

Reflective note

This thesis has been the source of exploring, learning, frustration, and hard work. The idea I had when I started was quite different from how it turned out in the end. I work in upper secondary high school, and I have taught the novel *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) before, and with great success. However, I discovered that many of the students struggled to grasp significant points as the absence of color and the concept of “release” without explicitly pointing it out. Throughout this process, I have learned to see *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) from other angles and gained knowledge of how it can be used to teach concepts as identity, diversity, and democracy. My first idea for this thesis was to use the novel for this project because I have taught the novel before, but I soon discovered that it was hard to point out single events that would serve as sources for analyzing. This is because essential elements in the story, like “sameness” and “release,” are not instantly revealed in the novel but rather a little at a time with different hints and clues. Therefore, I decided to change to the film adaptation of the novel, *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), which presents these concepts clearly and visually.

I struggled to find the correct angle for my thesis, and I tried a couple of different paths with little success. For instance, I tried to use Hofstede’s six dimensions as the primary foundation for analyzing the film. However, it did not turn out the way that I wanted, and it was difficult to use the theory without being biased when talking about the community in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014). I have learned so much from writing this thesis, and I now have a better understanding of what makes a good thesis, and what makes a solid foundation that ties everything together. If I could do it again, I would be better at taking on a “bird’s view” of the thesis and understand how the structure could be organized in the best possible way. I would also have connected the thesis questions to the interdisciplinary topics sooner, so that I could have written more about democracy and benevolent dictatorship. The most challenging part for me has been how much I have doubted myself in this process. I have been frustrated, and I have thought of postponing the hand-in several times. Even so, I am happy I did not give up and did the best I could in the time-period I had set for myself. Unfortunately, I have not been able to try out this teaching plan in a classroom, which will be my next step. As a concluding remark, I am glad I decided to work with the film and not the novel. As a person who has always thought of a film adaptation as the “second-best” thing after the novel, it has opened my mind, and I now see that a film can be just as good an aid, or even better, as a novel. It all depends on the project and the desired learning outcome.

MASTEROPPGAVE

Using *The Giver* in the English classroom to strengthen youths' self-image and initiate reflections about democracy and diversity.

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This thesis is the completion of six years of studying. When I quit my job six years ago, it was not a part of my plans to complete a master's degree. I aimed to study PPU and English and then start my new career as a teacher. I enjoyed studying and building competence, so one thing led to another. Little did I know that my first year as a teacher (ever), would be the same year I started the master's program. Starting a new profession as a teacher, with additional studies on the side have been challenging. So even though I have enjoyed building on my competence, I must admit I look forward to only concentrating on work and not having studies on my mind. When I now complete these six years of studying, some people deserve some recognition because this would never have been possible without their invaluable support.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis study aims to find out if the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can be used as a tool in the English as a second language classroom to emphasize the importance of democracy and diversity in a modern society, and further, to initiate reflections about identity to strengthen youths' self-image. By working with this film, students in upper secondary will reflect on the importance of their individuality, freedom, and choices. Mental health problems are an increasing problem amongst youths in Norway due to their tendency to put too much pressure on themselves in many areas, combined with their need to compare themselves to others (Bakken, 2018; Stuart, 2005).

Two thesis questions form the foundation for the theory and teaching plan. The thesis questions that will be addressed are:

- 1. To what extent does *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) have the potential to initiate reflections on identity and strengthen youths' self-image and confidence?**
- 2. To what extent does *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) have the potential to initiate reflections about democracy and diversity in a modern society?**

This thesis addresses theoretical concepts such as social comparison theory, diversity, intercultural competence, and identity. Firstly, *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is analyzed according to the concepts of "sameness", diversity, identity, social comparison and freedom of choice. These concepts form the foundation for the teaching plan construed to answer the thesis questions.

Secondly, the teaching plan is designed with *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) as the primary tool and includes individual, pair, and group work distributed between pre-, while-, and post-film activities. All activities are designed to include the theoretical concepts listed above and end up in oral and written assessments. Because most activities are rooted in the viewer-response approach (Teasley & Wilder, 1997), the students must be active viewers, convey their meanings and arguments, and collaborate with peers for maximum learning outcome.

The goal of the teaching plan is that the students at the end of the project will comprehend how important identity is for their self-image and something worth treasuring and understand why diversity and democracy are essential in a society.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a world where globalization is developing rapidly and diversity is embraced, prejudice is still an ongoing problem and not only an issue of potential conflict amongst different races or religions. While prejudice might be considered a world problem that causes wars and conflicts, it is also a problem for students in the classroom, and therefore the cause of many mental health issues among high school students in Norway (Bakken, 2018; Stuart, 2005). During recent years, there has been a disturbing rise in mental health problems amongst youths. These problems often originate from issues youths have with their self-image, combined with the fact that they put much pressure on themselves when it comes to achievement in school (Bakken, 2018). The last years' youth generation has been labeled "the generation of achievement" (Bakken, Sletten & Eriksen, 2018, p. 47), which refers to young peoples' possibilities to achieve their very best in a range of areas, such as appearance and education, friends, and recreational activities. To compare oneself to others is a central part of human nature and has historically been a way to size up competitors, and this has become known as "social comparison" (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007, p. 3). Because of this comparison, "diversity" as a term needs to be promoted in the classroom to let students learn that diversity, being different from each other, is necessary and essential. Thus, schools must shoulder their responsibility for the well-being of their students and encourage students to be proud of their individuality. As an institution, the Norwegian school is not solely about teaching technical and factual knowledge in diverse subjects, but it is equally important for the students to learn about how to master their lives. Students in upper secondary schools are in a stage of their lives where they are developing as human beings and trying to figure out their identities. Therefore, it is essential to teach them that the world consists of numerous cultures, societies, and individuals.

The Norwegian culture is built on democratic values, and democracy is also the foundation for all education in Norway (Regjeringen, 2020). Norwegian schools have a democracy mission, and this is embodied in the Education Act, which states that: "Education and training must provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking" (My translation, Opplæringsloven, 1998). The importance of democracy is also stated in the core curriculum for all education in Norway, and it says that: "The teaching and training shall promote belief in democratic values and in democracy as a form of government. It shall give the pupils an understanding of the basic rules of democracy and the importance of protecting them"

(Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Democratic values include tolerance and individual freedom of speech, and it is part of the schools' mission to promote these values to prevent prejudice and discrimination.

Therefore, understanding that there are different cultures can be essential for youths to grow as individuals and reach their full potential, both intellectually, mentally, and emotionally. By teaching youths about diversity, the aim is that it will lead to more acceptance and tolerance, not only of others but also of themselves. The film adaptation of Lois Lowry's futuristic dystopian sci-fi novel *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can promote life skills needed in the learners' future lives and will be discussed in this thesis as a tool for promoting acceptance of diversity and strengthening youths' identity and self-image. The aim of this thesis is that by working together with students and show them the dystopian world in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), which stands in stark contrast to their own world of democracy and diversity, they will come to appreciate their uniqueness, their freedom of choice and strengthen their self-images.

1.1 Background

In Norway, there is something called the “flink pike-syndromet,” and in English, it would translate to something like “high-achieving syndrome,” and it is primarily girls who suffer from this. It can be linked to “the generation of achievement,” as discussed above. These are youths who constantly strive to achieve better results, not only in school, but in sports, health, and appearance, to the point of mental breakdown, and the numbers of youths in Norway who suffer from mental health problems are high (Bakken, 2018). As stated in the introduction, all people tend to compare themselves to others (Corcoran, Crusius & Mussweiler, 2011), which often leads to insecurities regarding one's person. In addition, Norway is now a diverse, multicultural society, and in order for Norway to function at all, its inhabitants must accept and respect cultural differences. For these reasons, it has become essential to emphasize the need for diversity, to such an extent that the term has been implemented in many subjects' curriculum in Norwegian high schools. English is one of the subjects where diversity plays a significant role, and there are many ways to implement this in the classroom. While language construction and improvement of writing, reading, and oral skills may be the primary goal in language studies, topics such as culture, diversity, and identity struggles are significant.

The interdisciplinary topics *Health and Life Skills*, and *Democracy and Citizenship* (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g), was implemented as interdisciplinary topics in all subjects in upper secondary high schools in Norway from the fall of 2020, and thus, also in

the new English curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g). These topics are to provide additional content to language learning and make clear the importance of working with self-esteem, diversity, and democracy.

Health and Life Skills attend to students' feelings of mastery and emphasize the importance of expressing feelings, thoughts, and opinions. It states that: "In the childhood and adolescent years, the development of a positive self-image and confident identity is particularly important» (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). This is important for their physical and mental health and their abilities to make "responsible life choices" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). The other interdisciplinary topic is *Democracy and Citizenship* (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). It is equally important as *Health and Life Skills* because it deals with "the basic tenets of democracy and its values and rules" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

Further, democracy is about how all citizens have equal rights, irrespective of gender, religious affiliation, or race. *Democracy and Citizenship* deals with the fact that everyone has obligations and individual rights and "shall give the pupils knowledge and skills to face challenges in accordance with democratic principles. They shall understand dilemmas that arise when recognizing both the preponderance of the majority and the rights of the minority" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Through the promotion of democratic values and comparison to other non-democratic systems, students learn about their own background that may, or may not, be rooted in democracy. Further, they must stand up for democratic values, such as combatting inequality and prejudice. It is only by learning about other cultures and one's own, that one can learn about diversity and accept cultural differences. Since the values of democracy and citizenship have been promoted in Norwegian schools from the students started elementary school, it is assumed that they have at least a basic understanding of democratic values in the context of this thesis. It is also assumed that they have learned the basics of other forms of government, such as benevolent dictatorship. Therefore, as democracy and dictatorship are discussed in this thesis, it is assumed that the students have a basic understanding that can be further developed through this study.

As mentioned in the introduction, *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is a film adaptation of the novel with the same title set in a futuristic dystopian society. Since few articles discuss the film, relevant articles regarding concepts in the novel applicable to the film, will be discussed. The novel *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) has been used in literary classes since it was first published and has often been used to teach about sociopolitical questions (Han & Lee, 2018, p. 338) and problems with race-neutral perspectives. The novel lends itself to teaching as it depicts an entirely colorblind society, a phenomenon the society call "sameness" (Lea, 2006). Little

research, if any, has emphasized how the idea of this colorblind and race-neutral society in the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can shed light on the importance of diversity, democracy, youths' identity and self-image. The reason for using the film instead of the novel is that students probably can relate more to the film version of the protagonist because his age in the film is 18 years (Noyce, 2014), as opposed to the novel where he is 12 years old (Lowry, 1993). Considering that the protagonist and his friends in the film are around the same age as the students for whom this teaching project is designed, the characters in the film are more relatable for them. In addition, essential elements of the story can be more easily conveyed by visual aids rather than the written word. This thesis will aim to find out how the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can teach students about diversity and democracy, and emphasize how important it is for students to accept who and what they are and appreciate their uniqueness.

1.2 Research questions

This thesis aims to define and describe the terms social comparison theory, identity, diversity, and intercultural competence, and further, to consider a didactic implementation of the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) in the form of a teaching plan that aims to contribute to answering the following research questions:

- 1. To what extent does *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) have the potential to initiate reflections on identity and strengthen youths' self-image and confidence?**
- 2. To what extent does *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) have the potential to initiate reflections about democracy and diversity in a modern society?**

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework, including a brief overview of the English curriculum, emphasizing the interdisciplinary topics. Further, several essential concepts are discussed and described, such as social comparison, diversity, identity, intercultural competence, and a sub-chapter on using film as a teaching method. Chapter 3 provides information about the method and material, i.e., the film and the science fiction genre, used in the didactic implementation and why they are relevant for the thesis questions. The main content in chapter 4 is an analysis of *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014). It starts with a summary of the plot in the film, followed by discussions regarding different theoretical concepts in the film,

such as sameness, freedom of choice, identity, social comparison, and diversity. Chapter 5 provides the didactic implementation and teaching plan, which starts with an overview of the method and participants, followed by a sub-chapter about the viewer-response approach. Further, an outline of the teaching plan is provided, including learning goals and activities week by week, followed by a summary and discussion of the teaching plan. Lastly, the thesis summary and conclusion are provided in chapter 6.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will deal with the different elements of the Norwegian curriculum for the English subject that are essential and relevant for this thesis. Further, it discusses significant themes, such as social comparison theory, diversity, intercultural competence, and identity. The last sub-chapter discusses film as teaching method and why it is a good aid to use in the classroom.

