



Novel Guide for Gifted and Advanced Readers



This guide is appropriate for use with gifted and advanced readers. It addresses their affective and cognitive needs through questions that can be used for discussion. Depending on the length of the book, students should read the entire book before conducting the bibliotherapy lesson, the **Group Discussion** using the higher order questions and the **After Discussion** activities. Students should be given the **Before Discussion** activities to complete during their time while reading the book. If the book is exceptionally long, you may need to modify this lesson plan. See **Novel Guide: Notes for Implementing** for additional procedures and recommendations.

Book Title: *Messenger*

Author: Lois Lowry

Interest Level: 4th-6th grade

Lexile: 720L

Length: 169 pages

Guide Developed by: Rushton Wood-Thuston

Summary

Matty, a young boy growing up under the care of the Seer, is struggling to understand the ability of mysterious healing powers he has been given. His once harmonious Utopian society has suddenly started to undergo changes and the people are no longer feeling hospitable to new comers. The people of the village decided to close the gates of the once friendly place. When the Seer hears of this decision he enlists Matty to help him bring his daughter Kira back to the village before the gates close forever. On his way to bring Kira home Matty notices that the Forest is changing. Once Matty reaches Kira she agrees to leave her home and travel with him back to his village. The Leader goes into Forest to try to save them but becomes trapped as well. Matty tells Kira to reach out to Leader with her gift so that he will know where they are. Kira and Leader unite their gifts and are able to communicate with one another. Leader tells Kira that she must ask Matty to use his gift; Matty put his hands on the ground and healed the earth and everything around him. Kira and Leader are saved and the people of the village no longer desire to build a wall to keep those in need out. Using this massive amount of power takes Matty's life and it is then that Leader gives him his true name of Healer.

Conceptual Connections

Conceptual Lens: growth

Other Key Concepts: change, healing

Essential Understandings:

- All individuals go through changes when growing into who they are supposed to become.
- When things are broken they need to be healed in some way.

Essential Questions:

- How does growth impact an individual's life?
- What is the need for healing in our society?

Affective Focus (Bibliotherapy)

Introductory Activity/Hook

In the book *Messenger*, Matty, Kira, and Leader have special gifts that are unique to whom they are as a person. Imagine you have a special gift that relates to your personality and your interests. What would your gift be and why? Write a letter to a friend explaining your gift in detail and how you plan on using your gift.

Menu of Bibliotherapy Questions

Identifications:

- What is Matty's special gift? Who else in the story has a gift like Matty?
- What happens when Matty goes into the Forest to bring back Kira?
- How are the people in the village changing?
- How does Matty save everyone at the end of the story?

Catharsis:

- How does Matty feel about his gift?
- How are the changes in the village making Matty, Leader and Seer feel?
- How does Matty feel about Kira? How does Kira feel about Matty?
- How does Matty grow from the beginning of the novel to the end?

Insight:

- How has changing as you have gotten older made you feel? What changes do you feel especially good about?
- How does helping others make you feel?
- Why do you think healing is important?
- How can you help others not be afraid to change and grow?

Universalization/Follow up Activity

Write a short narrative story focusing a problem that needs to be solved. Consider your talents and gifts you discussed in the letter to your friend. Use your talents/gifts as the vehicle for solving this problem. Include at least two other characters in your story and write dialogue for the characters.

Reading Comprehension: Independent Work and Group Discussion

To foster strong reading comprehension, literacy skills, and a love of literature, students need to read critically, respond to what they read with text-based evidence, develop a robust vocabulary, and engage in high-level discussion with peers. The following activities address these components.

Before Group Discussion (Activities for students to complete independently)

A. Knowledge and Comprehension Questions related to the novel. Students use sticky notes to locate answers in the text as they read. Teacher may use answers for a grade.

Knowledge Questions

- Who were the main characters in the story?
- How did Matty act when he was younger?
- What was the first sign of Matty's gift?
- How did Matty help the Leader?
- How were some of the villagers changing? (Give specific examples.)

Comprehension Questions

- Why are the people of the village trading at the Trade Mart? What did they want to gain?
- Why is Matty afraid of his gift at first?
- Why does Leader tell Matty to use his gift wisely?
- Why are the people in the village closing its borders?
- How do Kira, Matty, and Leader's gifts relate?
- Why is Matty's mentor so worried about Matty and Kira?

