

# Diversity and Sameness in the Giver Quartet

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## SAŽETAK

Različitosti među ljudima mogu dovesti to neuravnotežene raspodjele moći i diskriminacije, ali mogu i stvoriti šaroliko društvo koje slavi raznolikosti. Koji će od ova dva ishoda biti konačan, ovisi o vrijednostima i uvjerenjima koja se razvijaju od ranog djetinjstva. Okruženost djeteta raznolikostima može imati utjecaja na razvoj empatije i socijalnih vještina te budući odnos prema osobama u njihovome okruženju. Izloženost raznolikostima može biti izravna, tako da dijete ostvaruje kontakt s različitim osobama, kulturama i jezicima, ili neizravna, kroz čitanje ili slušanje o onima koji su na neki način drugačiji. Kvalitetna književnosti može biti jedan od izvora raznolikosti u životu djeteta tako da predstavi manjine i one grupe koje su često premalo ili pogrešno predstavljene. Književnosti također pomaže i onima koji sami u te grupe i ne spadaju, ali čitajući mogu bolje shvatiti perspektivnu onih koji su po nečemu drugačiji. Dječja književnost i književnost za mlade još uvijek ne odlikuje dovoljnom zastupljenosti likova raznolikih u rasi, etnicitetu, rodu i invaliditetu, ali primjeri kvalitetne predstavljenosti se mogu pronaći. Istovjetnost, za razliku od raznolikosti, predstavlja ideju potpune jednakosti među svima, što ne mora nužno biti forsirana, uniformirana jednakosti. Kvalitetni primjeri raznolikosti i istovjetnosti mogu se pronaći u romanu *Davač* i tri nastavka koja ga prate, američke autorice Lois Lowry, koji predstavljaju nekoliko raznolikih likova i uspješno se dotiču socijalnih problema koje manjinske grupe često susreću.

Ključne riječi: raznolikost, istovjetnot, dječja književnost, književnost za mlade

## ABSTRACT

Differences between people can lead to unbalanced power and discrimination, or create a colorful society that celebrates diversity. Which one of those two outcomes will be the final result depends on values and beliefs that are developed from early childhood. Being surrounded by diversity can have effect on child's development of empathy, social skills and treatment of others around them. Exposure to diversity can be direct, by having contact with different people, cultures and languages, or indirect, by reading or listening about those who are in some way different. Quality literature can be one of those sources of diversity, by portraying minorities and misrepresented groups so that they can find themselves in those texts and feel like they too belong in their society, and it can help others understand what it means to be different, and understand the perspective of someone who leads a life different from theirs. Children's and young adult literature shows imbalance in portrayal of characters that vary in race, ethnicity, gender and disability, but examples of quality representation can still be found. Sameness, as opposed to diversity is the idea of every individual being alike, but not necessarily in a uniformed, strict kind of way. Quality examples of diversity and sameness can be found in *The Giver Quartet* written by and American author Lois Lowry, which provides a number of diverse characters and successfully tackles social issues that those minority groups face.

Key words: diversity, sameness, children's literature, young adult literature

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature impacts the way we think and act, especially if we are invested in it from early childhood.

Being exposed to numerous works of literature from an early age has shown to increase critical thinking skills and creativity. Reading a book can be seen as entering a whole new world and thinking in new parameters.

The reason for this is exposure to different people, cultures, values and ideas that reading brings. Books can introduce topics that are thought-provoking and initiate discussions of universally important topics, perhaps ones which would not have been given much thought otherwise. Children's literature does not need to be didactic in order to achieve this goal, but it can be rich in ideas and values. In *Ethics and Children's Literature* Claudia Mills states that the values promoted by a book cannot be separated from its aesthetic quality, meaning what a book says is equally important as how it is said (Mills, 2014).

One of those values that could be implemented in literature is the acceptance of diversity. Diversity, seen as the inclusion of different ideas, things and people, is acquired in a similar manner as a language would be; by being exposed to it. For example, a survey conducted with 1,520 children ages 7 to 16 confirmed that children who are exposed to disabilities, directly or indirectly, have better attitudes and less anxiety when dealing with disabilities (MacMillan, 2013). This tells us that children respond better to things that are familiar to them, and in order for that to be achieved they need to find it in their surroundings. If children find something in their surroundings often enough it will become a normality.

Just as it is with young children, young adults need to be stimulated by literature in order to develop their reading and critical thinking. Growing up means understanding the world around you, and that is often easier through associating with a book character.

This thesis will provide a short overview of diversity and sameness as its contrast and explain the importance of diverse characters in children's and young adult literature. The focus will be on diversity and sameness in The Giver quartet written by Lois Lowry, consisting of *The Giver* (1993), *Gathering Blue* (2002), *Messenger* (2004), and *Son* (2012). In *The Giver* Lowry introduces the idea of sameness, a notion of all differences being abolished, which makes this book especially suitable for such an analysis. In the analysis elements such as the inclusion of different races, ethnic groups, characters with disability and representation of gender will be examined. Next to the inclusion of diversity, characters will be also described with respect to their presentation to other characters and how they are treated by others in their surroundings.

## 2. DIVERSITY

Globalization has been bringing people all over the world closer together for a long time, but since the widespread use of technology and easier movements across the globe, acceptance of diversity has become a necessity. Societies and cultures are slowly becoming more and more aware of all the uniqueness a person can have and treat them in a positive way. Fights for equality of all are still being fought, but the progressive spread of awareness is undeniable.

### 2.1. Defining diversity

The etymology dictionary explains the origin of the term “diversity” by stating the following: “mid-14c., diversite, "variety, diverseness;" late 14c., "quality of being diverse, fact of difference between two or more things or kinds; variety; separateness; that in which two or more things differ," mostly in a neutral sense” (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.) UNHCR gives a definition of diversity which includes notions of different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other, as characteristics that vary from person to person, and age and gender as dimensions that are present in everyone (Cheng, et al., 2018). Similarly, Daft (2003, cited by Seymen, 2006) recognizes diversity in a dual differentiation of basic and secondary dimensions. The basic dimensions are the ones which are inborn and have influence on individuals during their life span, such as race, ethnicity, gender, physical and cognitive ability. Secondary dimensions, on the other hand, are characteristics which individuals have possessed throughout their lives and appear less effective in comparison to basic dimensions (beliefs, marital status, languages, social-economic status, education level, etc.).

Diversity therefore presents the coexistence of differences among people. These differences can be either visible or invisible, making individuals stand out more or less than others. However, differences are not the only part of diversity. According to Thomas (1996) diversity is not synonymous with differences, but includes differences and similarities alike. A diverse society would be one that recognizes and cherishes those dimensions which bring people together in their likeness, as much as those that emphasize individuality.

Apart from being understood as multi-dimensional, diversity can be seen as multi-layered. Faist (2010) recognizes three types of diversity within an educational context: diversity as a characteristic of societies, organizational diversity and individual diversity. Here, diversity is seen as a multi-level concept in which each level of understanding is connected to the other. In order to achieve organizational diversity, that organization, as in a group of people, has to ensure



that individuals within it have intercultural competence, which belongs to the level of individual diversity.