2.1 English Curriculum

The Norwegian curriculum in the English subject is quite open to interpretation, and certain elements provide a basis for the didactic implementation of the teaching plan. The English curriculum consists of five elements, and four of them are relevant for this thesis and will be discussed briefly:

- The relevance of the subject and key values
- Interdisciplinary topics
- Core elements
- Competence aims

2.1.1 The relevance of the subject and key values

“English is a key subject for cultural understanding, communication, education, and identity development” (My translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020d). The English subject is relevant for identity development and cultural understanding. Widening students’ perspectives on the world and themselves may help promote diversity in general and positive identity development. These are important objectives to aim for and should form the foundation for

any teaching plan that is made in the English subject. The key values that form the basis for the English subject are cultural understanding, communication, education, and identity.

Cultural understanding and identity will be further addressed in sub-chapters 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5

2.1.2. Interdisciplinary topics

Interdisciplinary topics are included in the curriculum because they have the potential to address challenges that affect society over time, and the curriculum clarifies what should be emphasized when working with these topics (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g). As stated in the introduction, two interdisciplinary topics are relevant for the English subject, namely *Health and Life Skills* and *Democracy and Citizenship*. The interdisciplinary topics are stated in the core curriculum, based on general values and principles for all primary and secondary education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g). Further, the interdisciplinary topics are customized to apply to the English subject in upper secondary education and fulfill the democratic social mission of the school (NOU, 2011: 20, p. 22). The topic *Health and Life Skills* in the English subject states: “Managing situations that require language and cultural competence can give students a sense of mastery and help them develop a positive self-image and a confident identity” (My translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g). This topic also emphasizes the importance of cultural competence, the ability to communicate with people with other cultural backgrounds, and how this competence can help students develop their own identity and become confident as their own persons. In other words, students shall learn how to be themselves, accept who they are, and be confident of their own identity, and developing intercultural competence is part of that process.

The other interdisciplinary topic, *Democracy and Citizenship*, deals with the values and rules of democracy. By learning about this, students shall develop “an understanding of the relationship between individual rights and obligations” and “they shall understand dilemmas that arise when recognizing both the preponderance of the majority and the rights of the minority” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Further, students must learn to “think critically, learn to deal with conflicts of opinion and respect disagreement (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). This is relevant to develop students’ understanding of the world, and how they perceive it depends on their cultural background. By encountering different communities and cultures worldwide, it “can help them unveil more ways to interpret the world, help create curiosity and engagement, and help prevent prejudice” (My translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g). The keywords here are that they should develop a curiosity

towards other cultures and use this to interpret other ways of living. These are aspects that will be in focus in the didactic implementation of *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014).

2.1.3. Core elements and competence aims

The core elements state that encounters with English-language texts contribute to providing students with knowledge of cultural diversity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020e). English-language texts are not limited to printed texts. On the contrary, they can also be in the form of films which have the ability to underline and convey a message using pictures and sound. To be able to interpret film is thus specified as one of the core elements a language learner must accomplish to develop knowledge of societies and cultures (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020e). Therefore, the competence aims in the English subject in Norwegian schools require a certain amount of time spent on films. The applicable aims are that the students should be able to:

- explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts
- discuss and reflect on the form, content, and instruments of English-language cultural expressions from various media, including music, film, and games

(My translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020f).

2.2 Social comparison theory

It can be argued that *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) portrays a counterweight to the society that today's Norwegian youths are part of, as the society depicted in the film is free from superficial pressure such as appearance, clothes, or specific body goals. According to Corcoran and Mussweiler (2010, p. 78), people have a tendency and need to compare themselves to others, and they use this comparison as a yardstick to measure their personality, ability, or talent, and this again affects how people judge and see themselves. The reason for this comparison is, first and foremost, a way to do a self-evaluation (Corcoran & Mussweiler, 2010, p. 82). However, there are also other reasons for making such comparisons, including the "need to gain a positive self-image" (p. 79) and "the fact that not only people's personal identity but also their social identity plays a major role in their thinking and doing" (p. 79). Self-image and identity do not have the same meaning. While identity, which is also called

'social identity', is dependent on a social setting, self-image is still present even if a person is isolated from others, and it is the quality of the self-image that "defines the quality of the social identity" (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014, p. 200). Therefore, one could say that social comparison is used to develop one's identity. There are two ways in which such social comparison usually happens. The first one is *upward social comparison* (Corcoran et al., 2011, p. 121), which is when one compares oneself to others and is motivated and uses it to improve oneself in a specific area or to learn something. The other one is *downward social comparison* (Corcoran et al., 2011, p. 121). That is when one searches for someone who performs less than oneself, for instance, one that runs slower, has a smaller house, or a lower income, only to make one feel better about oneself. The latter is often used when the goal of the comparison is to "create and maintain a positive self-image" (Corcoran et al., 2011, p. 121).

2.3 Identity

Our global society consists of numerous different cultures and identities. Thus, it is essential to understand the importance and the role of "identity". As stated in the introduction, the adolescent years in upper secondary high school is a time for identity development and character building. It involves "an exploration of one's abilities, interests, and options, leading to a commitment to a personal identity that will serve as a guide to future action" (Phinney, 1993, p. 62). Phinney (1993) stated that if youths fail to find a solid ground for their identity, they might experience identity confusion and a complicated view of who they are and their supposed role in life. Hence, to strengthen youths' psychological well-being, it is important to focus on their identity development (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy, 2013, p. 205). According to Erikson (1964, p. 91), there must be conformity between how adolescents see themselves and how they expect others to see them. Today's youths feel pressured to achieve very much in very many areas. The combined pressure from all these areas often leads to stress and mental health problems (Bakken et al., 2018). The term *Identity* is not easily defined and can be challenging to explain, but at the same time, it "has gained increased media usage over the past decade" (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 204). The reason why identity is challenging to define is that the term has numerous meanings. For instance, Samovar et al. (2013) distinguish between various concepts of identity, such as cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, regional, and personal identity. Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2008, p. 208) define identity as "a person's self-definition, as a separate and distinct individual, including behaviors,

beliefs, and attitudes.” Another and shorter definition, is provided by Martin and Nakayama (2010), who describe identity as “the concept of who we are” (p. 162). Barrett, Huber, and Reynolds (2014, p. 13), explain identity as a “person`s sense of who they are and the self-descriptions to which they attribute significance and value.” Based on these definitions, it is possible to simplify the term by saying that identity is all the elements that make a person unique. If people learn to embrace and accept these differences among people, they can also learn to embrace their own identities and uniqueness.

According to Ventegodt and Merrick (2014), both “self-image and identity are aspects of mind” (p. 200). Further, the quality of peoples` identities is determined by their self-images, and that ensuring a healthy self-image is, therefore, important for their identity development. Ventegodt and Merrick (2014, p. 200) also found that to ensure good development of youths` identity, one needs to search in the core of their identity where the self-image is. Furthermore, as stated above, while identity is dependent on a social setting, self-image is also present when a person is alone and can be explained with the feeling one has about oneself. This explains why the self-image influences the quality of the social identity (Ventegodt & Merrick, 2014, p. 200), and hence, why it is essential to develop the self-image.

2.4 Diversity

“Perspectives on cultural diversity have been an important focus in basic social psychological research for decades” (Schachner, 2019, p. 1). However, what is construed by the term *diversity* is mainly dependent on individual experience, and the term is often mentioned together with *multiculturalism* (Silverman, 2010, p. 293). Diversity can be used as a term to illustrate the presence of numerous identity groups in a society, such as race, class, and gender, depending on their “differing social status” (Silverman, 2010, p. 293). The term diversity can also be put more straightforwardly, as stated by Jones, Dovidio, and Vietze (2013, p. 4), “Diversity refers to those things that make us different from one another.” Jones et al. (2013, p. 4) list ethnicity and race as some of the most common differences but specify that diversity also includes characteristics such as culture, sexual orientation, and age. However, if diversity refers to race, class, gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and age, and even political and socioeconomic status, there is nothing but diversity in the world. This is hardly useful, and therefore, the term diversity must be narrowed down. In this thesis, concerning the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), diversity will be limited to differences

regarding race, religion, age, class, and appearance, traits that make up a person's unique identity.

Why does the curriculum emphasize diversity then? Some arguments have been presented above, and there are many answers to this question. However, matters like racism and prejudice are two important reasons why children and youths need to learn and understand what diversity entails. If youths do not learn about other cultures, there is a bigger risk that they will grow up to be skeptical of other cultures and thus have a higher risk of passing judgments on others (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 12). Such judgments can originate from ethnocentrism, which is a concept that is often linked to “stereotyping, prejudice and racism” (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 230). Ethnocentrism occurs when a person feels superior to people from other cultures because they think of themselves as having the correct set of “cultural standards” (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 230). Ethnocentrism is as natural to people as the culture they live in and is often developed unconsciously. Further, most people are ethnocentric to a certain degree, which is usually essential for their feeling of content. However, there are different levels of ethnocentrism, *positive*, *negative*, and *extremely negative* (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 231). The first one is a natural reaction and entails that people believe “that one's culture is preferred over all others” (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 231). *Negative ethnocentrism* is when one believes “one's own culture is the center of everything, and all other cultures should be measured and rated by its standards” (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 231). The latter, *extremely negative ethnocentrism*, happens when people believe that “their values and customs should be adopted by other cultures” (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 231). Thus, it is perfectly normal to behave ethnocentrically and use one's own culture as a yardstick when viewing people from other cultures. However, it is important to remember that one's own culture is not the only correct one.

Even in a somewhat homogenous classroom, where all the students come from the same town, have the same ethnicity, and the same cultural background, there will be diversity in appearance, clothing, and ambitions, and hopes for the future. As stated by Jones et al. (2013, p. 13), “There is, therefore, diversity ‘within’ and ‘between’ people or groups”. Thus, all differences within and between people constitute a situation of diversity. To understand, respect, and embrace all individuals as being equally important and of equal worth requires intercultural competence (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). The concept of intercultural competence will be discussed in more detail in the next sub-chapter.

2.5 Intercultural competence

Before the internet, the major sources of knowledge were the daily news, textbooks, or encyclopedias, and they provided the necessary, although limited, factual information about other countries, societies, and cultures. Today, information is readily accessed through the internet, and news and events from other parts of the world travel the globe in the flash of a second and create numerous, articles, pictures, and videos of a relevant topic. Peoples' knowledge of other cultures is increasing due to globalization and factors like travel, the internet, politics, and commerce (Galloway & Rose, 2015). However, mere knowledge about other countries and cultures is not enough to understand and communicate successfully with people from other cultural backgrounds than one's own. What is needed is intercultural competence. Byram et al. (2002) define intercultural competence as "[...] ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (p. 10). In other words, intercultural competence is the competence that one strives for in order to understand and interact with people that are from different cultural backgrounds than oneself. Byram et al. (2002, p. 11) state that one can never fully complete and perfect the acquisition of intercultural competence and point out three specific reasons why this is so. Firstly, it is impossible to acquire all relevant knowledge in interaction with people with other cultural backgrounds. Secondly, everyone meets new people and changes social groups throughout life. Thus, peoples' social identities and values also develop as one needs "to adjust, to accept and to understand other people". Therefore, people need to change and develop their social identities and values accordingly. Thirdly, there is not one perfect representation of another culture one can strive to imitate, simply because there is not a perfect model of culture. However, to develop as good an intercultural competence as possible, Byram et al. (2002) state that four components must be considered: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values (p. 11). *Attitudes* deal with whether one is open and curious about other cultures and beliefs. Further, with whether one is able to see how one's own culture can look from other people's perspectives and suspend beliefs that one's own culture is the only natural or correct one. Another essential component is to have *knowledge* of social and individual interaction and social processes in different cultures, including one's own. *Skills* include two sets of skills, namely "interpreting and relating" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13) and "skills of discovery and interaction" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13). The first covers the ability to compare two cultures and understand how people with different cultural backgrounds might misunderstand each

other. The latter is about being able to gain new knowledge and incorporate this with what one already knows. Finally, the concept of *values* is to what extent one has "critical awareness" of oneself and one's values, perspectives, and practices because this can influence one's "views of other people's values" (Byram et al, 2002, p. 13). Therefore, Byram et al. (2002, p. 13) claim that the "role of the language teacher is [...] to develop skills, attitudes, and awareness of values just as much as to develop knowledge of a particular culture or country". If teachers do not incorporate foreign cultures in their teaching, they are on many levels encouraging ethnocentrism instead of teaching diversity, and hence, they fail to promote intercultural competence (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 231).

