated, "I wasn't aware of it at the time... but when I was writing of her

yearning to find her boy, that was coming out of my own yearning to have my own son back." [\(NY Times\)](#)

The first part of the novel intertwines with *The Giver*.

The novel starts with 14 year old Claire, a birthmother, giving birth to “a product” but there were complications forcing her to be “decertified” from her position as a birthmother. When she was being reassigned she asked about the product she had produced and the committee member

accidentally revealed the number and the gender of Claire's product.

Claire then visits the Nursery on a regular basis to see her son, something that is forbidden. She starts to fall in love with her son.

Claire overhears that her son was supposed to be released (killed) by the community due to “his failure to thrive” and that Jonas kidnapped him. This causes Claire to run away on a supply boat from her community so that she can look for her son and be with him.

## Significant Quotes

1. “She began to dream of Thirty-six. In one dream, she wore the leather mask again, but they handed her something to hold. It moved tentatively in her arms, and she clasped it tightly, knowing it was he, not wanting them to take him away, weeping behind the mask when they did. In another, recurrent dream, Thirty-six was here with her, in her small room at the Hatchery, but no one knew. She kept him hidden in a drawer, and opened it from time to time. He would look up and smile at her. Secrecy was forbidden in the community, and the dream of the hidden newchild caused her to wake with a feeling of guilt and dread. But a stronger feeling was the one that stayed with her after that dream: the excitement of opening the drawer and seeing that he was still there, that he was safe and smiling. As children, within the family unit, they had been required to tell their dreams each morning. For single, working members of the community, like those at the Hatchery, the requirement was set aside. Occasionally, at the morning meal, one of the workers would recount an amusing dream. But there was none of the discussion that had been part of the family ritual. And Claire kept her new dreams private. But she felt restless now, and different, in ways that she didn't understand. In keeping with the demands of her new job and its meticulousness, its constant analyzing, she tried to examine her own feelings. She had never done so before, had never needed to. For Claire's entire life, her feelings had been those of—what? She searched in her mind for the right descriptive word. Contentment. Yes, she had always been content. Everyone was, in the community. Their needs were tended to; there was nothing they lacked, nothing they . . . That was it, Claire realized. She had never yearned for anything before.

But now, ever since the day of the birth, she felt a yearning constantly, desperately, to fill the emptiness inside her. She wanted her child. (526)

I chose this quote due to the fact that it was so bizarre and yet so familiar. There are many cases in which a mother and a child cannot be with each other but they might be able to visit each other. This quote is an establishment on how strict the community is and what is forbidden and not forbidden since sameness is enforced. Claire wants to be with her son but she is not supposed to know who her son is and the fact that she is visiting him is pretty much a crime that she is committing but she does not care. She just wants to see her son be happy and that is what drives her throughout the story.

2. “They each took a pill. Claire knew about the pills. The pill-taking in the community began at about Twelve—or for some children, earlier. Parents observed their children and decided when the time had come. She herself had not been deemed ready for the pills before her Ceremony of Twelve. It hadn’t mattered to her. Those of her friends who took them found it a nuisance. But when she was selected Birthmother at the Ceremony, part of her list of instructions had specified: No pills.” (567)

This quote is important due to the fact that it establishes as to why Claire has the ability to feel love. The people in the community are forced to suppress their emotions through pills but since Claire was a birthmother she was instructed to not take any pills and was given vitamins instead. The pills not only suppress emotions but also physical urges, indicating that it affects the hormones. Claire realises this and decides that she never wants to let go of the feeling of love.

3. “When she had entered the village for the first time, like so many others, she had been welcomed, years before. The fragility of old age was new to her then, and it had still startled her when she rose in the morning with her bones aching and stiff. The memory of running, climbing, even dancing, was alive and throbbing within her, but frailty made her hobble and limp. She had seen her son for the first time, in this place, when he was a child of eight or nine. She remembered that day. He ran along the path near the cottage to which she had been assigned, calling to his friends, laughing, his unkempt hair bright in the sunlight. “Gabe!” she heard a boy call; but she would have known him without hearing it. It was the same smile she remembered, the same silvery laugh. She had moved forward in that moment, intending to rush to him, to greet and embrace him. Perhaps she would make the silly face, the one with which they had once mimicked each other. But when she started eagerly toward him, she forgot her own weakness; her dragging foot caught on a stone and she stumbled clumsily. Quickly she righted herself, but in that moment she saw him glance toward her, then look away in disinterest. As if looking through his eyes, she perceived her own withered skin, her sparse gray hair, the awkward gait with which she moved. She stayed silent, and turned away, thinking. Did he need to