Diversity is, therefore, a complex idea that does not only imply the state of being different from something or someone. This difference can vary in meaning, magnitude and relation towards each individual or the whole society. When observed with the inclusion of all its dimensions and on the level of the whole society, diversity should include acceptance of both the majorities and minorities, with recognition of what makes the individuals within that society similar or different.

## 2.2. Exposure to diversity

Growing up in diverse settings can have numerous benefits for children. A research conducted in the US showed that infants who grew up in linguistically diverse neighborhoods were more receptive towards people who spoke languages other than their parent's language (Howard, 2014). Another research, also from the United States, confirmed that exposure to diversity in preschool classrooms impacts future tendency for racial bias and cross-race friendships (Gaias et. al., 2018). Researchers explain that "direct intergroup contact can only occur in contexts in which different groups are represented; when intergroup contact is not possible, stronger racial biases are likely to manifest" (ibid., p. 8). Multicultural experiences can also improve creativity. A study in China showed that exposing university students to different cultures can enhance their creative expression (Tan, et. al., 2019). What these three studies confirmed is that exposure to diversity can impact a person at any stage of life. Each research studied a different age group, from infants, preschoolers to university students, and each group showed changes either later on in life or soon after the exposure to different people, cultures or languages. The results proved that being exposed to diversity can be beneficial for children and adults alike.

More and more curricula across the world include the intercultural competence as one of the educational goals. *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* describes the intercultural competence as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive and behavioral orientations to the world" (Deardorff, 2009, p. 7) This competence is built from early childhood when children first learn to communicate with others around them. Teachers have a lot of influence over student's exposure to multiculturalism and development of intercultural competence at a young age, especially foreign language teachers. Through language learning, students can also learn a lot about the source culture and people behind it. The importance of

developing intercultural competence through foreign language learning is recognized by teachers as well (Breka, Petravić, 2015).

Children do not need to be explicitly taught to accept diversity, but instead should be naturally surrounded by it. Exposure to diversity has proven to have positive effects on attitudes, values and behavior of children and grown-ups alike and have influence in direct form (interaction with different people such as minorities) and indirect form (foreign language classes that introduce different cultures to students). Apart from being beneficial in terms of developing healthy attitudes towards different people, languages and cultures, being exposed to diversity helps develop intercultural competence that has become a necessary life-skill.

### 3. DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

As the mentioned MacMillan research (2013) confirmed, exposure to diversity can be direct or indirect, and in both cases the exposure has an effect on children's attitudes and values. If a child is raised in a homogeneous society, diversity can be introduced through literature. Literature can influence a child's cognitive and emotional development and help in avoiding occurrences of racist and hateful attitudes. Children connect with characters they are reading about and available characters need to be both similar and different than them. This stands for both children that belong to a majority and children that are a part of a minority. Reading about a character that is similar to the reader brings understanding of themselves and reading about someone who differs from the reader creates an opportunity for understanding others. Values and opinions are formed from an early age and books can have an immense impact on what kind of a person a child will become.

A powerful statement by Rudine Sims Bishop captures the true meaning of the reading experience and importance of diverse representation:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (1990, p. ix)

Numerous studies proved how reading can influence the behavior of the reader, and the same goes for younger children. For example, a study from 2017 observed the behavior of a group of four to six years old children that come from racially diverse schools in England. After listening to a story oriented on questions about race and racial diversity, the racial segregation among children was lessened (McKeown, Williams, & Pauker, 2017). This research proved how effective the right story can be, and how much literature could do for changing the inequalities that still hold the grip on the society. This was a short-timed exposure that showed results only temporarily, which only goes to prove that diverse literature needs to be implemented in the curriculum as a regularity. If one reading of a diverse picture-book can bring children closer during lunchtime that same day, then it is worth reading more often.

While keeping in mind that diversity should be seen as inclusion of differences and similarities alike, implementing diverse literature in the curriculum implies representation of minorities, and all those that are not portrayed in literature already available to students. Cai (2002) discusses multicultural literature as a unity of diversity and inclusion that involves power structure and struggle, noting its power in changing people's views on cultural diversity. Cai explains this by stating:

The ultimate goals for using multicultural literature in the curriculum are to challenge the dominant ideologies, affirm the values and experiences of historically underrepresented cultures, foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, develop sensitivity to social inequalities, and encourage transformation of the self and society. Through reading multicultural literature, whether non-fiction or fiction, we gain knowledge or information about the experiences, beliefs, and values of other cultures, thus enhancing our multicultural awareness and appreciation. (Cai, 2002, p. 134)

In order to achieve diversity as equal representation of any type of all participants of that society, representation of minorities should meet the one of the dominant social circle.

Teachers are the most common source of literature choices for children they work with, so it is up to them to provide the students with diverse and inclusive books. Unfortunately, due to the lack of awareness or resources the reality is not that ideal. A US study from 2012 focused on the knowledge of elementary teachers on this topic. When asked to name two children's books from five different ethnic groups, the majority of participants could only identify two books from the Anglo-American category and lacked book knowledge in all other cultural areas (Leahy & Foley, 2018). In order to successfully provide diverse literature for their classroom, teachers need to be educated about that topic. Education is an area that requires continuous training and keeping up with new findings and knowledge so even if a teacher is not initially trained in this area that can always be changed with continuous development. Leahy and Foley (2018) propose several strategies for selection of appropriate children's literature; assessing literature with special detail to diversity and inclusion of characters, using book lists and diversity grids, literacy biographies and literature circles, encouraging discussion, etc. These strategies are already universally popular in classrooms, only here their focus is shifted to diversity in literature. Since these strategies are familiar to teachers and students they are a great way to introduce diversity into the classroom by building on previous knowledge and experience in chosen activities. For example, if a teacher often organizes discussions about the work of literature that was read, this would be a good strategy to use when a diverse book is

being covered. Students would be familiar with the activity of discussion and they could easily focus on the presented topic.

Young adults are at a stage of their lives where a lot is changing and often they have trouble understanding their maturation. Reading about relatable characters can make that task a little easier. The need to feel represented in literature is not restricted only to early childhood, and neither are the grim statistics of insufficient representation of minorities in literature.

Joyce Hensen emphasizes the need for representation of all groups of young people in literature suitable for them, and warns that the lack of which might lead to the feeling of less significance and distance from literature. Hensen puts great importance on including diverse books in the curriculum, as well as on knowing the students and providing appropriate literature in which they will be able to find themselves, finishing the chapter by saying: “We cannot afford to ignore any of our children each must have a story of his or her own.” (Hensen, 1998, p. 19) Young adults are more aware of social issues and injustices in their surroundings, so this is a good time to introduce issues of misrepresented people through literature.

S.R. Toliver agrees with the notion of importance of representation of all human experiences and emphasizes the significance of it during adolescence, which the author explains as the age in which children of color face and internalize negative and distorted images of themselves (2020). Adolescence is the age at which children start to understand themselves as a part of society and compare themselves to others, making this age especially sensitive for developing low self-esteem.