2.6 Film as teaching method

The Giver (Noyce, 2014) is, as stated, based on the novel with the same title (Lowry, 1993). It is one of the greatest young adults, sci-fi novels of all time and considered "a rich source for analysis and interpretation" (Stewart, 2007, p. 22). Considering the many controversial issues that it addresses, there are numerous ways to use the novel in teaching, depending on what one wants to emphasize and the desired outcome. Teasley and Wilder (1997) argue that broadly, film "is a branch of literature" (p. 6) and that "feature films are analogous to novels" (p. 6). Hence, when Bland (2018, p. 1) states that intercultural understanding, tolerance, and self-reliance can be an additional positive effect of literature, this can also be applied to film, and there are many arguments for teaching film in the language classroom. Youths that are struggling to find their identity can find comfort and understanding in literature, and therefore also in film. Further, both in novels and in films, they may find that characters remind them of themselves because of similar incidents they encounter, and they can experience new and unfamiliar cultures (Bland, 2018, p. 3). By working with film, one can avoid biased and stereotyped topics and introduce alternative views of the world (Bland, 2018, pp. 3-4). There are many advantages related to using film in the ESL classroom. For the specific purpose of this thesis, the aim is personal enrichment and development. Hence, there will be a lot to gain for the students by visually observing the unique circumstances in this futuristic sci-fi setting, including the community's members, the surroundings of the community, and the technology they use.

2.6.1 Why use film as teaching aid?

Considering the aim of the thesis, which deals with how to initiate reflections on diversity and democracy in order to strengthen youths' identity and self-image, a reasonable question to ask would be why film is chosen as the method to use. There are many reasons for using film in the classroom and why it is implemented as part of the competence aims in the English curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020f). Film has been regarded as a more authentic source than printed text, mainly because it is easier for the students to put themselves in another setting or culture using live images (Truong & Tran, 2014, p. 208). According to Sturm (2012, p. 246), digital tools can benefit the classroom in this digital age, considering the entertainment value film has as a visual medium. However, digital tools like film must be rooted in a pedagogical base to take full advantage of their potential for the classroom. Film is a recognizable and entertaining teaching aid and can therefore be more motivating for students than other activities, like, for instance, reading. A film is also more likely to bring out stronger and more physical reactions in the students (Bay & Felton, 2012, p. 162). The use of film as a teaching tool can be beneficial due to its advantage of the visual portrayal of complex abstract concepts. Therefore, it can provide more realistic situations, something that is especially beneficial for less experienced students (Champoux, 1999, p. 206).

Using film can also lead to situations where academically talented students and less able students learn together (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 4). In other words, "films can help students to *remember* and *understand* course material" (Bay & Felton, 2012, p. 161).

Furthermore, the viewer can see the expressions on the characters' faces when they speak or receive messages, which is not possible to the same extent in a novel. Film has the ability to give meaning to concepts and symbols in a way that the printed word cannot convey in the same way (Champoux, 1999), and filmmakers can use different elements to highlight certain parts they want to draw attention to as meaningful or unique, using lighting, sound effects, camera angles, and music (Domke, Weippert & Apol, 2018). For instance, in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), a significant part of the film is that colors are removed from the society, and a film can easily convey this message by removing the colors. King (2002, p. 510) states that "Their [students'] encounters with realistic situations and exposure to the living language provide a dimension that is missing in textbook-oriented teaching". Regarding visual effects in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), important aspects such as sameness, the absence of color, and the futuristic sci-fi setting, are visually accessible through the film, and hence, probably easier for the students to comprehend the grave importance of.

3. METHOD AND MATERIAL

In this chapter, the benefits of using film and the science fiction genre in the classroom are discussed. The first sub-chapter summarizes the film and discusses why *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is well suited to use in the didactic implementation to answer the thesis questions. Further, it argues why film is valuable as a teaching aid and how it can convey certain features in the science fiction genre. The second sub-chapter describes the traits of the science fiction genre and discusses why it is a fruitful genre to use in the classroom. It also accounts for why the community in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is considered dystopia. When analyzing *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) in chapter 4, specific film stills will be incorporated and discussed to visually present concepts, such as “sameness”, freedom of choice, and identity. Various quotes from the film will also illustrate specific points related to some of the theoretical concepts mentioned above.

3.1 The Film

The Giver (Noyce, 2014) is a sci-fi drama set somewhere and sometime in the future. A group of people, The Elders, were tired of all the hate, conflict, and grief in the world and tried to create the perfect society, a utopia. In this utopia, all colors, emotions, and memories are removed. The concept of money has been erased, and all the members of the community have all their basic needs seen to, such as food, shelter, and clothes. There are no shops or restaurants, and food is delivered to peoples’ houses. Further, there are no cars or other motor vehicles in this society, and the members are provided with bikes as their means of transport. The community members are divided into family units, assembled by The Elders, consisting of a mother and father, and a son and daughter, who are provided to them by birthmothers. The family unit has no deep feelings for each other, and there is no physical contact between people from different family units. Surveillance cameras are constantly watching all the community members, and they have limited free time for leisure activities beyond school and work. Their life-long occupations are provided to them by The Elders when they graduate school at the age of eighteen, and their training for these jobs starts immediately upon graduation. Every age group wears the same clothes, owns the same items, and all members eat the same food simultaneously. There is also a joint bedtime for all members, regardless of age. To avoid inconveniences such as physical and mental disabilities, “release”, “a euphemism for murder” (Stewart, 2007, p. 21), is frequently used as a ‘relief’ for the society.

The community calls it “release to Elsewhere” which entails that the ones that are “released” are just relocated somewhere unknown. Babies that do not fit specific standards in length, weight, and development are being “released” because they risk standing out amongst the standard person in the community. The same goes for the old people, who are being “released” while they are still healthy and vigorous. Because of all these rules and regulations, all community members can live carefree and clueless lives in their constructed families, free from sorrow and pain, but also unaware of emotions such as love and happiness. The protagonist in the film, Jonas, starts to wake up and finds out what The Elders have taken from them, for example, memories about colors, emotions, music, and dance. He finds out that he has the power to change this situation. Even though he knows that all the bad memories and emotions will be set free, together with the positive ones, he decides to defy the rules and free them.

3.2 Science fiction and dystopia

As stated in sub-chapter 2.6, film can be considered “a branch of literature” (Teasley and Wilder, 1997, p. 6). Therefore, films can apply to Lee’s (2021, p. 1) statement, “science fiction is the quintessential literature of modernity”. According to Lee (2021, p. 1), “science fiction is a compelling tool for teaching technical communication, especially for contemporary approaches prioritizing ethics, humanistic values, and social justice”, and is “a unique discourse for interrogating the dynamic interrelations between science, society, and the self”. Further, the science fiction genre “touches upon issues of multiculturalism, gender [and] race”, and “influence[s] the values of modern society” (Lee, 2021, p. 2). Considering that this thesis aims to promote identity, diversity and democracy in a modern society, science fiction is a good genre to use for this purpose.

Because of the futuristic setting in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) and the extensive use of technology and scientific advancement, there is no doubt that this film belongs in the science fiction genre (Literary Terms, n.d.). When watching *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), the viewer is supposed to understand that the film is set in the future without being explicitly told, and the film must use visual aids to emphasize this. For instance, in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), the inhabitants in the community wear certain clothes according to age, gender, and vocation, and visually, these clothes can reflect the futuristic sci-fi setting. According to Telotte (2001, p. 12), three components describe the science fiction film genre. These are that the story is set in another time, that changes in society and culture are made possible by science and

technology, and “technological alterations” (Telotte, 2001, p. 12) of the self. The setting in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is somewhere unknown and sometime in the future, and this is obvious due to the advanced technological equipment. The members of this society are altered by technology, which is made clear in that they cannot remember anything from the past, they cannot see colors, and they lack emotions. Even though there are no ‘aliens’ presented in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), one can certainly see “new ‘laws’ of nature” (Telotte, 2001, p. 14), and “[...] genetic manipulation, racial discrimination [and] political corruption [...]” (Telotte, 2001, p. 16), are all issues which are present in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), and form the foundation for the plot. The idea behind the society in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) was to create a utopia, which can be described as the idea of the perfect society, or the “[...] desire for a different world or simply a different way of life” (Telotte, 2001, p. 16). However, the very idea of such a perfect society is impossible and utopia, therefore becomes, dystopia (Science Fiction Foundation, 1972). Whether or not it is perceived as a utopia or a dystopia depends on the viewer. In *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), all pain, grief, and sorrow are non-existing, and peoples’ lives are being planned and assembled for them. It is practical in the sense that there are no conflicts or disorders. Considering that the film belongs to the science fiction genre, it is natural that political and cultural issues arise in the viewers’ minds (Stewart, 2007, p. 32). Not only are these issues present in the plot, but they are also turned into larger-than-life dilemmas to challenge our thinking about our own societies. Another trait of the dystopian genre applicable to the film is the community’s request for sameness and the inhabitants’ limits of choice (Science Fiction Foundation, 1972).

4. ANALYSIS OF *THE GIVER*

This chapter will analyze *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) according to the theory discussed in chapter 2. First, the outline of the plot is described. Secondly, the film is analyzed regarding the lack of color and “sameness”, freedom of choice, identity, social comparison and diversity. The film is relatively faithful to the novel regarding the plot, and therefore, theoretical articles regarding the novel will be used when discussing the plot. However, there are apparent differences between novel and film regarding visual aids, and how they can emphasize essential elements in a clear manner vary greatly.

4.1 Outline of plot

As already stated, *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is a futuristic sci-fi film set somewhere, and sometime, in the future. The intention of creating a utopia is to erase issues that people struggle with in today's world, issues like warfare, prejudice, sorrow, and grief. For the society in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), solving these issues involve creating "sameness," initiating intentional collective memory loss, removing colors (or removing the capability or desire to see colors) and emotions, something that results in a life which is lead under extensive rules, rituals, and surveillance. The founders of the community attempt to create a utopia "without poverty, without suffering and without chaos" (Lea, 2006, p. 51). However, as in every other utopian novel, the attempt to create a problem-free paradise fails. In the film, three opening sentences written in white on a black background before the first scene, give away much of the background for the setting:

From the ashes of The Ruin, the Communities were built.

Protected by the boundary.

All memories of the past were erased.

(Noyce, 2014, 00:34-00:48)

The opening scene depicts the community from above while a voice, which can be assumed belongs to the protagonist, is heard. The voice says that "After The Ruin, we started over", and he goes on to explain how the new society was built on equality and how rules were the building blocks for this equality. The rules he talks about include: "Wear your assigned clothes", "Take your morning medication", "Obey the curfew", and "Never lie" (Noyce, 2014, 00:52- 01:19). The narrator goes on to say that:

"We lived in a world where differences weren't allowed. There was no 'popular', no fame, no losers, and no winners. Our elders had eliminated all of that so there would be no conflicts between us" (Noyce, 2014, 02:35-02:49).

The protagonist is an eighteen-year-old boy named Jonas, who is also the narrator. He is experiencing the transformation from boy to man, and he, as the other members of the community, lacks control over his own life. Even though the setting is unknown, one can assume that it is far away and isolated from the outside world. Their community is located on what seems to be a hill, with a belt of clouds surrounding it. No one knows what is beyond the cloudy belt because it is forbidden to cross the boundary.



(Figure 1: The community from above, isolated on a hill, 08:03)

Jonas is about to graduate from school, and this event will be marked in a ceremony with all the graduates in front of the entire community. However, this event is not about graduation alone. A far more important consequence of graduation is that all the graduates will receive their future occupations, which have been decided by The Elders in the community.

