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Messenger

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Lowry, Lois. *Messenger*. Houghton Mifflin, 2004. ISBN 0618404414. \$16.00. 169 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy Fiction; Adventure Stories;

Subject: Utopian Societies--Juvenile Fiction; Community life--Juvenile Fiction;

Matty lives with Seer in Village, a utopian society situated at the edge of Forest. Matty is anxious for his "true" name to be given him, for everyone in Village is given a "true name", a description of the job they perform, and a gift. He thinks his name will be Messenger because he already serves as Leader's messenger to the people who live in and beyond Village. He has only recently discovered his gift of healing. Village, however, is changing. The Trade Mart, which facilitates the trading of objects in a kind of swap-meet like manner, is changing, as well. Village people are trading inner moral values, such as kindness, for selfish objects and desires. When the majority of the Village people decide that they want to close the Village to all outsiders, Leader sends Matty through Forest to convince Kira, Seer's gifted daughter, to come before Village's borders close forever. In the dangerous journeys through Forest, Matty sacrifices his gift and is granted his "true name". Through Matty's sacrifice, Village and its people become once again a nurturing and caring society.

This fantasy novel is considered to be a companion title to *The Giver* (1993) and *Gathering Blue* (2000), as *Messenger* reintroduces such characters as Jonas, Matty, and Kira, however it can stand alone. Lowry's writing is masterful, making the characters real and understandable without laborious descriptive text or illustrations. Lowry skillfully weaves characterization and other descriptive information into the plot so the reader can easily visualize the characters, events, and setting. Like other Lowry novels, *Messenger* can serve as a starting-off point for current social issues such as immigration and materialism in a class discussion.