At this age, young adults are developing critical thinking skills, and are and using those skills to form and express opinions, so reading diverse literature can be followed by various activities. Jeffrey D. Wilhelm studied the possibilities of using drama while reading multicultural books to help students understand themselves as well as those different from them. Wilhelm reported that “blending the reading of multicultural stories with drama activities that asked students to observe and appreciate other cultures, to enter into the experiences of people from those cultural groups, and to manipulate those situations to explore possibilities for change proved to be a powerful combination” (1998, p. 119)

The importance of being represented and reading about someone different from us, as can be seen, remains the same in adolescence, therefore what was said about diversity in children’s literature is applicable here as well. It could be concluded that while exposure to diversity in early childhood impacted the future development of values and behavior, the same exposure

has a more immediate impact on young adults, forming their currently developing understanding of themselves and the world around them.

### 3.1. Race and ethnicity

University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) has been compiling statistics about diversity of children's literature published in the US since 1985. CCBC site regularly updates the number of published children's and young adult's books in the US that feature or are written by a member of a minority. The collected data showed that racial and ethnic diversity has improved over the years but is still far from being equally represented as the white race. (CCBC, 2021)

CCBC analysis of representation of race and ethnicity showed the lack of diverse literature available to children and young adults in the US, and the same could be applied for different parts of the world. A study of representation of marginalized communities in Australian young adult fiction showed that not enough progress has been made and that the representation of minorities is still not sufficient (Booth & Narayan, 2018). Authors from marginalized communities in Australia interviewed for the Booth and Narayan research expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of positive representation and recalled their own experiences with books as young adults explaining it as "either due to the total absence of representations of their own community in fiction, or the existing representations being harmful" (Booth & Narayan, 2018, p. 207). Representation of racial and ethnic minorities should therefore be considered in terms of quantity and quality. How a character is presented in a book is just as important as the fact that they are present at all.

Kimura (2019) studied the racial diversity of young adult novels published in the US in 2014 compared to the ones from 2018. The research considered quantity and quality of visual representation of different ethnicities and concluded that, while there has been some improvement between the two years, there is still an imbalance between the number of white characters compared to people of color on the covers (Kimura, 2019). Covers are the first impression a book leaves on the reader and it is the most obvious signal of diversity of the available literature. The common misconception that readers are more likely to pick a book with a white character on it stands in a way of equality of representation and that obstacle is up to publishers to cross.

### 3.2. Gender

When it comes to gender, the data shows that there is plenty of room for improvement in order to achieve equal representation of genders. A study from 2011 concluded that males are central characters in 57% of 5,618 children's books published in the twentieth century in the United States. In contrast, females as central characters can be found in 31% of the corpus in question. When it comes to books that have animals for central characters 23% of animals are male while female animals can be found in 7.5% of the books analyzed. The representation in titles is just as unjust with males in titles of 36.5% of books and females in 17.5% of book titles (McCabe et. al., 2011). Male and female representation in children's literature of the Western world is unequal and as such it reflects the position of girls and boys in that society. Lack of female representation sends a message to young girls about their status compared to the one of boys telling them that they are not as important.

Just as important as the amount of male and female characters represented in literature is the way they are portrayed. Kathryn Jacobs (2004) studies the impact of gender representation in young adult literature, stating the importance of proper portrayal: "Young adults may be particularly susceptible to gender portrayals in literature as they work through a stage in life in which they are searching to define themselves" (Jacobs, 2004, p. 20). The female portrayal, which proves to be loaded with superficial prioritization of physical appearance (for example as ones in *The Sisterhood of Traveling Pants*) and boyfriends (for example as in *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging*), even though exceptions of quality representations can be found. When it comes to male representation, there is a significant lack of support for crossing gender boundaries that girls have been receiving in recent years. Instead, boys are represented in a masculine, aggressive, emotionless manner (Jacobs, 2004). This representation of male and female characters goes in hand with traditional gender roles of Western cultures. "Gender roles are the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex. Traditionally, many Western societies have believed that women are more nurturing than men" (Blackstone, 2003, p. 337). Men, on the other hand are seen as leaders and providers for the family (ibid.). Western societies and similar cultures still hold on to these traditional views of gender even though there have been some changes and visible progress towards equality. The lacking and improper representation of genders supports the fact that there is still a lot to be one in order to eradicate these gender norms, while it continues to shape the way boys and girls understand themselves and the world around them.

### 3.3. Disabilities

Another group of children that often do not get enough recognition in literature are children with disabilities. This lack of representation can be harmful for the feeling of self-worth, as well as the position of these children in a society. “Children with disabilities who cannot find themselves represented in books and other children’s media are equally invisible to their peers without disabilities in the classroom” (Matthew & Clow, 2007, cited by Rieger & McGrail, 2015, p. 3). The lack of portrayal of disabilities in literature can be harmful for children and young adults with disabilities as well as those without. Reading about characters with disabilities can help readers understand and form healthy opinions about disabilities. A research was conducted by Donna Sayers Adomat with students of two combined classrooms. Students were read inclusive books and participated in a discussion. Results showed changes in student’s behavior and better understanding of their peers with disabilities, with some students recognizing they too know someone similar to the book characters and changing their attitude towards students with disabilities. Some participants even became active members within their community after reading these books (Adomat, 2014). This is another proof of how literature can impact attitudes towards groups that are often not represented enough among book characters and how beneficial it is to those with and without disabilities.

Like several other researchers, Beckett, Ellison, Barrett & Shah (2010) showed that literature that portrays disabilities is available and increasing in quantity, but question the quality of that representation. While observing 100 texts that portray disabilities, what the scholars noticed as problematic was the outdated and inappropriate language, tragedy model view of disability which elicits sympathy rather than empathy, promoting unrealistic “happy ever after” endings, the “curio” stereotypes which strips the person of their humanity, and “a lesson to us all” theme (p. 378–381). On the more positive note, some findings show better portrayal of persons with disabilities. Within 40 texts of the ones that were studied disability is treated as a part of diversity and disabled people as a part of community, while 15 of the analyzed texts were anti-disablist texts that “go one step further and directly address a range of ‘social’ barriers facing disabled people” (Beckett, Ellison, Barrett & Shah, 2010, p. 383–384).

Even though disabled characters are not the most represented in children’s and young adult literature, examples of representation can still be found. Characters with disabilities are often shown in unrealistic, stereotypical ways but better examples can be found, and for those it is especially important to be available to young readers. Disabled people are often misunderstood in the society or approached with restraint, and this is something that could be changed by education and empathy that quality literature can provide.



## 4. SAMENESS

The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d. Definition 1) describes sameness as “the quality of being the same as or very similar to something else.” Sameness among people can be seen as the group that the person that is different does not belong to, but still that definition would not completely grasp the idea of sameness and difference and the line between the two. When it comes to diversity and sameness between people, embracing differences between one another means accepting those aspects that pull us apart and just as much as those that make us the same.