The members have no memories of their past lives and do not learn about history or other parts of the world. They need to be kept in the dark for The Elders' "utopia" to function. All members marry, and their spouses are decided for them, and every family receives two children a couple of years apart. These children are birthed by birthmothers, a job they were assigned when graduating, the same as for all the other inhabitants' life-long occupational careers, chosen for them based on their personal qualities. The Elders study the children's personalities and skills through a surveillance system and decide their future occupations accordingly.

There are strict rules to follow regarding clothing, feelings, and behavior. The slightest slip from the rules, including no touching of people outside of their family unit, no eating in between meals, and no unscheduled free time, can lead to a member's "release". Jonas' father

is a caretaker for all the newborn babies, and one of his duties is to “release” the ones that do not fit the criteria decided by The Elders. If a baby weighs less or develops more slowly than it should, it does not fit the standards and must be “released”. When old people in the community reach a certain age, they are “released” before they become sick or weak. This act unburdens the community from caring for the old and makes sure there are no worries or sorrows due to disabilities or sickness. The community members do not have any associations related to death, and they do not even have a word for it. As death is an unknown concept in the community, “release” is seen as a part of their normal routine and a necessary act to keep order in the community.

Their families are *units*, and children live with their family units from the age of one until they are provided with their own spouses. When children move out and form their own family units, their 'parents' are moved to units for couples with no children before moving to the House of the Elderly, the last stop before their “release”. From the moment a child is provided with its own family, it will never see its 'parents' again, apart from when they are being paraded in front of the community for their “release”-ceremony. The community members are like puppets who are assigned jobs, are told when to eat dinner, when to have free time, whom to marry, and when to die. Based on the initial event with the graduation ceremony, one realizes rather early that a lot of the members’ individual identities in this community is taken away. It is possible to control people to this extent because all their memories of the "old" world have been removed. Hence, there is no recollection of emotions or colors. The community members cannot remember and do not know of anything other than the life they currently have.

One person only in the entire community remembers the world's history and all the members' collective memories. He is the keeper of all memories, called *The Receiver of Memories*. He is also the person that Jonas is intended to replace. Jonas has *the capacity to see beyond*, which means that he is slowly beginning to see colors and sense emotions. Therefore, he is provided with the most important role in the community, he is to be the new Receiver of Memories. The old Receiver now becomes The Giver, and Jonas' training for his new profession as The Receiver of Memories, takes place at The Giver's house, located on the outskirts of the community, away from the other members. These training sessions entail that The Giver teaches Jonas about history and concepts such as war, colors, music, race, and love. By performing a sort of hypnosis on Jonas, he can transfer memories to Jonas through physical touch. Through these training sessions with The Giver, Jonas receives memories,

both happy, painful, and sad, a little by little. He encounters music and dance for the first time and starts to realize what they all are missing out on and that people used to have the ability to make their own choices. There used to be colors, diversity, happiness, and pain, and he slowly begins to feel that their way of life is wrong. He later finds out that his father is scheduled to “release” *a one* (a term they use for all one-year-old babies) whom they call Gabriel. Because the child has been weak, Jonas' father has been taking care of him at home to try to strengthen him. When Jonas hears about Gabriel's “release”, he decides to leave the community and take Gabriel with him beyond the border to prevent this from happening. He learns from The Giver that all the memories will be set free by doing this, and the members of the community will get their memories, emotions, and colors back. Jonas decides to risk everything to rescue Gabriel and starts his journey to free the community, inviting both joy and sorrow.

4.2 The absence of color - Sameness

It is noticed from the very beginning that colors are an unknown phenomenon in this dystopian community. How an entire community may have lost the ability to see colors is not revealed. However, it can be assumed that this futuristic dystopian society has managed to somehow remove peoples' ability or desire to see colors (Stewart, 2007, p. 24). Though it is not revealed *how* The Elders have managed to remove colors, it is understandable *why* they have made this change for their community. This colorblind community is clueless about social challenges related to race, differences, and diversity related to skin color (Lea, 2006). To draw parallels to the real world, order and race are issues that are very much present and part of what The Elders are trying to solve by removing colors and controlling and surveilling their members. Many articles about *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) deal with the absence of color and the political references, and it has been accused of using problems from today's society as a foundation for the rules and traditions in their community (Latham, 2004; Lea, 2006; Stewart, 2007). Lea (2006) states in her article that the colorless dystopia, which is created in *The Giver*, is really a metaphor for racism and that the removal of colors, emotions, and choices is an attempt to rule out pain, grief, and conflict, which in the real world are inflicted through, for example, different skin colors, religions, and cultures. In the dystopian, futuristic society in *The Giver*, the Elders have removed the ability, or the desire, to see color rather than embrace the diversity in the world. The Giver tells Jonas that:

“There are red, green blue, many different colors. You’ll see them all in time. But our people, they chose to do away with all of that, color, race, religion. They created sameness. If we were different, we could be envious, angry, resentful, consumed with hatred. We need sameness. Don’t you think?” (Noyce, 2014, 24:29-24:59).

In this passage, The Giver confirms why the colors and religion in the community are gone, that it was done to avoid problems due to the differences in race, religion, and color. One could conclude that the Elders have done so to make the world less complicated and to avoid grief, sorrow, and pain, which are issues very much present in the real world.



(Figure 2: Jonas’s family unit in black and white and similar clothes, 12:23)

The film is in black and white, which demonstrates visually how this would be in real life. Figure 2 illustrates how “sameness” is displayed in the film, with the absence of colors and their similar clothes. Even though the community strives to live by the concept of “sameness”, which includes the members’ colorblindness, it is quite visible in the film that every community member is of “light” skin. This is revealed in one of the memory-giving-sessions between Jonas and The Giver, where Jonas says:

“I got lost. The good kind of lost. I saw sounds and sights I have no words to describe. Faces with flesh of all different colors. I felt so alive. This was forbidden? I didn’t know what to think, what to believe” (Noyce, 2014, 37:49-38:15).

Jonas is puzzled because he sees all these people with different skin colors and their laughter and happiness and cannot understand why these colors have been removed. Jonas realizes that

he is not like everyone else when he notices something different about the hair of Fiona, who is one of his best friends. This is illustrated in figure 3. Jonas does not know that this is a color at the time, but he later learns about the color red through an apple.



(Figure 3: Fiona's hair is the first color Jonas notices, 04:43)

The use of colors is quite powerful in the film. The first time Jonas receives a memory from The Giver of people dancing to music, the colors of their clothes and their skin are vivid, and people are clearly happy and joyful. When the memory session is over and Jonas is awakened from the hypnosis, the contrast to the silent, black, and white world is significant. After Jonas has started to see colors, the film changes from black and white to soft, dim colors. This illustrates how Jonas starts to change and becomes more independent. The society in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) and their construction of the concept of “sameness” stands in stark contrast to what today's students learn about diversity and acceptance. Norwegian students are used to different skin colors, variety in clothing, and colors in general.

4.3 Freedom of choice

Color is not the only factor that challenges diversity in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014). Another source of conflict in the real world is people's ability to make their own choices. In *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), every minor and major life choice is decided by The Elders. These are choices that range from whom to marry, how many children to have, what occupations to have, what clothes to wear, when to start to ride a bike and what feelings and memories to have. In her paper, Stewart (2007, p. 33) claims that *The Giver* manipulates us to critique the society in which Jonas lives and challenges the reader/viewer even further than that, beyond the distaste for this totalitarian rule of a community. Jonas' rebellious act has been discussed as both heroic and cowardly. Stewart (2007), discussing the novel, points out the irony that Jonas does not choose to leave the community himself but is told what to do by The Giver and

hence is not the rebel he is intended to be when he decides to leave the community. However, in the movie, Jonas is the one who decides to take Gabriel and leave because of his newfound courage that has developed simultaneously as his identity and emotions have been appearing. Jonas's rebellious act gives him the power to change society and challenge the totalitarian governance that the community unknowingly suffers under, which is also what Latham (2004) claims in his article about the novel (p. 135). Latham (2004) suggests that the novel challenges our views of our society and states that it will appear as preferable to the one in *The Giver*, but at the same time warns us as about what our society could turn into. Needless to say, this claim is also true for the film version launched 21 years after the novel.

As mentioned earlier, poverty, suffering, and chaos (Lea, 2006, p. 51) are what The Elders are trying to eradicate by founding this new community. The leaders of the society in *The Giver* have made many sacrifices on behalf of their members to achieve a peaceful, conflict-free, and non-prejudice society. One of these sacrifices is the removal of emotions and desires, also sexual ones. The children in the community are obliged to tell their parents about any feelings they might have experienced (due to inadequate emotional disablement), a ritual that happens every day at supper time. There are no lies in this community. Neither adults nor children lie. They know that if they are caught in a lie, it may lead to their "release". To be able to control the community members to this extent, they are all being injected with a daily shot of "medicine". The injection device they use is clearly seen in the film, hanging by the front door. Every time a family member leaves the house in the morning, they are injected while time and date are registered, as displayed in figure 4.



(Figure 4: Lily gets her injection before school, 36:02)

The Elders are lying for the benefit of the many, and therefore, the community members are told that this injection is for their health, when it actually is what removes their “stirrings”, and what keeps their hormones in check, all to avoid sexual encounters. This injection may also remove their ability to remember memories and see colors, but this is not revealed. The Giver tells Jonas about this injection and how this removes their ability to experience deep emotions for others. Later, Jonas experiences his first dream, although he does not know that is what it is, and he tells The Giver about this dream. The Giver understands that Jonas has stopped taking his daily injection shots and explains the concept of dreams and love to Jonas (Noyce, 2014, 41:48-42:55). This is the first time Jonas hears about love, and he starts to realize that this is what he feels for Fiona. When Jonas and Fiona are out bicycling, he looks at Fiona in a way she finds strange and asks him why he is being so weird. Later, when he is at home with his family, he has a conversation with his parents that illustrates the lack of love in their community:

Jonas: “Father, do you love me?”

Mother: “Jonas, precision of language. Please.”

Lily: “What does love mean?”

Mother: “Jonas uses a word so antiquated that it no longer has any application.”

Father: If you ask, ‘do you enjoy me?’, the answer is certainly yes. Or ‘do mother and I take pride in your accomplishments?’ Well, of course we do. Do you understand?”

Jonas: “Yes, I think I finally do.”

(Noyce, 2014, 43:30-44:01)

This scene demonstrates that the concept of love is lost to the members of the community and that they do not know what the word entails or what these emotions are. Dreams are another unknown concept for the members because the injection removes their ability to dream. After Jonas’ first dream, the colors in the film become even more clear and vivid. Another essential element in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is the young people’s transition from being children in a family unit to create families of their own. These partnerships are arranged, and the

youngsters are paired up with partners that The Elders find the most suitable. Because of the lack of emotions, people are content with whomever is decided as suitable for them. Freedom of choice is unwanted in the community, and The Chief Elder underlines this when she says:

“People are weak. People are selfish. When people have the freedom to choose, they choose wrong. Every single time” (Noyce, 2014, 01:19:54-01:20:03).

This clearly depicts that The Elders do not trust their members' judgment and see it as a threat to their society. The lack of colors, identical clothing, and the same access to resources such as food, living conditions, and health services eliminate the differences between people and the need to compare oneself to others. If everyone is the same, what would one compare oneself to? The absence of the opportunity to make individual choices in the film is the opposite of the reality most students in Norway are familiar with. As stated earlier, the Norwegian society and the Norwegian school system are rooted in democratic values such as individual rights and liberties (Regjeringen, 2020).

4.4 Identity in *The Giver*

In *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), all rules and traditions are rooted in the idea that the community should benefit from them. The occupations that Jonas and his peers receive are based on two criteria. First, they are based on their personal skills, and second, they are based on the community's current needs. Because the community is self-sufficient and isolated from the outside world, various occupations are needed to run the community, such as landscapers, doctors, nurturers, and birth mothers. Someone must produce food for the community, others must take care of the old. There is, understandably enough, not much individual identity to spot in the community.

