ABOUT THE BOOK

Kira’s mother manages to save her handicapped daughter’s life, even though the society in which they live shuns and discards the weak. Now her mother is dead, and Kira’s future is uncertain. Vandara, an evil and bitter woman, wants Kira banished to the beasts and demands that the flawed girl be taken before the Council of Guardians. As Kira prepares to fight for her life, the Council reveals that they have plans for her. Born with a special talent for weaving, Kira is moved into the Council Edifice and given the important task of weaving the “singer’s robe,” a garment that tells the entire story of the village. Inside her new quarters, Kira meets Thomas, the carver, and Jo, the future singer. While life appears good for the three orphaned artists, there is a feeling of menace in the air, and it falls upon Matt, a poor boy from the Fen, to help Kira find the courage to seek the truth.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Tell students that Gathering Blue isn’t a sequel to the The Giver, but a second book in a quartet that deals with similar themes. Have students explain the difference between a companion novel and a sequel. Read aloud the first chapter of the novel. Then have students write a one-page paper that predicts how Gathering Blue connects to The Giver. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

CLASSE R ROOM DISCUSSION

• Fear plagues the people of Kira’s community. What do they fear the most? How do the Guardians exploit their fears?

• Why are the women fearful of Vandara? Debate whether Vandara is a bully. What in her past life turned her into a bitter woman? How is she the “ring leader” in turning the women against Kira? Vandara takes Kira before the Council of Guardians. At what point does Kira realize that she doesn’t need to fear Vandara?

• Jamison is appointed Kira’s defender. At what point does Kira realize that Jamison is also her enemy? How is he the epitome of “evil”?

• Discuss how Kira changes from a fearful young girl to a self-assured young woman. Who or what calms her fears?

• Katrina, Kira’s mother, demonstrates great courage when she stands up to the people of the community and demands that her handicapped daughter’s life be spared. How does Kira inherit her mother’s courage? When does she demonstrate the most courage?

• Explain what Katrina means when she tells Kira, “Take pride in your pain . . . You are stronger than those who have none.” (p. 23) How does Kira call upon these words throughout the novel? Which part of her journey takes the most strength?

• Describe the pain that Matt endures in the Fen. How does he attempt to hide his pain from Kira? Trace Matt’s courage throughout the novel. What is his most courageous act? What does he discover about his village while on his quest to gather blue?

• Katrina tells her daughter, “I could see the beginning of something remarkable in your eyes.” (p. 5) How does this foreshadow Kira’s talent, and her future role in the village?

• Kira experiences loneliness at different points in the novel. How does being an orphan contribute to her

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 6-8.2; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-8.1; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-8.4.
loneliness? Explain why her handicap causes her to be lonely. How does Kira sense loneliness in Jo? What do she and Thomas do to comfort the little girl? What other characters suffer from loneliness? How do they deal with it?

- Matt is a devoted friend to Kira though they live very different lives. Why does he befriend Kira? Kira admires Matt’s curiosity, and she thinks he is kindhearted. How is kindness an important element in friendship? Discuss Matt’s kindest gifts to Kira. How do these gifts change her life?

- Discuss the relationship that develops between Kira and Thomas. How is their friendship the key to their survival?

- How are the people of the village slaves to the Council of Guardians? At what point does Kira realize that she isn’t really free, even though she lives in an unlocked room? Why is Jo’s room locked?

- Discuss the symbolism of the master key that Thomas carves, the cloth talisman that belongs to Kira, and the blue threads that Christopher gives Kira.

- How does her father’s return cause Kira to realize the truth of her mother’s death? Explain how meeting him brings the tears that she was unable to shed at her mother’s death.

- What is the purpose of the Village of the Healing? Why does Christopher feel a sense of belonging there?

- Thomas tells Kira, “Wood speaks to me like cloth speaks to you.” (p. 105) How do wood and cloth warm and calm the two artists?

- How does “true art” require freedom of expression? Discuss how Kira, Thomas, and Jo lose the freedom to express themselves in their art form.

- Kira is faced with the decision to remain in her role as weaver of the “singer’s robe,” or to leave the village with Christopher. Discuss her decision. Her father says, “You will come when you can.” “Matt will go back and forth. He will be our tie. And one day he will bring you.” (p. 214) Why is her father so understanding of her decision? How will Kira know when it is time to leave? Debate whether Kira will eventually go to Christopher.

REACHING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Tone and mood in a work of literature are difficult concepts for young readers. Refer to the following website for ways to explain the difference between tone and mood: www.inetteacher.com/upload1/102670/docs/Tone-Mood%20Worksheet.pdf. Divide the class into groups and ask them to find a passage in the novel that reveals the tone and mood. Have them read aloud the passage and state what it reveals about Lowry’s attitude toward the subject (tone) and the feelings the reader gets (mood). How does Lowry reveal the value in art?

At the beginning of the novel, Kira is mourning the death of her mother. Explain the death ritual of Kira’s community. Research death rituals of the other on the following website: (www.pbs.org/wnet/onourownterms/articles/cultural.html). Write a paper that compares and contrasts the death rituals of Kira’s people to the cultures featured on the website. Encourage peer editing for clarity, grammar, and spelling.

Vandara takes Kira before the Council of Guardians to “pass judgment on a conflict.” Ask the class to dramatize the hearing. Hold an audition for the following roles: Kira, Vandara, the door guard, the chief guardian, members of the Council of Guardians, and Jamison. Include a narrator to introduce the scene. Additional roles may be added to include curious community members waiting outside to hear the verdict. Perform the dramatization for another class.
Legends belong to the genre of folklore, are handed down through time, and often continue to evolve over the ages. Have students use sites on the Internet or books in the library to identify and read well-known legends. Review what the legends have in common. Then divide the class into two groups and instruct them to write a “Movable Legend” about the beasts that the people of Kira’s village fear. One student should write the first paragraph and pass it to another student to embellish, etc. Allow time in class for the groups to share. How are the legends similar? How are they different?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 6-8.9; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-8.3; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 6-8.4.

Kira tells Jamison that she will need a place for a “color garden.” Use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research plants and the colors they create. The following website is helpful: www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/dyes.shtml. Include the blue that Matt brings her.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 6-8.8.

Discuss whether the novel is written in third-person omniscient or third-person limited point of view. Ask students to select a favorite scene and write it from Kira’s or Matt’s point of view. How does it change what the reader knows about the event?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Craft & Structure RL. 6-8.6.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 6-8.8.

Rules and customs of Kira’s village may be compared to those of Jonas’s community in The Giver. For example, how does the “field of leaving” in Gathering Blue compare to the “release” in The Giver? What about the way the communities name their citizens? Think about the way the people dress. How are Kira and Jonas given jobs of great importance? What about the decisions they must make in the end? Write a paper that draws on one of these comparisons. Use specific examples from the novels to illustrate points.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 6-8.1; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 6-8.1; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 6-8.4.

VOCABULARY

Students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them, taking clues from the context. Such words may include cott (p. 4), forage (p. 12), malevolence (p. 17), menaced (p. 20), unbidden (p. 33), contempt (p. 38), concede (p. 40), ravenous (p. 43), reiterated (p. 46), homely (p. 58), consigned (p. 69), agility (p. 94), brandished (p. 110), dubiously (p. 134), incessant (p. 177), entrepreneur (p. 182), palpable (p. 186), assuaged (p. 187), solemnity (p. 214), delirious (p. 226), filched (p. 241), and renegade (p. 241). Ask students to check a dictionary for the meaning of each word. How well did they do?

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Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 6-8.4.