Children’s and young adult literature benefit from diversity, but sameness can be beneficial for young readers, too. O’Sullivan and Immel (2017) provide an explanation of why portraying sameness and difference is the key to appreciating the role that children’s literature has in promoting social change on the example of *Madlenka*, a picture book written by Peter Sís that promotes diversity. By asking *Who Is Seeing?*, *What (or Who) Is Seen?* and *How Are They Represented?* O’Sullivan and Immel (2017) analyze the picture book in terms of representation of foreigners coexisting in *Madlenka*’s world. They touch upon the idea of internationalized childhood, as well:

At the same time, there is a strong rhetorical tradition of internationalism in children’s literature discourse from the Enlightenment [...] to the present day; instead of emphasizing the idea of children belonging to specific ethnic or national groups, these narratives stress the sameness of children throughout the world and cast childhood itself as a utopian space that transcends all borders and erases all differences. (O’Sullivan and Immel, 2017, p. 8)

Petros Panaou (2011) studies Comparative Literature as a part of the global tension between sameness and difference, and embraces letting go of nationalizing literature, but instead seeing it as an opportunity to globally share values, ideas and influences. (Panaou, 2011).

### 4.1. Sameness designed by Lois Lowry

Lois Lowry is an American author for children and young adults who published some of the most famous contemporary pieces of literature, for example *Number the Stars* and *The Giver Quartet*, which will be discussed further on.

Lowry’ official website (n.d.) notes that she was born Hawaii, but spent her childhood moving all over the world, until finally settling down in Maine where her writing career started. While her works vary in genres, Lowry emphasizes the importance of human connection and acceptance in all her work, especially in *The Giver* (1993) and the three following books from

*The Giver Quartet.* In *The Giver* sameness is described as a complete lack of any differences between people, a monotony that was artificially created in order to protect and control the society. Lowry's sameness is developed in a complex way that provokes readers' thoughts and makes them wonder whether this organization of society could have its benefits.

## 5. *THE GIVER* (1993)

The novel follows a 12-year-old male protagonist named Jonas, who lives in a society deprived of pain, hunger, grief, memories and emotion, due to society's conversion to sameness. Sameness was created by genetic modification, as well as population control. The human history was not taught and was therefore simply forgotten by everyone except the Giver and the Receiver of memories. Sameness forbids anything that is different or stands out, so such individuals get released (murdered). Children are controlled by the tradition of retelling dreams and daily activities through which their parents get insight into everything they do or think. Feelings and attachments are forbidden as well, this is controlled by medicine all adults have to take which erases their emotions and needs. Jonas is at the age when he is assigned a role in his community, and this role turns out to be the Receiver of memory, meaning that he is to learn all about the past of humanity and use that knowledge to help his community. Once Jonas realizes what life used to and should be he questions his own beliefs and wonders whether there is more to life than his sheltered reality.

Throughout the book the reader is slowly introduced to the extent of sameness and its practical aspects. Sameness altered people's beliefs and values by removing memories and limiting people's knowledge, and modified the physical aspects of human life.

"And the faces of people? The ones I saw at the Ceremony?"

The Giver shook his head. "No, flesh isn't red. But it has red tones in it. There was a time, actually — you'll see this in the memories later — when flesh was many different colors. That was before we went to Sameness. Today flesh is all the same, and what you saw was the red tones. Probably when you saw the faces take on color it wasn't as deep and vibrant as the apple, or your friend's hair."

The Giver chuckled, suddenly. "We've never completely mastered Sameness. I suppose the genetic scientists are still hard at work trying to work the kinks out. Hair like Fiona's must drive them crazy." (Lowry, 1993, p. 94–95)

As can be seen from the previous quote, with everyone in the community having the same skin color there can't be much more said about representation of racial diversity, considering the futuristic-dystopian narrative present. In any case, this is one of the contrasts, an extreme this

book goes to, that could certainly be food for thought and a topic for discussions with young adults that could lead them to think about advantages and disadvantages of living in a monochrome society. The entire plot is placed in Jonas' community with only little mention of people who live outside it, therefore there is no diversity of ethnic representation included either.

It was the first thing Jonas noticed as he looked at the newchild peering up curiously from the basket. The pale eyes.

Almost every citizen in the community had dark eyes. His parents did, and Lily did, and so did all of his group members and friends. But there were a few exceptions: Jonas himself, and a female Five who he had noticed had the different, lighter eyes. 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. (Lowry, 1993, p. 20)

In this example, another physical trait can be noticed that is universal to Jonas' community, with some exceptions. The pale eyes are something that even his colorblind society notices and further on into the story we learn it is associated with special abilities of its carriers. Here we also see how differences are treated, as rare as they are. Pale eyes represent special abilities and individuals who could be seen as superior, but then again sameness does not allow for anyone to stand out, in a positive or negative way, so noticing and commenting such a distinctive trait would be inappropriate.

Another example emphasizes how all differences are taboos, so much that children are taught to avoid it from an early age:

It was the sort of thing one didn't ask a friend about because it might have fallen into that uncomfortable category of 'being different.' Asher took a pill each morning; Jonas did not. Always better, less rude, to talk about things that were the same. (Lowry, 1993, p. 38)

Forced sameness was previously explained by the genetic modification that made everyone colorblind, but here it can be seen how manipulation helped that cause as well. Children are taught to only notice and discuss things that are universal, and avoid talking about anything that stands out.

Treatment of children has been a hot topic in this book that led to many discussions, censorships and rebellions against the book. Some argue how infanticide is too traumatic for young adults to read about, while others do not see the need for such sheltering. Gabriel provides us with the insight into the logistics behind the sameness and its control over the people. In order to keep the differences in the taboo area that should not be talked about, the community eliminates everyone who shows signs and tendency of being different.

“Father had gone before the committee with a plea on behalf of Gabriel, who had not yet gained the weight appropriate to his days of life nor begun to sleep soundly enough at night to be placed with his family unit. Normally such a newchild would be labeled Inadequate and released from the community. Instead, as a result of Father's plea, Gabriel had been labeled Uncertain and given the additional year.” (Lowry, 1993, p. 42)

The newchild, Gabriel, was growing, and successfully passed the tests of maturity that the Nurturers gave each month; he could sit alone, now, could reach for and grasp small play objects, and he had six teeth. During the day-time hours, Father reported, he was cheerful and seemed of normal intelligence. But he remained fretful at night, whimpering often, needing frequent attention. (Lowry, 1993, p. 113–114)

In these quotes we can see a stand on what could be called a disability- a child that showed signs of slower development was seen as not beneficial to the community and therefore not worth saving. Nothing portrays the lack of humanity described in the novel as much as the releasing of children, which was considered a sad event, but still a necessary one. Law makers of this fictional world thought of all the ways someone might start asking questions that should be avoided, and how to prevent it. A child with developmental issues wasn't the only one that posed a threat: anything that stands out from the sameness is.

There's a Birth-mother who's expecting twin males next month."