All children are called newborns until they turn one year old when they receive their name in a joint ceremony, and all children born the same year celebrate a new year together with all the other children born the same year. Thus, there are no individual birthdays or celebrations of any kind. Likewise, all older people in a specific age group are released every year, regardless of their physical shape or health. Figure 5 portrays one of these “release”-ceremonies, where the old people are paraded in front of the community members one last time.



(Figure 5: Ceremony for the old people that are to be released, 08:03)

When Jonas graduates, he starts to *see beyond*, and colors and emotions start to arise. He realizes that The Elders care for the society as a whole, but do not care for them as individuals, and therefore have taken specific steps to fade out their identities. Jonas is used to doing what is expected of him without asking questions because he has never considered what he wants to do. All rules, laws, and actions in the community are made for the community's common good, and the isolated individuals are not important. The society portrayed in *The Giver* has all the hallmarks of being run by a dictatorship. One could argue that the Elders constitute a benevolent dictatorship, but nonetheless it remains undemocratic. Jonas breaks out from this undemocratic and oppressive society when he realizes he is not comfortable with the knowledge that Gabriel will be released and decides to leave to rescue him. This is a strong sign that Jonas is starting to develop an individual identity, even though he knows the maneuver is both illegal and socially unacceptable in the community. Jonas has, by this point, come to terms with the harsh reality of their community and realized that the Elders do not respect any individual rights in the community (Lea, 2006, p. 54). Because Jonas is starting to break free from this way of living, his identity is developing, and he acts based on his own choices, beliefs, and feelings.

4.5 Social comparison in *The Giver*

Because there is no individuality or significant differences in the community, there is no need for the community members to compare themselves to others. As discussed in sub-chapter 2.2, in the society in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), there is no pressure regarding appearance, clothes, or specific body goals. Further, there is no comparison between intelligence, grades, or academic performances, because the graduates are given their professions based on their

personality traits rather than their results and achievements in school. Though community members do not have the possibility to explore their individual identities because of “sameness” and strict rules, some of them do have certain talents in, and interests for, specific occupations. For instance, that Jonas’ friend Asher wants to be a drone pilot while Fiona enjoys working with “newchildren”. Corcoran and Mussweiler (2010) point out that people tend to compare themselves to others because they need to “gain a positive self-image” (p. 79). The people in *The Giver* do not seem to compare themselves to others because their creation of “sameness” has been developed to remove all the features that would typically lead to such comparisons. In addition, the community members are free from feelings such as anger, sadness, and envy because of the absence of emotions. The Giver explains to Jonas why The Elders have created “sameness”:

“If we were different, we could be envious, angry, resentful, consumed with hatred. We need sameness” (Noyce, 2014, 24:52-24:56).

Here, The Giver implies that there is no foundation for comparisons between community members because there are no differences in their community, which is why they do not feel envy towards each other. For instance, there is no incentive for the members to make *upward* or *downward social comparisons* (Corcoran et al., 2011) with others based on personal wealth or material things because they all have the same resources. In the graduation ceremony, The Chief Elder speaks to the graduates before they will be handed their vocations, and she says:

“All of your training has been to help you fit in, to curb any impulse that may set you apart from others, but today, we honor your differences for they have determined your future” (Noyce, 2014, 08:38-08:54).

Even though they have different fundamental qualifications based on their personalities, there is no need for the community members to socially compare themselves to others because The Elders decide all aspects of their lives. Further, they are content with what they have got because they do not know of any other way of life. Youths in Norway are not familiar with this kind of social control. They live in a democratic society where differences are embraced and encouraged, and their unique personalities and identities can lead them to their future educations and vocations. On the other side, because of democracy, youths in Norway have

the freedom to make their own choices. All the possibilities and this seemingly “unlimited” freedom to choose can lead to stress, as opposed to the community members in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), where all aspects of their lives are decided for them. Hence, even though youths in Norway can motivate and improve themselves in a specific area to advance in their careers in life, using *upward social comparison* (Corcoran et al., 2011), it can also be a source of stress. Therefore, the interdisciplinary topic *Health and Life Skills* emphasizes the importance of “the development of a positive self-image and confident identity” during the childhood and adolescent years to help them handle and manage the freedom a democratic society entails (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c).

4.6 Diversity in *The Giver*

In sub-chapter 2.4, diversity was limited to differences regarding race, age, class, and appearance, which are all traits that combined make up a person’s identity. Further, it was stated that all differences between people, such as gender, age, class, and race, are diversity, and hence, diversity is present in all cultures. The issue of color and race was addressed in sub-chapter 4.2. In *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), there are no differences regarding race or religion, simply because religion does not exist, and all members have white skin. Further, the community members do not know the concept of money because they are provided with all necessities as shelter, food, and clothes.

Given that there are no motorized vehicles, and all members of the community ride bicycles, live in identical houses, eat the same food, and wear identical clothes, there is close to no diversity regarding class and appearance in the community, as portrayed in figure 6. However, biological differences such as age and gender are present. Children are provided with bicycles at the age of nine, and all nine year-olds receive them simultaneously. This is done to prevent issues such as jealousy, anger, and sadness.



(Figure 6: Identical bicycles, bags, and gender specific clothes, 02:30)

As stated in sub-chapter 2.4, diversity can be used as a term to illustrate identity groups in a society, depending on their “differing social status” (Silverman, 2010, p. 293). In *The Giver*, there are no differences in social status amongst the members. The only difference to spot is the difference between the members of the society and The Elders, which are the ones with power. However, there is no evidence that they have access to more or other resources than the rest of the community. Issues related to the access to resources, such as money, is one of “those things that make[s] us different from one another” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 4). Differences in access to resources is often the primary cause of diversity and social comparison in Norway (Rudi & Vårdal, 2020).

5. DIDACTIC IMPLEMENTATION AND TEACHING PLAN

The teaching project will go on for three weeks and it consists of different activities, learning methods, and learning goals. There will be a mixture of oral and written work, divided between individual reflection tasks, and pair- and group work, while some questions and tasks will be discussed in plenum. All tasks together form the foundation for the written and oral assessments at the end of the project. Firstly, the students will be given a worksheet with individual pre-film questions (Appendix A1), where they will be asked to reflect on their own identity, diversity in the world, if they compare themselves to others, and if yes, how this makes them feel. Further, they will be asked about their hopes and dreams for the future and how their freedom influences their life choices. Secondly, the students will watch the film trailer to *The Giver* (Movieclips Trailers, 2014) and answer questions related to it. The students will, in pairs, discuss what genre they think the film belongs to and where it is set, and what they know about the science fiction genre (Appendix A2). These questions are an

introduction to the next part, a section where the teacher goes through a PowerPoint-presentation to clarify the sci-fi genre and the idea of utopia. At this point, the students are ready to start watching the film. The watching is divided into three parts with different additional activities after each part (Appendices A4, A5, B1, B2 and B3).

Each activity will be further explained in the respective sub-chapters. When the students have watched the last part of the film, they will start preparing for their oral and written assessments. As a concluding activity, and to check if the film has impacted their views regarding diversity, democracy, identity, and self-image, they will be given some of the same questions as in the pre-film activity in week 1 to see if their answers have changed.

The two interdisciplinary topics, *Health and Life Skills* and *Democracy and Citizenship* (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020g), will be included as the core of the activities, and the general competence aims covered are the ones presented in chapter 2.1.5:

- explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts
- discuss and reflect on the form, content, and instruments of English-language cultural expressions from various media, including music, film, and games

(My translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020f).

The learning goals in this didactic implementation are based on the competence aims and are presented in the teaching plan with the activities. In sub-chapter 2.1.1, it was pointed out what the relevance of the English subject is, namely that identity development, cultural understanding, and widening students' perspectives on the world and themselves may help promote diversity and a positive development of their identity. Considering the plot of the film, which is about how Jonas develops his identity throughout the story, combined with the students' reflections regarding their own identities and challenging their cultural understanding, this teaching plan also emphasizes the importance of diversity and democracy.

5.1 Method

The Giver (Noyce, 2014) is the main component in the teaching plan that will form the foundation for working with such essential concepts as identity, democracy, diversity, and social comparison. Certain features of the film will be analyzed in relation to their relevance to the teaching plan, and the way in which film as visual aid has the ability to highlight the

concepts mentioned above. The teaching plan will consist of a mixture of collaborative and individual activities. Collaborative learning is another term for group learning and consists of numerous collaborative techniques amongst students and teachers (Barkley, Cross & Cross, 2014, p. 4). The difference from traditional group work is that collaborative learning focuses on planned group activities deliberately constructed to ensure that all group members participate in providing joint possibilities for learning (Barkley et al., 2014, p. 4). A group in collaborative learning consists of two or more group members, and they must participate with equal effort.

Fischer and Frey (2011, p. 2) states that it can be wise to treat the film as a written work and divide it up as one would do with any other form of text. There are advantages of not watching a film in one sitting, and by dividing a film into “chunks”, one can make sure that exciting and essential parts are being discussed and processed immediately when they occur. The film will therefore be divided into three viewings, where the students work with specifically designed tasks immediately after each part. The students will have to pay “close attention to details while they are viewing, writing down their immediate responses, discussing their interpretations with their fellow students, and supporting their opinions with evidence from the film” (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 50). By doing this, the students are more active viewers because they pay more attention when they watch and discuss their reactions afoot (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 50). This is called the viewer-response approach and will be further discussed in sub-chapter 5.1.3.

5.1.1 Participants

The teaching plan is designed for upper secondary English students during their first year in general studies and can be used for vocational studies as well. The classes in general studies usually consist of approximately 30 students with various cultural backgrounds, both ethnic Norwegians and immigrants, either first, second or third generation, who often have another primary culture at home. In Norway, 14,7 % of the population are immigrants, and they come from 221 different countries (Aldrimer22Juli, 2020). In addition, 3,5% of the population are children of immigrants, making the total number of immigrants or Norwegian born with immigrant parents with another cultural background than the Norwegian, 18,2 % of the population (Aldrimer22Juli, 2020). In 2017, 17% of students in upper secondary high school were immigrants. Of them, 12% were first-generation immigrants, and 5% were second-generation (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017, p. 7). Therefore, the average number of immigrant

students in a class with 30 students is approximately five students that come from another cultural background than the Norwegian. Therefore, to cater to a multicultural Norway, intercultural competence must be developed, diversity must be respected, and there should be acceptance for all these different identities. Further, students may have varied perspectives on certain issues in the film because of these diverse backgrounds, which can initiate fruitful discussions in the classroom.

5.1.2 Duration and activities

As already stated, the project's duration is set to three weeks, including two assessments at the end. The English subject consists of five school lessons every week, and the teaching plan will present activities and learning goals for one week at a time. The teaching plan will consist of pre-film activities, while-film activities, and post-film activities related to the movie genre, identity, diversity, democracy, social comparison, and the importance of freedom. As mentioned earlier, the film will be divided into three viewing sessions, each consisting of approximately 30 minutes.

There are several ways to use films in the classroom. Firstly, there is one issue to consider, namely that even though teachers may have a clear idea of what the outcome of working with a literary work should be, this idea is often formed and based on their own cultural background and world view, and this notion can also be transferable to their approach to film (Lazar, 2013, p. 62). For this reason, the students must be allowed to watch the film based on their own cultural backgrounds and world views.

5.1.3 The viewer-response approach

As mentioned in sub-chapter 5.1, where the method was discussed, the film will be viewed in chunks, and it will be divided into three sessions with in-between questions and tasks. The viewer-response approach has been adapted from the reader-response theory in literature (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 48). The approach involves the idea that a teacher's interpretation of analysis regarding literary devices such as meanings, symbols, or imagery, is not the only correct interpretation. The viewer-response approach embraces students' interpretations and opinions and shies away from fixed content and "correct" answers (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 48). This approach promotes the idea that while students "develop as empowered readers

(viewers), the teacher's role is one of being a model reader (viewer), promoting students' active engagement with the text (film), clearing up obvious misreadings and encouraging clear thinking and articulate responses" (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 49). When a film is watched in several parts, it is wise first to ask the students, "What did you notice?" (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 49), and let the students take it from there, and this usually initiates active discussions. The advantage of using the viewer-response approach when working with films, is that the students need to be active viewers, which entails that they must pay attention and note down findings as they watch (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 50). Another advantage is that every student watches the film, and if "they are free to express their reactions and interpretations" (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 50), it can lead to lively discussions. The teacher can also learn from the students' arguments and insights.