know, after all? He appeared to be a happy child. If she were to make herself known, to tell her unbelievable story, he would be stunned, uncomprehending. His friends might taunt him. Perhaps he would reject her. Or worse—perhaps he would feel obligated to tend to her in her remaining days. His carefree life would be interrupted. She would be a burden, an embarrassment. In the end she decided that it was enough that she had found him. She would let him be. But she realized then the magnitude of the cruel exchange Trademaster had offered her” (706)

This emphasises Claire's selflessness which many people may not relate to. Rather than think of herself, she thinks of her child. She feels that her son may be better off without her but in reality, hse son wants her more than anything. But also, she is afraid that his life is going too well without her and that he might not want her so she allows him to continue life as he has always known it to be. Her not being a part of it.

## Text Complexity

**ATOS Book Level:** 5.0

**Interest Level:** Grades 6 and up

**AR Points:** 11.0

### **Dale-Chall Formula worksheet**

Raw score 2.4126

Adjusted score: (3.6365 + 2.4126)

Final Score: 6

New Dale-Chall Readability Index:

Grade level: Grades 7 - 8

I used a sample from the middle of the book when Claire was assisting a woman named Alys with the birth of another woman, Bryn. I chose this passage due to the fact that it was different from the rest of the reading and it is also a key moment in the story. The trauma that Claire went through comes back when she fears that Bryn’s baby would be taken away. I disagreed with the recommended grade level and feel that children should be in high school to read an intense scene since the signs of PTSD are displayed but they may not be old enough to understand it.

Lexile range

610L - 800L

I used a sample from the first quote of this book talk and it was recommended for this book to be read by students in grades 4-5. This book is far too complex and intense since it is about love, trauma, and sacrifice. Children in that age do not fully comprehend the kind of love, trauma, and sacrifice displayed in the book. I would say that the wording of the book does appear suitable for that age range but the subject matter is what makes me disagree.

## Teaching Suggestions

I would use this book if I taught at the middle school level, specifically eighth grade, and I would use this book at any grade level in high school. At that point students would most likely be able to understand the subject matter at hand. It should not be a difficult book to read in terms of grammar and complexity.

Ways I would implement this in a classroom is by asking students what it is that they want at this moment and what they would do for them to achieve it. I would talk about something I would want, something personal. I would then ask the difference between a want and a need and what they would do for both. This may allow students to have a personal connection to the story and also be able to learn how to prioritize different aspects of their lives.

Another way I would teach this book is to look at the undertones of each story. Looking at Claire's reassignment to the fish hatchery, she had to care for fish but not as pets but for food. She compared herself to the dead fish egg as being defective. She then had to become a midwife and not be able to care for her own child. Things in which Claire had to help others experience but not herself.

Finally, the last suggestion would be for them to each write an anonymous note of affirmations. Not everyone has a parental figure in which they feel that they are loved. Many of the students have worked so hard to get to where they are and so knowing that they are seen by their peers is nice. They will have two sheets of paper stapled with their names on the top. The notes will be written in pencil and will be turned in to me and I will review them all to make sure they are all kind. Claire went through a lot of hardship to get to where she is but it was through the encouragement of the people she has met and self determination that got her to finally be with her son.

### *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*

#### **Chapter 6: Adventure, Sports, Mysteries, and the Supernatural**

#### **Chapter 7: Fantasy, Science Fiction, Utopias, and Dystopias**

*Son* falls underneath both categories of chapter 6 and 7. Claire goes on an adventure and has to deal with the Trademaster who is not human but a force of evil. Claire also has to uncover her mysteries of the world since the community she grew up in is very restrictive. This leads to the

fact that Claire has been living in a dystopian society for sixteen years of her life and when she leaves, she is afraid of many things she was not familiar with.

## Why should Teens read this book?

Teens should read this book due to the fact that it shows how hard work and dedication towards a goal can pay off well. It also shows the great lengths one would go through for the one they love. This can also give closure for those who have read *The Giver* and they want to know what happened to Jonas and Gabriel. Also if students have a caring parental figure in their lives, this can lead for them to be more appreciative of their parents. This can also give them a goal as to what kind of parent they would like to be and what kind of parent they feel they deserve.