Non-Fiction Reading Activity for The Giver:  Are Utopias Possible?

|  |
| --- |
| **Objective**: I can identify and understand main ideas in a text in order to draw new conclusions.  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| Student exceeds minimums of detail, analysis, or connections to show critical comprehension of text(s).  | Based on summary, comparison, and text-based conclusions, student comprehends nonfiction text(s). | Student does not fully or consistently answer questions in a way that demonstrates comprehension.  | Student work does not show evidence of text comprehension. |

Jonas’ community lives by strict sets of rules in an attempt to avoid pain and conflict. However, these limits come at a cost: knowledge, emotion, color, and love are abandoned.  As a result, Jonas begins to question his freedom and craves a different life for himself and his loved ones.

The Council of Elders is not the first body of leaders to attempt a utopia on earth. Groups have been seceding, immigrating, and separating from governments all over the world for many years. (Some would even argue that the United States and democracy in general are utopian experiments.) Today, we will read about these utopias to ask whether or not utopias are possible. Complete each step of this activity to develop a critical understanding of utopias!

Step 1: Read & Comprehend Your Article

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Article Title | Summary  of Ideas | Text-Specific Question |
| 1. [The Seeds of Their Own Destruction](http://www.forbes.com/2008/04/10/why-utopias-fail-oped-utopia08-cx_mh_0410hodak.html)
 |  | What does the article suggest about the relationship between rules and productivity? |
| 1. [The Amish Lifestyle](http://www.amishcountry.org/explore-the-area/area-history/the-amish-lifestyle/)
 |  | What is the relationship between their beliefs and their rules? |
| 1. [4 Utopian Communities that Didn’t Pan Out](http://mentalfloss.com/article/23297/4-utopian-communities-didnt-pan-out)
 |  | Why didn’t (most of) these communities work out? |
| 1. [Want to Escape the Modern World? 9 ‘Utopias’ That Really Exist](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/21/utopias_n_3768023.html)
 |  | Why do you think a majority of these communities are isolated? |
| 1. [Austin’s Utopian Homeless Village is Becoming a Reality](http://www.buzzfeed.com/summeranne/austins-utopian-homeless-village-is-becoming-a-reality)
 |  | What is the goal of the village? Will they succeed in achieving it? |

Step 2: Fill in the Blanks with Classmates! Get the answers to the other rows from your peers.

Step 3: Compare, Contrast, and Draw Conclusions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Answer | Source (Article #) |
| Why did most of these utopias start? |  |  |
| What lifestyle characteristics do most of them have in common? |  |  |
| What were the characteristics of the comparatively successful ones? |  |  |
| What were the characteristics of the unsuccessful ones? |   |  |
| What specific problems caused the unsuccessful ones to fail? |  |  |

Step 4: Synthesize Information and Form an Opinion

1. Do you believe that it is possible for a utopian society to successfully form and endure over time? Explain your answer fully, referencing at LEAST one article.

1. Some argue that because humans are imperfect, any attempt at perfection on earth will fail. State whether or not you agree with this statement, and why.

1. Clearly, we believe that the community in The Giver is a dystopia, due to the lack of knowledge and freedoms. However, by most standards, it is still functioning, the needs of people are being met, and it has lasted over time. Is Jonas’ community a successful utopia, or not?