"Oh, dear," Mother said, shaking her head. "If they're identical, I hope you're not the one assigned — "

"I am. I'm next on the list. I'll have to select the one to be nurtured, and the one to be released. It's usually not hard, though. Usually it's just a matter of birthweight. We release the smaller of the two." (Lowry, 1993, p. 114)

Gender representation could be considered atypical, with the absence of what we know as typical gender roles. Jonas is not portrayed as a typical masculine, emotionless male protagonist, but then again, he lives in a society in which all children must speak honestly and express their thoughts and emotions. Families in the community have a tradition of sharing feelings at the end of the day, which is in reality a way for parents to get to know more about their children and control them. This could also be the reason why Jonas is not in denial with or afraid to share his feelings.

"I'm feeling apprehensive," he confessed, glad that the appropriate descriptive word had finally come to him.

"Why is that, son?" His father looked concerned.

"I know there's really nothing to worry about," Jonas explained, "and that every adult has been through it. I know you have, Father, and you too, Mother. But it's the Ceremony that I'm apprehensive about. (Lowry, 1993, p. 9)

Later on, Jonas is introduced to real, complex emotions. He realizes their importance and wishes for them to be normalized. Here we have the typical revolt towards the system that often occurs with male protagonists in young adult literature, but in this case the revolt comes out of the need to feel and express emotions:

"But anyway, I was thinking, I mean feeling, actually, that it was kind of nice, then. And that I wish we could be that way, and that you could be my grandparent. The family in the memory seemed a little more — " He faltered, not able to find the word he wanted.

"A little more complete," The Giver suggested.

Jonas nodded. "I liked the feeling of love," he confessed. He glanced nervously at the speaker on the wall, reassuring himself that no one was listening. "I wish we still had that," he whispered." (Lowry, 1993, p. 126)

The lack of traditional gender roles can be noticed in the dynamic between Jonas' parents. The family, like much else, is artificially created and, with the general lack of emotions, it is seen as a duty. Jonas' parents do their job properly and behave in a way that is most appropriate for the parental role, but differences in character can be noticed.

Mother is portrayed as the stricter and more orderly one. She plays the role of the parent efficiently and properly, but does not go beyond her parental obligations dictated by the community. She is dedicated to her job and her family, and there are no suspicions towards her loyalty to the community.

"Here you are, Lily-billy," he said. "I'll come help you remove your hair ribbons."

Jonas and his mother rolled their eyes, yet they watched affectionately as Lily and her father headed to her sleeping- room with the stuffed elephant that had been given to her as her comfort object when she was born. His mother moved to her big desk and opened her briefcase; her work never seemed to end, even when she was at home in the evening. (Lowry, 1993, p. 19)

The father, on the other hand, is the gentler one of the two. He calls his children by their nicknames and even occasionally breaks smaller rules for them.

"He glanced down, grinning at Gabriel. "Then I wave bye- bye," he said, in the special sweet voice.

Gabriel giggled and waved bye-bye back to him. "And somebody else comes to get him? Somebody from Elsewhere?"

"That's right, Jonas-bonus."" (Lowry, 1993, p. 137)

“Did you still play at all, after Twelve?” Jonas asked.

“Occasionally,” his mother replied. “But it didn’t seem as important to me.”

“I did,” his father said, laughing. “I still do. Every day, at the Nurturing Center, I play bounce-on-the-knee, and peek-a-boo, and hug-the-teddy.” He reached over and stroked Jonas’s neatly trimmed hair. “Fun doesn’t end when you become Twelve.” (Lowry, 1993, p. 18)

Another deviation from the traditional gender roles are the jobs assigned to the parents, Mother holds “a prominent position at the Department of Justice” (Lowry, 1993, p. 8) while the father has the gentle role of the Nurturer.

Jonas’s father’s title was Nurturer. He and the other Nurturers were responsible for all the physical and emotional needs of every newchild during its earliest life. It was a very important job, Jonas knew, but it wasn’t one that interested him much. (Lowry, 1993, p. 7)

The fact that the mother has the role of keeping the law and order in the community while the father takes care of babies is even more interesting considering the fact that jobs are assigned according to each person’s abilities and aptness, which can be seen as a statement against the traditional view of gender roles that is often defended as the natural way of things. Gender roles, as seen by the Western cultures, are usually defended by arguments about the natural order and physical predispositions of men to be the leaders while women are considered gentler and loving, and therefore expected to take on the nurturing status. Here the roles are completely switched, meaning the mother was seen as more suitable to handle the governing position in the community, while father’s character was fitting for a nurturer.



## 6. *GATHERING BLUE* (2002)

*Gathering blue* (Lowry, 2002) is the second book in the quartet but the setting is shifted to another community. Here, the protagonist is Kira, a two-syllable girl that, like Jonas, has a special ability. Kira is in a difficult situation, she was born fatherless and now loses her mother too, all of which would be manageable, were it not for her disability, a crippled leg. In this novel we follow Kira as she fights for her place in the community while learning about her special gift- seeing the future through embroidery.

Kira's character is especially interesting when observed as a portrayal of a person with a disability. What is interesting is that even though her leg is an important aspect of her character, something that makes her life more difficult and influences her position in the society, it is not the central part of her personality. Kira has a gift for embroidery which goes beyond mere talent. This gift, and not her physical disability, is what truly sets her apart and gives her a special place in the community.

The Village itself is much different from the community in the previous sequel. There is no sameness and the organization of life is different, but the population is still controlled. Like in Jonas' community, the Village is ruthless towards those who stand out, eliminating them entirely.

Healthy, strong tykes were valuable; properly trained, they could contribute to family needs and would be greatly desired.

No one would desire Kira. No one ever had, except her mother. Often Katrina had told Kira the story of her birth — the birth of a fatherless girl with a twisted leg — and how her mother had fought to keep her alive.

"They came to take you," Katrina said, whispering the story to her in the evening, in their cot, with the fire fed and glowing. "You were one day old, not yet named your one-syllable infant name —"

"Kir."

"Yes, that's right: Kir. They brought me food and were going to take you away to the Field —"

Kira shuddered. It was the way, the custom, and it was the merciful thing, to give an unnamed, imperfect infant back to the earth before its spirit had filled it and made it human. But it made her shudder. (Lowry, 2002, p. 4)

Kira was born with a physical deformity which was seen as a weakness difficult enough to leave her to die. In her community she is seen as useless and weak. This theme was introduced in the first part of the Quartet and here it continues on but in a more open manner. While in Jonas's community releasing was masked by rituals so the public wouldn't see it for the murder that it is, Kira's village openly accepts the rule of leaving disabled children to die because they are seen as useless and burdensome.

"But now there was no one to help her. She had no family left, and she was not a particularly useful person in the village. For everyday work, Kira helped in the weaving shed, picking up the scraps and leavings, but her twisted leg diminished her value as a laborer and even, in the future, as a mate." (Lowry, 2002, p. 6-7)

Vandara's voice was firm and bitter. "The girl should have been taken to the Field when she was born and still nameless. It is the way."

"Go on," the chief guardian said.

"She was imperfect. And fatherless as well. She should not have been kept."

But I was strong. And my eyes were bright. My mother told me. She wouldn't let me go. Kira shifted her weight, resting her twisted leg, remembering the story of her birth, and wondering if she would have an opportunity to tell it here. I gripped her thumb so tightly.