5.2 Outline of teaching plan

The teaching plan will be presented in chunks of weeks, where week one will be presented with learning objectives and activities, then week two will be presented in the same way, and lastly, week three. Each week will start with a teaching plan in the form of a table, followed by a more detailed explanation of how the activities will be carried out. The tables provide learning goals and activities combined for each week, while every activity with corresponding teaching goals is provided in detail in the appendices. Each weekly table and its related appendices contain the same heading color scheme to make it easier to locate the correct appendix. The following sub-chapters are organized in the following manner:

- Week 1: Pre-film activities and viewing of the first part of the film with related tasks
- Week 2: Viewing of the second and third parts of the film with related tasks
- Week 3: Development of podcast and hand in of written assessment

5.2.1. Week 1: Pre-film activities and viewing of the first part of film with related tasks

Table 1: Teaching plan week 1

WEEK 1		
Learning goals	Activities	Learning outcomes
<p>After week 1, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe the terms “identity” and “self-image” - explain what diversity is an express their views whether it is important - reflect on the student’s freedom of choice in a democracy - identify traits of democracy and dictatorship - reflect on the genre, setting and plot of the film - identify traits of the science fiction genre and the concept of utopia/dystopia - discuss and reflect on reasons for conflict, pain, and grief in the world - discuss and reflect upon the concept of “sameness” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual questions about identity, diversity, freedom, and comparison to others– Appendix A1 2. Watch the film trailer – Group activity: questions to the film trailer regarding setting and genre. The group make a list of why this movie can belong to the sci-fi genre, based on the film trailer. The teacher makes a common list based on the students’ findings - Appendix A2 3. PowerPoint-presentation by teacher about the sci-fi genre and utopia/dystopia- Appendix A3 4. Watch the first part of the film and answer questions to the first part - Appendix A4 Think-pair-share assignment. 5. Groups of three - Make a list with clues and items that give away the concept of “sameness”, setting and genre - Appendix A5 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By reflecting on their own individuality, freedom and how they compare themselves to others, it will be easier for the students to understand the difference between the democracy they live in and the benevolent dictatorship in <i>The Giver</i>. 2. The point of the film trailer, is to familiarize the students with the futuristic science fiction setting and the concept of utopia/dystopia. The students must reflect and discuss what the characteristics of the sci-fi genre are, based on the film trailer. They can also use traits from other sci-fi films they have seen or books they have read. 3. By learning more about the concepts of sci-fi and utopia/dystopia, it will make it more interesting for the students to work with tasks related to these concepts during and after the film. 4. It is essential that the students understand how the society in <i>The Giver</i> differentiates from the students’ own. The point of the questions is to make sure the students reflect upon concepts such “sameness”, identity, diversity and democracy. The discussions ensure that everybody has followed the plot and grasped the first part of the film. 5. The idea of making a list is for the students to reflect upon how the film reveals setting and genre without having to tell it, and what a society of “sameness” look like.

Activity 1

The first part of the film introduces the futuristic sci-fi setting, essential characters and discloses the community's different rituals in their annual ceremony. The lack of color and the

“sameness” in the community is instantly visual because of the apparent advantage the film has to present it in black and white. Before the students start to watch the film and in order to use it effectively, the teacher must set the mood for what the students are about to see and open their minds to the message they are about to receive (King, 2002, p. 511). Therefore, it is wise to use pre-film activities. In the first activity in week 1, the students will be presented with a worksheet (Appendix A1) with these questions that they will answer individually:

- Search the web and find out what “identity” and “self-image” is and how they are different.
- Are you confident with your own identity and with your self-image?
- Have you ever compared yourself to others? How and in which settings?
- How did this make you feel?
- What is diversity? Explain in your own words.
- Do you think diversity is important? Why/why not?
- How many choices do you take during a day? (Choices about clothes, food, activities etc.).
- How would you feel if all these choices were made for you?
- Search the web and find out what characterizes a democratic society. Make a list with the most essential points.
- What are your dreams for the future? (In terms of education, job, family, hobbies etc.)
- Do you feel that you can follow these dreams as you please, or do others have a say in that matter, for instance your family?

These questions make the students reflect upon the concepts of identity and self-image, diversity and democracy, their hopes and dreams for the future, and to what extent they can make their own choices in life. Because people tend to compare themselves to others (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007), the students are asked to think about to what extent they do this, and if it affects them positively or negatively, and how this makes them feel. Some students are probably influenced positively and use it as an inspiration to improve themselves in a specific area, using *upward social comparison* (Corcoran et al., 2011). Others are affected negatively and feel less adequate by such comparisons. The students will be handed some of these questions once more at the end of the project to see if any of their answers have changed and see if the film has impacted their views regarding identity, diversity, and democracy.

Activity 2

The second pre-film activity is watching a film trailer from the film (Movieclips Trailers, 2014). The film trailer will introduce some issues and topics in fragments, and the students must use their fantasy and imagine what the film is about. The students will be divided in groups and provided with five questions (Appendix A2) related to the film trailer where they must reflect upon the genre and settings they are presented to:

- Where and when do you think this film is set?
- What do you think this film is about?
- What genre do you think this movie belongs to?
- What do you know about the science fiction genre?
- Make a list of clues from the film trailer that gives away that it belongs to the science fiction genre.

The last two questions will be summarized in plenum by the teacher as an introduction to activity 3. The teacher will make two lists on the blackboard, one with the students' prior knowledge of science fiction, and one with clues from the film trailer that give away that the film belongs in the science fiction genre.

Activity 3

The two lists that were made in plenary on the blackboard were an introduction to this third activity. The students were supposed to list clues from the film trailer that give away the science fiction genre. After this activity, the teacher presents and explains the science fiction genre and the concept of utopia and dystopia briefly by using a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix A3). The point is to add additional information to what they already know about the genre. It is wise that students know the genre to understand how it is possible to remove colors, feelings, and memories in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014). Further, to be aware that utopia is impossible to create, and always turns into dystopia, will challenge the students' view of how one best can create the best possible society. The PowerPoint presentation will be at a propositional level, where only key terms and main ideas will be included. Such a powerpoint may facilitate the students' comprehension and enhance their learning of the content. However, irrelevant information in a PowerPoint can be harmful to students' learning, and therefore the content here focuses on essentials only (Gordani & Khajavi, 2020).

Activity 4

Now it is time to watch the first chunk of the film, approximately the first 30 minutes. After having watched the first part of the film, the students will be handed a set of questions (Appendix A4):

- Describe what you have seen so far.

- The first lines of the movie are: “From the ashes of The Ruin, the Communities were built. Protected by the boundary. All memories of the past were erased”. What do you think is meant by “The Ruin”?
- What is happening in the ceremony we see in the beginning of the film?
- Describe the characters we have met so far.
- Search the web and find out what “dictatorship” means.
- Do you think the community members in *The Giver* live under democratic rule or a dictatorship? Explain your answer.
- Look at the picture. What effect does it have on the viewer that everything is in black and white?



- What do you think would happen to the Norwegian society if you woke up one day and everything was in black and white and peoples' emotions were gone?

First, they will reflect on the questions individually before they discuss the same questions in pairs with their neighbor. Lastly, there will be a sum-up in plenum. This learning technique is called a think-pair-share assignment, a collaborative technique that fosters depth and breadth of thinking. It includes time to process questions individually and discuss with and learn from other peers (Azlina, 2010, p. 23). The idea is that by working in collaboration with others, the students will have to discuss their thoughts and, in addition, also listen to their partners' reflections, which in turn will lead to more carefully prepared answers when presenting them to the class. The questions and the following discussion in plenum are included to make sure the students understand the plot and the film's central themes (see King, 2002, p. 518), such as the issue with the lack of freedom and democratic rights, and the concept of “sameness”. King explains that "discussion questions are aimed at extending and expanding students' understanding and experience of [a] film, requiring them to reflect on issues in terms of their own experience and to compare cultural differences" (King, 2002, p. 519). To ensure that watching the film has learner value, sorting out key concepts as in the above activities is a wise strategy (cf. Ahn, 2014).

Activity 5

In the fifth and last activity of week 1, the students will be divided into groups of three and they will be handed a worksheet where they will fill out a list (Appendix A5) of visual items in the film that show that the genre is science fiction. They will also discuss and make a list of what clues there are of the film being set in the future and that the community members live by the concept of “sameness”. This requires that the students pay close attention and note down visual clues while they watch, and they will be informed of this beforehand. As a concluding activity, the teacher gathers all the groups’ clues in a joint list on the blackboard as a summary.

5.2.2 Week 2: Viewing of the second and third parts of the film with related tasks

Table 2: Teaching plan week 2

WEEK 2		
Learning goals	Activities	Learning outcomes
<p>After week 2, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>describe</i> the society in <i>The Giver</i> and how it differs from their own - <i>reflect</i> upon how a society without diversity would be - <i>identify</i> reasons for why they compare themselves to others - <i>discuss</i> their view on social selection by “releases” - <i>develop</i> their intercultural competence - <i>discuss</i> positive and negative aspects of “sameness” and freedom - <i>discuss</i> what impact memories, colors and emotions have on the individual person and a community as a whole - <i>reflect</i> upon how issues such as diversity and identity are connected to memories, colors, and emotions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch the second part of the film and answer questions to the second part, in groups of three - Appendix B1 Discussions in plenary. 2. Pair activity - The students will make a pros & cons- list for the concepts of ‘sameness’ and ‘freedom of choice’ - Appendix B2 3. Watch the third part of the film and write an individual text about what happens next - Appendix B3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questions will make the students discuss issues such as structures of the society, the lack of diversity in <i>The Giver</i>, social comparison, self-image, the concept of “release” and the freedom of choice. 2. By making a pros & cons list of the concept of “sameness” and the freedom to make their own choices, they will have to reflect upon why diversity is a good thing and how freedom of choice affects identity. 3. The students must use their fantasy and their previous lists regarding pros and cons of “sameness” and freedom of choice to imagine what would happen to the community when colors, emotions and memories are set free.

Activity 1

The second week starts with watching the second part of the film. After this, the students will be handed a set of questions they will discuss in groups of three (Appendix B1):

- Describe the society in the film.
- Would you say the dictatorship in *The Giver* differs from a democratic society? Explain your answer.
- Look at picture 1. Do you think there is diversity in this community? Explain your answer.



Picture 1

- Look at picture 2. Do you think the community members compare themselves to others like we do in our Norwegian society? Why/Why not?



Picture 2

- Look at picture 1 and 2 above. Do you think The Elders' idea of "sameness" affects the community members' self-image negatively or positively? Explain your answer.
- Why do they "release" babies and elders and what is your opinion about it? Can there be positive reasons for doing this? Discuss pros and cons about "release".
- Why do you think Jonas does not sit down to dinner and decides to leave the house after curfew? Where do you think he is going?

After their group discussions, there is a summary in plenum where the groups talk about their answers, initially the two first questions. The teacher makes a list on the blackboard regarding things that describe the society in the film and how this society differs from a democratic society. Further, the teacher asks a follow-up question about how it would be if the students' society would become like the one in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), and how it would affect peoples' self-image if there was no diversity. This can initiate discussions in the classroom. Then, the remaining questions will be discussed accordingly. The last question is to make the students reflect upon what they think will happen in the next part of the film. In this activity, the students are working with intercultural competence and Byram et al. s' (2002) four

components, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values (p. 11). Firstly, the students must be open to and curious about the culture presented in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) and suspend possible beliefs that their own culture is the only natural or correct one, and this will challenge their *attitudes*. Secondly, by working with different aspects of the society in the film, they will also learn about the social and individual interactions in Jonas' community. They might see how these differ from their own, which will strengthen their *knowledge* about their own culture, and other possible cultures. Thirdly, the students will also develop their *skills* as they compare elements of the culture in *The Giver* with their own, and based on these, they can understand how the cultures are different. Finally, because they discuss and reflect upon concepts such as identity, diversity, and self-image, they must have a critical awareness of themselves and their values, perspectives, and practices (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13).