B. Vocabulary Study: Students will complete the following activities with vocabulary from the novel. The activities may be used for a grade, but should also be included in the discussion.

- Students look up the word in the dictionary or online, noting the definition that best fits how the word is used in the passage. Also, determine possible synonyms and evaluate the author's use of the word in the passage.
- Students will complete a graphic organizer provided by the teacher.

Vocabulary Words

- Concoctions (p. 2)
- Boisterous (p. 12)
- Transgression (p. 25)
- Frivolous (p. 37)
- Jostled (p. 60)
- Frolic (p. 75)
- Eloquently (p. 85)
- Epidemic (p. 100)
- Divert (p. 107)
- Intricate (p. 118)
- Perceive (p. 159)

Group Discussion: Teacher-facilitated small group discussion. Teacher may choose to provide students with a set of the questions prior to the discussion. Students should also be encouraged to create their own questions.

Higher-Level Questions (using Bloom's categories)

1. Application:

- Matty notices changes in the villagers and goes to talk to Leader about his concerns. Would the changes Matty notices make you worry as well? Why?
- How does Matty's gift make him feel?
- What would be the most troubling thing to you if you lived in the village where Matty lived?
- Matty came from another village when he was younger as did most of the inhabitants of the Village. Why would you ever feel the need to flee your home?
- Why is this book titled *Messenger*?

2. Analysis:

- In *Messenger* we see evil spreading in the Village. How does the Trade Mart promote this evil spreading?
- Why did the Villagers want to close the borders of the town when so many of them had come there for refuge themselves?
- What did Lois Lowry tell us about Leader's past in Chapter Four? How does this information affect the way you view Leader?

3. Evaluation:

- What does this story tell you about evil?
- How would this story have been different if Matty had not used his gift to heal the Earth?
- What does this story tell us about good versus evil and the impact one person can have?

4. Synthesis:

- Do you think that Matty lived on after healing the earth?
- What do you think ended up happening to Kira and the Leader after the end of the novel? Write your version of the novel's ending.

After Group Discussion: Activities for students to complete with a partner, in a small group, or individually. Activities may be used for a grade.

A. Connections to the Curriculum: Students will make connections to a curriculum area (math, science, social studies, language arts, art, or careers) using one of the concepts from the story. The product should reflect creativity as well as critical thinking.

- **Language Arts-** The people who live in the village come from all over create a character that lives in the village and write about their story and why they came to the village.
- **Social Studies-** Who is the leader of our country? Connect the actions of our leader to the actions taken by Leader in the story. How are they similar? How do the two differ?
- **Science/Health-** Matty talks about cooking in the novel and how he has not yet learned to appreciate it. Create a menu of a meal that Matty would have had one day in the village. What type of animals would live in the Forest? Draw a picture of one of these animals and write what they eat, where they sleep, and how they act.

- **Art-** Create a map of all of the settings in the Messenger by Lois Lowry. Connect the areas the characters lived in and be sure to color and label your maps. Provide a key for your symbols on the map.
- **Careers-** Matty was waiting for his true name in the story. He was finally given the Healer. True names were based on the villagers jobs and daily routines what would your true name be in the village and what would your job be?
- **Language Arts/ Creative Drama-** Script Matty and Kira's journey through the forest. Pick a partner to help you reenact their journey through Forest. Make sure to include a script.

B. Creative Reading: Using the following list of creative products, students will complete a project reflecting their personal connection with the novel (students may determine their own creative product with the approval of the teacher):

1. Create a puppet play based on a favorite scene in the story
2. Create a poem based on the novel, a character, or favorite scene
3. Illustrate a favorite scene(s) from the story
4. Create a storyboard of the plot of the story
5. Write a screen play based on the story
6. Create a new ending for the story
7. Create a map of the location(s) of the story
8. Create a mural representative of the story and characters
9. Extend the story into a sequel
10. Rewrite a portion of the story from another character's perspective
11. Rewrite the story in another time or culture
12. Create an online product: infographic, video, character blog, etc.
13. Write a song that one or more of the characters might sing
14. Create an interpretative dance for the story
15. Student idea for a creative product related to the story: Create a flyer advertising the village Matty lives in so that wandering people who need help would know where to go.