"We have all tolerated her presence for these years," Vandara went on. "But she has not contributed. She cannot dig or plant or weed, or even tend the domestic beasts the way other girls her age do. She drags that dead leg around like a useless burden. She is slow, and she eats a lot." (Lowry, 2002, p. 26-27)

The presented quotes show the point of view and the reasoning of the village towards infanticide. This could be an interesting view on disabilities and the one to spark many discussions. Not only does this theme represent a view on disability but it also opens a spot for multiculturalism. There are still cultures around the world that practice killing newborns with disabilities, so this is topic is food for thought not just about disabilities in general, but also cultural differences.

Kira is represented as a strong person willing to fight for herself, a personality trait her mother helped her build. As can be seen from the provided examples, her weakness was only seen as such by her community, not by herself. This is an important aspect of her representation as a disabled person that does not diminish character's personality but instead presents the social issues she faces.

The major difference between the two communities that were so far observed is the gender equality. While in Jonas' community male and females were generally seen as having equal opportunities, Kira's village's sexism is closer to the one present in Western cultures, but a bit more obvious. Gender roles are more strictly divided and system is patriarchal.

"You can write? And read?"

"Thomas nodded. "I learned when I was young. Boys can, the ones who are chosen. And some of the carving I do has words."

"But I can't. So even if you were to write the names, I couldn't read them. And it's not permitted for girls to learn." (Lowry, 2002, p. 88)

The rule that forbids woman to read is a clear indicator of the conditions in which Kira lives. Women are denied learning and knowledge, which puts them in the position of mothers and the ones that take care of the family and enables them to go further from that. In this community women are denied the freedom of choice, education and any form of power and only allowed to function within limitations set by men. The fact that Kira and her mother survived on their own, in a system which gives them almost no rights, perfectly describes their strength. Further on are presented examples of standardized roles of males and females the Village.

Many girls her age were preparing for marriage. She had always known she would not marry — her twisted leg made it an impossibility; she could never be a good wife, could never perform the many duties required — but certainly she could manage alone. Her mother had, and had taught her. (Lowry, 2002, p. 58)

Kira was about 12 years old, and were it not for her leg and the inability to marry that it brings, she would be preparing for marriage. Marriage at the age of 12 seems shocking to readers, but

such tradition is understandable for a community that sees women as a potential mothers, wives and nothing much more than that, therefore they are put into those roles as soon as they can provide and take care of children. Her disability stands in the way of marriage because she is seen as useless. This could be explained by the fact that here disabled children are normally left to die, therefore her community has no way of knowing that she could in fact function just like everyone else, since they never truly gave anyone like her a chance before. Female roles are pretty similar to what can be found in traditional gender roles of patriarchal societies, including taking care of children, the husband and the household. Men are portrayed as violent hunters and protectors, and their aggression is appropriate for such a barbaric society as the one presented here.

Kira had not been much in the world of men. They led very separate lives from those of women. She had never envied them. Now, as she found herself jostled by their thick, sweat-smelling bodies, as she heard their muttered angry comments and their shouts, she found herself both frightened and annoyed. But she realized that this was hunt behavior, a time for flaunting and boasting, a time for testing each other. No wonder Matt, with his childish swagger, wanted to be part of it. (Lowry, 2002, p. 100)

There was always hostility here. Harsh words. I haven't thought about it in a long time, but now I recall the arguments and anger — even that morning, when the weapons were assigned —"

Kira told him, "It happened again recently, at the beginning of a hunt. I saw it. Fights and arguing. It's always that way. It's the way of men."

He shrugged. "So it hasn't changed."

"How could it change? It's the way it is. It's what tykes are taught, to grab and shove. It's the only way people can get what they want. (Lowry, 2002, p. 200-201)

Another important aspect of gender representation in *Gathering Blue* is the fact that there are no women in positions of power. The governing body in the Village is the Council of Guardians which consists of 12 men. Kira's mother showed revolt, but unlike Kira's grandfather, her mother was not strong enough to keep Kira alive.

"She defied them? Katrina?" His face lit and he smiled. "And she won!"  
"Her father was still alive, and he was a person of great importance, she told me. And so they let her keep me. They probably thought I would die anyway. "  
(Lowry, 2002, p. 201)

Kira's strong character draws even more focus when placed in a society that evidently does not give power to women. The fact that Lowry included a female character with a disability and placed her in a society that gives no meaning to both of those aspects of her personality gives a new meaning to inclusion of diversity, placing importance on the treatment of such character by the society that surrounds her. When it comes to racial or ethnic diversity, there is not much to be found. No importance has been given to skin color. The setting of a closed community gives little space to inclusion of ethnic differences, apart from the mentioning of the community Kira's father comes from that will be observed in more detail in the next part.

## 7. *MESSENGER* (2004)

The third book of the quartet brings together all the characters and places we previously encountered in the first two books. The plot is set in the newly formed community that the reader is introduced to in the previous part. This community is especially interesting in terms of diversity and sameness, seeing how it is formed as a rescue for all those too different to fit in their own communities. The protagonist here is Matty, previously introduced as Kira's friend, who now lives with her blind father. Matty is learning more about the special gift he recently developed while fighting the mysterious enemy that seems to have taken over the forest, as well as the population of his Village.

The setting of this novel is the recently formed community that was created as a haven for all those rejected by their own societies. The organization of life in this fictional community resembles a democratic system in today's modern Western societies, but presented in a more utopian than realistic way. This Village was created for everyone too different to fit in, which makes it the most diverse community of the quartet and a contrast to everything created under the sameness. Here differences are wanted and celebrated, and with everyone being different in one way or another, in their diversity they are all the same. Diversity and sameness are presented as one, with everyone having in common the fact that in some way they are different. Members of this community show empathy towards one another because their community was founded on individually different, yet equally difficult lives they escaped from.

Heading for the path that entered Forest at the edge of Village, Matty went by a roundabout way so that he could pass the home of the schoolteacher, a good-hearted man with a deep red stain that covered half of his face. Birthmark, it was called. When Matty was new to Village, he had sometimes found himself staring at the man because he had never known anyone before with such a mark. Where Matty had come from, flaws like that were not allowed. People were put to death for less.

But here in Village, marks and failings were not considered flaws at all. They were valued. The blind man had been given the true name Seer and was respected for the special vision that he had behind his ruined eyes. (Lowry, 2004, p. 6)

Kira's and Matty's original community shows progress towards the acceptance of equality, what was seen as clear indicator of female oppression has now changed for better:

"I can read Shakespeare," he told her, swaggering.

"Hah! So can I!" she said, and he knew then for certain how changed this village was, for in the earlier days, girls had not been allowed to learn." (Lowry, 2004, p. 113-114)

The representation of people with disabilities continues on in this book, the reader is reunited with Kira who shows her physical impairment didn't stand in her way of fitting in the society. Kira does not see her leg as a flaw, but simply as a part of her like any other.

"I'll explain. But for now, I think we should start. If I do it right away, I can sleep completely through the night and almost all of the morning. You can use that time to become accustomed to being whole..."

"I am whole," she said defiantly.