Activity 2

After this first activity, they will be divided into pairs and handed a list where they are asked to list pros and cons about "sameness" (Appendix B2). The point of this activity is that they will come to discuss how "sameness" has erased the community members' emotions and memories, and that diversity is limited to differences in age, gender, and vocation. This will initiate reflections regarding diversity in their own society as well, and discussions whether "sameness" is something to strive for.

Activity 3

Finally, the last activity of the week is to watch the third part of the film. After the students have watched this last part, they are given an individual written assignment (Appendix B3). The assignment is to describe what they think will happen to the community in *The Giver* after all the memories, emotions, and colors come back. They will be asked to think about consequences for the individual members, the family units, and the society as a whole to make sure they think about these changes from several perspectives.

5.2.3 Week 3: Development of podcast and hand in of written assessment

Table 3: Teaching plan week 3

Week 3		
Learning goals	Activities	Learning outcomes
<p>After week 3, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze, discuss, and evaluate and put their knowledge in context. - Structure their content and grade their meanings of a topic in positive and negative sides - Draw parallels between the film and their own society regarding topics such as “sameness”, freedom, and identity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparations for making podcasts. The students will be provided with six essay questions related to issues from the film. They will pick out one question for their podcast and one for their individual essays- Appendix C1 2. Recording of podcasts. 3. Writing session – the students will write an essay about the second question they chose – Instructions in Appendix C2 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to group members’ wishes and make compromises about the podcast. Divide tasks between the members and be able to perform assigned tasks. 2. To initiate reflections and discussions in a collaborative setting where they can learn from each other. This way, they may have a better starting point for their individual essays. 3. When writing an essay, the students have to reflect and discuss with themselves and really reflect about their answer and how they feel about certain issues. They must also structure their content and sort out their points.

The third week of the teaching plan will consist of two assessments. The first one is an assessment of oral performance, and this is done in the form of a podcast by groups of three students. The second is an individual written essay. At the beginning of the week, the students will be divided into groups and start preparing for the recording of the podcasts. They will be handed a set of six essay questions regarding concepts and themes related to the film (Appendix C1), and they will be asked to pick one of them to discuss in the podcast with their group:

- Why do you think Jonas’ society chose to institute ‘sameness’? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ‘Sameness’ in a society.
- There is no diversity in *The Giver*, due to factors such as release and the removal of colors. Discuss how they have managed to eliminate diversity in *The Giver* and what consequences this could have.
- Jonas' community appears to be a utopia. List why it seems like a utopia and explain why the things on your list contribute to perfection. Why cannot this society turn out to anything else than a dystopia?

- Feelings and memories have been eliminated from Jonas' community. Explain why they have done this and how this affects the members of the community.
- In *The Giver*, individuality and identity are unknown concepts. Discuss the importance of identity.
- The people in Jonas' community gave up their freedom and individuality to live in a safe environment. Discuss whether or not the community is a safe environment which to live. How would you define a safe environment?

When they have decided on a task, they can start to organize the group and prepare for the recording. There will be certain criteria the students must fulfill in their podcasts, and these are that they need to find parts from the film they want to talk about, examples to refer to, what roles each group member will have in the podcast and make a structure for the dialogue. Further, they must decide what kind of podcast they want to make, whether in the form of a discussion, a “news”-broadcast, a debate, a “talk show” with guests, or a pure informational podcast. They are free to be creative in their podcasts as long as they follow the given criteria mentioned above. When they are ready with all the preparations, they can start recording their podcasts.

The second part of the assessment is a written essay which they will write in a writing session at school in the last lesson of the week. The students are handed instructions for the written assessments (Appendix C2) with the same six discussion questions they were provided with for their podcast. They must choose a different question than the one they discussed in their podcasts. By this point, the students have worked thoroughly with themes and concepts from the film and will have much to write about. All essay questions deal with how *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can be compared to today’s society and what problems can arise if one follows The Elders’ attempt at creating utopia.

As a concluding activity, they will once more answer some of the questions (with some alterations), individually, that they answered in the pre-film activity in week 1 (Appendix D):

- What is identity and self-image?
- Are you confident with your own identity and with your self-image?
- What is diversity? Explain in your own words.
- Do you think diversity is important? Why/why not?
- How do you think it would be to live in a dictatorship where much of your life would be decided by others, like in *The Giver*? Compare with your knowledge of and experience with democracy.

The point of asking some of the questions a second time is to see if the students’ opinions regarding identity, self-image, diversity, and democracy have changed during these three

weeks. Considering that *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) will introduce them to a society completely different from their own, issues such as “sameness”, lack of emotions, and lack of basic democratic rights may strengthen their confidence in their own situation and embrace the freedom they have in their democratic society. They will gain new insights into concepts like identity, freedom of choice and diversity.

5.3 Summary and discussion of teaching plan

This teaching plan was designed to address issues related to such concepts as identity, diversity, and democracy to answer the thesis questions:

- 1. To what extent does *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) have the potential to initiate reflections on identity and strengthen youths’ self-image and confidence?**
- 2. To what extent does *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) have the potential to initiate reflections about democracy and diversity in a modern society?**

As stated in the introduction, the interdisciplinary topics *Health and Life Skills* and *Democracy and Citizenship* are integrated in the core curriculum based on general values and principles for all primary and secondary education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). The two interdisciplinary topics are customized to apply to the English subject in upper secondary education and fulfill the democratic social mission of the school (NOU, 2011: 20; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). *Health and Life Skills* shall help youths develop a confident identity and a positive self-image by broadening their cultural competence (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). This cultural competence can help boost students’ confidence and encourage them how to be themselves, accept who they are, and be confident of their own identity. The other interdisciplinary topic, *Democracy and Citizenship*, deals with the rights and obligations of democracy, and this is essential to develop students’ understanding of the world, and promote the underlying values on which democracy is built. Therefore, the teaching plan is designed to include these two interdisciplinary topics. Before the film, the students will be provided with pre-film tasks to initiate thoughts and engage them in the topics they will be working with (King, 2002, p. 511). The film is divided into three sessions because of the viewer-response approach (Teasley & Wilder, 1997). The reason for almost exclusively pair and group work during these three weeks is because collaborative

learning is a great way to engage the students to work together and contribute equally (Barkley et al., 2014). Collaborative learning aims to deepen learning for the students, and the questions are designed to initiate discussions that will foster such learning (Barkley et al., 2014). The teaching plan addresses the same issues multiple times, but from different angles to challenge the students on their views on these issues, and to initiate reflections regarding the society they live in and their thoughts about diversity, democracy, and identity. The students must reflect upon why Jonas decides to follow his needs and instincts and what the alternative could be if he did not. This will initiate thoughts and reflections and make the students look at their individual identities and foster some reflections regarding the importance of staying true to one's identity and how valuable the freedom of choice is. The assessments aim to let the students present what they have learned more in detail since they can immerse themselves in the topics they find interesting. Providing some of the same questions as a concluding activity serves to check whether this film has impacted the students. The concluding questions deal with identity, diversity, self-image, and democracy and it will be interesting to see if the film has changed their view on these issues.

Mental health problems are an increasing threat to our youths (Bakken, 2018). Because it is common to socially compare oneself to others, their identities and self-images are suffering under much pressure. The society in *The Giver* tried to solve these problems by taking away individual freedom and choices, and they constructed a society based on “sameness”, strict governmental control, and limited freedom for the individual. For this to be a possibility, they also had to remove colors, feelings, and memories. In today's society, we strive to embrace diversity, and not only how to learn to accept it but also to encourage these differences. Democracy and freedom of choice are closely connected to our identity, and it is because of democracy that we have the opportunity to fully embrace who we are. However, it can be challenging for youths to see the importance of their individual identities due to the pervasive and constant social comparison to others (Corcoran et al., 2011). It is not easy for people to stop comparing themselves to others because of their individuality and that everyone is different. *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can help shed light on the importance of identity, diversity, and democracy. By teaching *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) in the English subject, students will see why diversity is important and necessary and accept and appreciate their uniqueness as individual human beings. Further, they will increase their intercultural competence by observing and discussing the society and the benevolent dictatorship in *The Giver* and making comparison to their own democratic society. This teaching plan may lead to the understanding that a society cannot be based on the concept of “sameness”, and that

freedom of choice and uniqueness are what create this diverse world we are all part of. Intercultural competence is crucial in order to develop mutual understanding across cultures, societies, and individuals. If we want our students to realize the importance of democratic values, to take on and tackle today's "racism, power, and social structures," and hence relieve the world from trouble caused by "pain, conflict and grief" (Lea, 2006, p. 52), they need to be able to see beyond insignificant differences and take on another approach to intercultural interaction. Furthermore, through teaching the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014), the students will "have a basis for seeing their own and others' identity in a multilingual and multicultural context" (My translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020e).

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I asked to what extent the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) can have the potential to initiate reflections on identity and strengthen youths' self-image and confidence, and if it has the potential to initiate reflections about democracy and diversity in a modern society. These questions are rooted in the two interdisciplinary topics *Health and Life Skills* and *Democracy and Citizenship* which are stated both in the core curriculum and the English subject curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). These topics are supposed to teach the students about the rights and obligations of democracy and help strengthen their self-images so that they can tackle life. While exploring the before mentioned questions, I analyzed *The Giver* from different perspectives. I started with the theoretical framework for the thesis, such as the thesis' relevance to the English curriculum. Further, different theoretical concepts such as social comparison theory, diversity, intercultural competence, identity, and democracy were discussed. Following this was a chapter regarding the method and material, which took a closer look at how the film *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) is relevant for the thesis questions and why the film belongs in the science fiction genre. Then, I started on the analysis of *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014). First, a summary of the plot in the film was provided. Second, I continued with the concept of "sameness", which was discussed regarding the lack of color in the film and how all inhabitants are provided with the same necessities, clothes, and food. Third, the concepts of "freedom of choice", "identity and democracy" and "diversity" in *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) were analyzed with references to quotes and images from the film. In my didactic implementation, an overview of participants, duration and activities, and the viewer-response

approach were provided before the teaching plan was presented. Each week of the teaching plan was presented with learning goals and activities, followed by a discussion of the teaching plan and its relevance to the thesis questions. All activities were rooted in the two interdisciplinary topics *Health and Life Skills* and *Democracy and Citizenship*. Further, a sub-chapter of the teaching plan followed, where the teaching plan's relevance to the thesis questions were discussed, with regards to the two interdisciplinary topics. Finally, my conclusion is that by working with this teaching plan about *The Giver* (Noyce, 2014) in the English classroom, students will be provided with a valuable tool for initiating reflections on the importance of diversity, identity, and democracy, and strengthening youths' self-image and confidence.

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Appendix A1

- Learning goals:**
- *describe* the terms “identity” and “self-image”
 - *explain* what diversity is and express their views whether it is important
 - *reflect* on the students’ freedom of choice in a democracy
 - *identify* traits of democracy and dictatorship

Activity 1: Pre-film activity. Answers these questions individually.

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Search the web and find out what “identity” and “self-image” is and how they are different.	
Are you confident with your own identity and with your self-image?	
Have you ever compared yourself to others? How and in which settings?	
How did this make you feel?	
What is diversity? Explain in your own words.	
Do you think diversity is important? Why/why not?	
How many choices do you make during a day? (Choices about clothes, food, activities etc.).	
How would you feel if all these choices were made for you?	
Search the web and find out what characterizes a democratic society. Make a list with the most essential points.	
What are your dreams for the future? (In terms of education, job, family, hobbies etc.)	
Do you feel that you can follow these dreams as you please, or do others have a say in that matter, for instance your family?	