"I meant to having two strong legs. You'll be amazed at how it feels, at how much more easily you can move around. But it will take a little while to adjust to it." (Lowry, 2004, p. 121-122)

Kira refuses Matty's offer to heal her leg, as she does not see it as something that needs healing. Disability is presented as a social barrier, something the society has difficulty understanding and accepting as simply different and not necessarily problematic.

A lifetime of walking in that way had made it, as she had pointed out, part of her. It was who she was. To become a fast-striding Kira with two straight legs would have been to become a different person. This was not a journey Matty could undertake with a stranger. (Lowry, 2004, p. 129)

The treatment of disabilities is the main topic of these novels. When the community starts to be influenced by a supernatural force of literal evil known as the Trademaster, attitudes of the members of that community change and treatment of disabled and different becomes worse.

"Something was different," he said. "She's a nice woman, the one who got the Gaming Machine."

"Yes, she is. Gentle. Cheerful. Very loving to her husband."

"Well," said Matty slowly, "when she was leaving, walking and talking with the other women, and her husband behind trying to keep up, she whirled around suddenly and scolded him for being slow."

"Slow? But he's all twisted. He can't walk any other way," the blind man said in surprise.

"I know. But she made a sneering face at him and she imitated his way of walking. She made fun of him. It was only for a second, though." (Lowry, 2004, p. 165-166)

Aside from Kira, another character with disability reappears in this sequel; her father Christopher, known as the Seer. Seer's visual impairment is, like any other, celebrated in the Village. He is shown as a fully functioning adult with a special position in the community. Matty and Seer live together as if they were father and son, while the reader gets to experience both Matty's perspective on disability and as well as Seer's.

"Look! He sits now when I tell him to." Then Matty groaned and said, "Oh, sorry."

When would he ever learn to stop saying "Look" to a man who had no eyes?

But the blind man laughed. "I don't need to be able to look. I can hear that he sits. The sounds of his feet stop. And I don't feel his teeth on my shoes."

(Lowry, 2004, p. 71)

Matty's shame caused by saying the wrong thing is something relatable to both people with disabilities and those without, and what this duo shows is that it is normal and, after all, humanly to make such mistakes. This interaction also portrays blindness in a realistic way, showing how such a disability is not necessary in a way of normal functioning, even though it is often seen as such.

The representations of gender in this part of the Quartet is not as extreme as it was in the previous one. In *The Giver* (1993) gender equality was artificially created, while *Gathering Blue* (2002) was at the other end of the spectrum with strict patriarchal norms. *Messenger* (2004) provides the perspective of the future being the same as what we have today in Western democratic cultures. Not much attention has been given to this aspect but what can be gathered is that families function without any strict rules or domination of parent over the other. Men and women are portrayed as equal and yet, more traditional than the families in the first book.



“Behind them, Village, quiet and peaceful, continued its daily life. Gatherer had been buried this morning. With her toddler playing on the floor by her feet, his widow now nursed her new baby on the porch of her homeplace, attended by comforting women who sat with their knitting and embroidery and spoke only of happy things.” (Lowry, 2004, p. 17)

This example provides an insight into a regular day at the village, and an example of a family life there. The mother that was recently widowed is shown as a nurturer of her children, in mourning of her late husband, implying that affection was a part of their relationship. The gender roles seen here are close to what was the Western cultures see as traditional, but there are no signs of oppression.

The protagonist Matty is introduced in *Gathering Blue* (2002) as a typically portrayed young, fast, dirty, troublesome boy, which fits the violent society he lives in at the time. Here Matty shows character development with the recognition of his gentle, emotional side.

“The harshness of his homeplace led him to thievery and deceit; had he been grown, he would have been imprisoned or worse.

But there had always been a gentle side to Matty, even when he had disguised it. He had loved his dog, a mongrel he had found injured and had nursed back to health. And he had come, eventually, to love the crippled girl called Kira, who had never known her father, and whose mother had died suddenly and left her alone.” (Lowry, 2004, p. 108)

As mentioned before, Matty’s community turns cold and cruel due to being affected by an evil supernatural force, and as such they start to lose their warm welcoming attitude towards those who, like them before, needed shelter. The community was starting to close off and everyone outside of the border was seen as lesser and unwanted. Ethnic minorities today often face similar attitudes so the inclusion of this social issue opens many discussion opportunities. This is a worldwide problem that many immigrants will emphasize with, from Mexican children in the US, to the Middle-Eastern refugees in Europe. The common statement that immigrants should go back to where they came from that can be sensed from Matty’s neighbours is often heard in the real world as well.

“One by one the people spoke, and one by one Matty identified those who had traded. Some of those who had been among the most industrious, the kindest, and the most stalwart citizens of Village now went to the platform and shouted out their wish that the border be closed so that "we" (Matty shuddered at the use of "we") would not have to share the resources anymore.

*We need all the fish for ourselves.*

*Our school is not big enough to teach their children, too; only our own.*

*They can't even speak right. We can't understand them.*

*They have too many needs. We don't want to take care of them.*

*And finally: We've done it long enough.”* (Lowry, 2004, p. 84-85)

This example is a realistic portrayal of discrimination and social issues that many young adults will sadly recognize as the selfishness of the majority. It is shown as a community wide problem that surges from corrupted minds that suddenly do not want to share their comfort, even though not so long ago they ran towards it themselves.

“I remember what he was like! If we close the border, we won't have to do that anymore! We won't have to deal with thieves and braggarts and people who have lice in their hair, the way Matty did then, when he came!”

Matty turned to look. It was a woman. He was stunned, as if someone had slapped him. It was his own neighbor, the very woman who had made clothes for him when he came. He remembered standing there in his rags while she measured him and then put on her thimble to stitch the clothing for him. She had a soft voice then, and talked gently to him while she sewed.” (Lowry, 2004, p. 86)

This idea of previous immigrants turning on more recent immigrants is very similar to what minorities of the US are enduring, while the majority of the population forgets that were it not for immigration, they wouldn't be there either. This example shows how realistic Lowry's portrayal of ethnic minorities and the social issues they face is.

Race or racial diversity is not directly addressed in this book.

## 8. *SON* (2012)

The final novel of the quartet is *Son*, which consists of three parts: *Before*, *Between*, and *Beyond*. (Lowry, 2012) *Before* is set in the community Jonas grew up in, and *Beyond* in Matty's village. The central part, *Before* is set in a new community. The novel follows the main protagonist Claire who starts her journey as a twelve-year-old girl, assigned to be a Birthmother. Claire secretly and against all rules meets her biological son and goes on a journey to find him, overcoming many obstacles on the way.

Claire's character is shown as both gentle, motherly and loving, and at the same time strong, willful, ready to break strict rules and fight for what she values most. Claire overcomes physical and mental barriers and represents the strong female figure whose feminine and masculine traits are accentuated.

“She wanted only to be with the child, to feel the warm softness of his neck as he curled against her, to whisper to him and to sense how he listened happily to her voice. It was not right to have these feelings, which were growing stronger as the weeks passed. Not normal. Not permitted. She knew that. But she did not know how to make them go away.” (Lowry, 2012, p. 107)

*Between* shifts the plot to a new location: a village that is cut off from the rest of the world. Representation of women in this village brings back the patriarchal views with women being confined to traditional roles and duties, and men taking on more dangerous tasks. Therefore, similar to Kira, this female protagonist is set in an environment that shows little acknowledgment to the equality of genders.