Appendix A2

- Learning goal:**
- *reflect* on the genre, setting and plot in the film
 - *identify* traits of the science fiction genre and the concept of utopia/dystopia

Activity 2: Discuss with your neighbor the following questions:

1. Where and when do you think this film is set?

2. What do you think this film is about?

3. What genre do you think this movie belongs to?

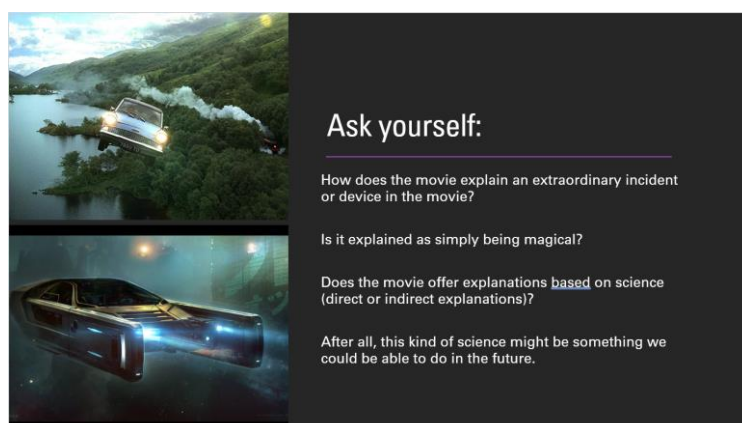
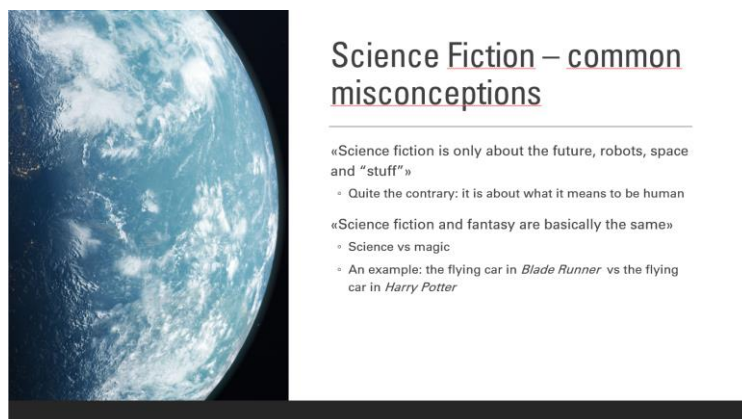
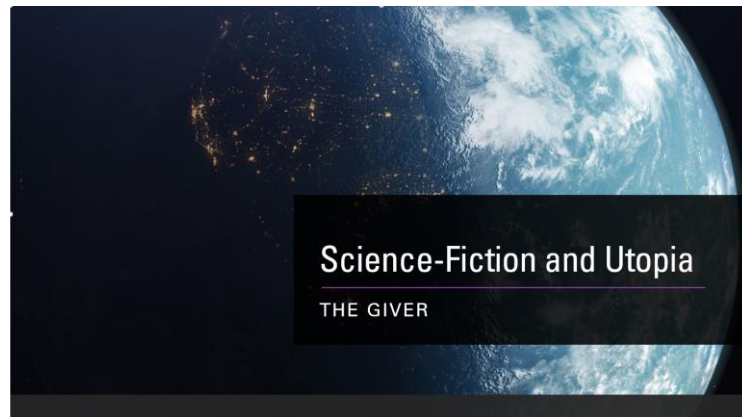
4. What do you know about the science fiction genre?

5. Make a list of clues from the film trailer that gives away that it belongs to the science fiction genre.

Appendix A3

Learning goals: - identify traits of the science fiction genre and the concept of utopia/dystopia

Activity 3: PowerPoint presentation:



What is SF then?

All genres ask questions about human nature. SF, on the other hand, explores scenarios whether or not they seem unrealistic or even insane at first glance

- Some of this crazy scenarios might come true. It is not the first time

SF sets out to explore possible scenarios that could happen

- In the past, today's society, near future, or far future
- Scenarios you might have thought of before, or scenarios you have never even considered

"What if?"

(What if it was possible to drive flying cars? What if cloning was possible? What if we could travel back in time?)

Futuristic Predictions Gone Right?

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949): A government that surveils you

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968): A movie that inspired future technology

Fahrenheit 451 (1953): Predicted earbuds. Called "seashells" in the book. Described as: "thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound, of music and talk coming in [...]."



Futuristic Predictions Gone Right, part 2

▪ *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979): Inspired Motorola engineer Martin Cooper to design the first cell phone

▪ *The Terminator* (1984): Inspiration for military drones. In a movie where humans are hunted by military drones (lead by AI), we have been inspired to make our own military drones.



Soft versus Hard SF

The question remains the same: How would humans react if [insert strange scenario here] were to happen?

Soft SF: Explores the emotional aspect to a larger extent

- Often raises moral issues
- What would happen if we could erase selective parts of our memory?
- Would we ever learn how to deal with difficult matters if we removed painful memories?
- Focuses more on emotions and not so much on the science. The way humans react is more important here.

A possible advantage could be treating war trauma.

Societies in soft SF resembles OUR society.

Soft vs Hard SF, part 2

Hard SF: Focus on scientific accuracy and logic to a greater extent.

Example of hard SF:

- What would happen if humanity was struggling to survive because there weren't a lot of resources left, and our planet was dying?
 - Does this sound familiar?
- A lot of scientific theories and explanations in the movie
- The next slides will show examples of some SF movies where we can ask the question "what if?".

What if a computer simulated programme enslaved the human race?

What if people had to kill each other in order to entertain the rich?



What if human beings could bring back dinosaurs to life?

What if females were treated as properties of the state?

Characteristics of a utopian society (the idea)

Peaceful, benevolent government

Equality for citizens

Access to education, healthcare, employment, and so forth

Citizens are free to think independently

A safe, favorable environment

Characteristics of a dystopian society (the reality)

Propaganda replaces education and is used to control the citizens of society.

Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.

Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.

Citizens have a fear of the outside world.

Citizens live in a dehumanized state.

The natural world is banished and distrusted.

Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.

Conclusion

SF explores what it means to be human

The genre tries to imagine humans in strange scenarios. The goal:

- Our reaction and/or possible consequences
- Moral issues

A glimpse into the future?

SF is not only about "space and stuff", but anything we put our minds to explore further

Just like any other genre, we might not like everything

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Appendix A4

- Learning goals:**
- *discuss and reflect* on reasons for conflict, pain, and grief in the world
 - *discuss and reflect* upon the concept of “sameness”
 - *identify* traits of democracy and dictatorship

Activity 4: Questions to part 1 of the film:

- First, reflect on the questions to yourself and make notes.
- Second, discuss your answers with your neighbor and note down new aspects.
- Be ready to discuss your answers in plenum.

	Individual answers	Discussions in Pairs
Describe what you have seen so far.		
The first lines of the movie are: “From the ashes of The Ruin, the Communities were built. Protected by the boundary. All memories of the past were erased”. What do you think is meant by “The Ruin”?		
What is happening in the ceremony we see in the beginning of the film?		
Describe the characters we have met so far.		
Search the web and find out what “dictatorship” means.		
Do you think the community members in <i>The Giver</i> live under democratic rule or a dictatorship? Explain your answer.		
Look at the picture. What effect does it have on the viewer that everything is in black and white? 		
What do you think would happen to the Norwegian society if you woke up one day and everything was in black and white and peoples' emotions were gone?		

Appendix B1

- Learning goals:**
- *describe* the society in *The Giver* and how it differs from their own
 - *reflect* upon how a society without diversity would be
 - *identify* reasons for why they compare themselves to others
 - *discuss* their view on social selection by “releases”
 - *develop* their intercultural competence

Activity 1: Questions to part 2 of the film:

Work in groups and discuss the following questions. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

- Describe the society in the film.

- Would you say the dictatorship in *The Giver* differs from a democratic society? Explain your answer.

- Look at picture 1. Do you think there is diversity in this community? Explain your answer.



Picture 1

- Look at picture 2. Do you think the community members compare themselves to others like we do in our Norwegian society? Why/Why not?



Picture 2

- Look at picture 1 and 2 above. Do you think The Elders' idea of "sameness" affects the community members' self-image negatively or positively? Explain your answer.

- Why do they "release" babies and elders and what is your opinion about it? Can there be positive reasons for doing this? Discuss pros and cons about "release".

- Why do you think Jonas does not sit down to dinner and decides to leave the house after curfew? Where do you think he is going?

Appendix B2

Learning goals: - discuss positive and negative aspects of “sameness” and freedom

Activity 2: In pairs - fill out pros & cons regarding the concept of ‘sameness’ in a society, both for the individual, groups and the society. Then, do the same for the concept ‘freedom of choice’:

SAMENESS	
PROS:	CONS:
FREEDOM OF CHOICE	
PROS:	CONS:

Appendix B3

- Learning goals:**
- *discuss* what impact memories, colors and emotions have on the individual person and a community as a whole
 - *reflect* upon how issues such as diversity and identity are connected to memories, colors, and emotions

Activity 3: Task to part 3 of the film:

Write a text of 400-600 words, where you describe how the community changes after all memories, colors and emotions are set free. How does it change for the individuals, the family units, and the society as a whole?

Write your text here:

Appendix C1

- Learning goals:**
- Analyze, discuss, and evaluate and put their knowledge in context.
 - Structure their content and grade their meanings of a topic in positive and negative sides
 - Be able to draw parallels between the film and their own society regarding topics such as “sameness”, freedom, and identity

Instructions for the podcast

You are going to make a podcast where you discuss the question you have chosen. How you decide to do it is up to you. Here are some suggestions: You could for instance plan a conversation between two fictional people with opposing views on the issue. Or perhaps just a conversation between some people who are discussing a social issue? It can also be a “news”-broadcast, a debate, a “talk show” with guests or a pure informational podcast. These are just some suggestions. Feel free to be creative! Your podcast should be approximately 5-7 minutes long.

Choose one of the six questions to discuss in your podcasts.

- Why do you think Jonas’ society chose to institute ‘sameness’? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ‘Sameness’ in a society.
- There is no diversity in *The Giver*, due to factors such as release and the removal of colors. Discuss how they have managed to eliminate diversity in *The Giver* and what consequences this could have.
- Jonas' community appears to be a utopia. List why it seems like a utopia and explain why the things on your list contribute to perfection. Why cannot this society turn out to anything else than a dystopia?
- Feelings and memories have been eliminated from Jonas' community. Explain why they have done this and how this affects the members of the community.
- In *The Giver*, individuality and identity are unknown concepts. Discuss the importance of identity.
- The people in Jonas' community gave up their freedom and individuality to live in a safe environment. Discuss whether or not the community is a safe environment which to live. How would you define a safe environment?

Appendix C2

- Learning goals:**
- Analyze, discuss, and evaluate and put their knowledge in context.
 - Structure their content and grade their meanings of a topic in positive and negative sides
 - Draw parallels between the film and their own society regarding topics such as “sameness”, freedom, and identity

Instructions for the essay:

Choose one of the six questions to discuss in your essay. You cannot choose the same question that you discussed in your podcast.

- Remember:
 - o an **introduction**, at least 3 **body paragraphs**, **conclusion**
 - o **your name** on top of document
 - o to state your **sources**
 - o to write which **task** you have chosen.
 - o Font: **Time New Roman**
 - o Size: **12 pt.**
 - o Space: **1,5**
 - o 800-1000 words
 - o Give your text a suitable title
 - Time: 08.00-10.40: 2 hours 40 mins
 - Hand in via Teams
-
- Why do you think Jonas’ society chose to institute ‘sameness’? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ‘Sameness` in a society.
 - There is no diversity in *The Giver*, due to factors such as release and the removal of colors. Discuss how they have managed to eliminate diversity in *The Giver* and what consequences this could have.
 - Jonas' community appears to be a utopia. List why it seems like a utopia and explain why the things on your list contribute to perfection. Why cannot this society turn out to anything else than a dystopia?
 - Feelings and memories have been eliminated from Jonas' community. Explain why they have done this and how this affects the members of the community.
 - In *The Giver*, individuality and identity are unknown concepts. Discuss the importance of identity.
 - The people in Jonas' community gave up their freedom and individuality to live in a safe environment. Discuss whether or not the community is a safe environment which to live. How would you define a safe environment?

Appendix D

- Learning goals:**
- *reflect* upon whether their view on identity, diversity, self-image have changed
 - *reflect* upon how it would be to have no options to make their own choices

Activity 1: Pre-film activity. Answers these questions individually.

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
What is identity and self-image?	
Are you confident with your own identity and with your self-image?	
What is diversity? Explain in your own words.	
Do you think diversity is important? Why/why not?	
How do you think it would be to live in a dictatorship where much of your life would be decided by others, like in <i>The Giver</i> ? Compare with your knowledge of and experience with democracy.	