“The women remained in their cottages. Fighting the weather was men's work. The women listened to the wind as it roared in the chimneys, to the ripping sounds of torn thatch, and to the whimpering of frightened children. They tended the fires, stirred the soups, rocked the babies, and waited. This storm would pass. The sea would calm. It always had.” (Lowry, 2012, p. 131-132)

Marriage and family life are portrayed as rather primitively. The village is shown as an area of tough living conditions and dangerous jobs are taken up by men, while women have the task of taking care of the household and the family.

“They’ll be needing a woman here,” Alys said, glancing around the crude hut. The cooking vessels were unwashed and a blanket thrown across a chair was stained and in need of mending.

“Yes,” Claire agreed. “Men don’t tend houses well, do they?”

“Tall Andras is of an age to wed,” Alys said pointedly.”

“Claire shrugged. “He should, then.”

“It’s you he wants.”

Claire knew it to be true. She blushed. “I’m not of a mind to wed,” she murmured.

Alys didn’t hear, or pretended not to. “He’ll want sons.”

“All men do, I expect.” It was something Claire had observed, in the village. Sons carried on the outside work; they took on the boats and the fields as their fathers grew old.” (Lowry, 2012, p. 180)

This example shows how insignificant a woman’s voice in this community is. What matters is that a man will want marriage and children, even though Claire shows no interest. Alys states that he will want sons, clearly indicating that men hold more power in this community, which is something Claire is aware of as well. There are still many cultures that would agree with these attitudes, and even the women in Western democratic countries can understand this pressure for marriage and childbearing.

“Is it true, what they say?”

“Who? And what is it they’re saying?”

“Everyone. That you’ve had a child. And no husband.”

...

“It was different, where I lived. There weren’t weddings. And yes, I gave birth.”

She found herself speaking tersely to him. She was angered. “You can’t understand. I was selected to give birth. It was an honor. I was called Birthmother.”

He raised his chin and looked at her with a kind of contempt. “You live here, now. And you’re stained.”

“Stained? What are you talking about?”

“Women who couple in the field, like animals. They have a stain to them. No one wants them, after.” (Lowry, 2012, p. 196)

Another aspect of gender inequality that is not so far from reality is the notion of virginity and pureness. Claire is a woman and a mother, and in this community, she is seen as stained due to

the fact that she has a child and no husband. Claire is perceived as less pure and less significant. Some cultures still attribute much importance on female virginity while others, such as the US and Western European countries have lessened their conservative views. Still even those more liberal cultures do not perceive male and female experience equally, with women receiving much more judgment for having the same experiences as men.

The only male character of the *Between* that does not show prejudice towards Claire is Einar, who is also a victim of discrimination in his village and a person with physical disability.

“Claire waved back, and smiled. So, she thought, there’s one young man who doesn’t think me stained. Or is it that I’m now ruined, as he is?  
She watched him make his way along the path, his feet dragging, one after the other. Beside her, in the sand, the laughing children imitated Einar, dragging their feet and limping dramatically, and then watching the furrowed ruts they made fill with seawater and smooth over.” (Lowry, 2012, p. 199)

The same as the previous part, the final part of the Quartet also does not portray racial differences.

## 9. CONCLUSION

Diversity enriches the human experience and should be appreciated as such. It is a concept that should be present, recognized and accepted around every individual from early childhood, considering how much exposure to diversity can impact the future development of values and behavior of a child.

Diversity is an important aspect of literature that seems to be often overlooked, but can be achieved by including characters whose individual differences are emphasized and celebrated. The inclusion of diverse characters and the manner of their representation has improved over the last decade, with different races, ethnicities, genders and disabilities being portrayed in more quantity and quality, but it is still not even close to the desirable level. Children and young adults who belong to any type of a minority are still faced with lack of representation that can lead to unwanted consequences such as the feeling of less worth, lack of understanding amongst their peers and low self-esteem (Toliver, 2020).

Children and young adults do not have to belong to a minority in order to benefit from diverse literature. A number of studies has shown that reading inclusive literature that portrays different characters helps develop empathy, awareness and positive changes in behavior (Gaias et. al., 2018; Tan, et. al., 2019; McKeown, Williams, & Pauker, 2017). Diversity and sameness represent a rich source of discussions, provoking reader's critical thinking and perception of society from a different point of view.

One interesting example of such literature is *The Giver Quartet*. It has proved to be rich in diverse characters that stand out and portray several different groups of people. Each character is set in a society that creates an even larger contrast to their personality, and even though portrayed as extremes, traces of such ways of life can be found outside of fiction as well.

Main protagonists in these novels differ in gender, abilities and personality traits, creating plenty diversity among four of them alone. The first and most prominent book of the quartet portrays Jonas, a young boy that challenges a strong, controlling system. Jonas is not the typical boyish figure that can be found in young adult literature, he fights for all the things that makes humans humane, such as feelings, memories and true affection. The second male protagonist is Matty, at first shown as a typical young, troublesome boy, who later expresses his gentle side, simultaneously being brave and loving. The two male characters are balanced out by Kira and Claire, two strong young women who defy the society and fight for what they want and believe in. Both female characters are placed in communities that undermine girls and women, a move that emphasizes their strength while at the same time makes them relatable to the reader. Apart

from the four main characters, the novel provides several more, both male and female characters that don't oblige to the traditionalism of gender roles dictated by their community.

Along with gender, disabilities are a topic that can be noticed in all four parts of the quartet as something that, in one way or another, presents an issue within the society. A number of characters, both main and other, showcase some sort of an impairment, but most of the time it is presented as a part of that person, but not the most important one. The center of attention was not overcoming disabilities, but rather achieving separate goals, mostly tied to the social aspects of their lives.

Racial diversity was not given much, if any, space in the quartet. The first novel explains how racial differences existed before the sameness and that explanation could be seen as valid for the entire humanity of Lowry's world.

Ethnic diversity could be discussed as one of the topics. People in these novels are divided into societies, often corrupt and brutal towards its citizens, which leads to excessive immigration to which people react as they would today, selfishly protecting what they can share. This is a social issue national and ethnic minorities all over the world could identify with.

sameness is a construct that is presented as an artificially created, forceful system of extreme lack of diversity, and as such it does not work without the oppression of people's freedom and elimination of all those who do not fit in. In other communities such artificial sameness is not present, but still one way or another it comes to being.

The Village in the *Messenger* (2004) is presented as a utopian place of acceptance. What is interesting to see is how with such an attitude, and assumption that every single person is in their own way special and different, everyone becomes equal and the same. If achieved in this manner, sameness could be something to strive for.

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## **Izjava o izvornosti diplomskog rada**

Izjavljujem da je moj diplomski rad izvorni rezultat mojeg rada te da se u izradi istoga nisam koristio drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.

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(vlastoručni potpis studenta)