

The lottery essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



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Introduction

After being released in New Yorker, Sherley Jackson's short story " The Lottery" became the subject of criticism and controversy. In a sardonic yet hilarious tone, Jackson tries to portray human kind as weak and dark imposters.

The story is based on a small village, where people are closely bonded together through tradition. For example, one such tradition in which every member of the town takes part is known as " The lottery". The rules of this tradition are such that lottery takes place annually and a person is randomly selected to be vigorously stoned by friends and family.

The hypocrite nature of human kind is evident through the author's tone. By emphasizing on the amiable and light toned conversations amongst the villagers, the author depicts that the event of lottery is as much welcomed as is the event of square dance or Halloween. For instance, the author described the first few moments at the start of event day as candid in which the women greeted each other and exchanged gossip compelling the reader to anticipate price or gift distribution at the end. On the flip side of the coin,

the author manages to pull through this aura of suspicion until the end when the reader finally discovers the winner's true gift: death, by family and friends (Sparknotes).

Symbolism:

The Black Box

The black box is another demonstration of the strong association that the villagers bear to their tradition. Jackson explicitly illustrates the strong association by stating that no one in the village appreciated the dismay of the black box tradition because these villagers believed that the box originated from the legendary Black Box by gathering shards of previous boxes (Shmoop). This is analogous to the practice of accumulating Christian antiques like the dead saint's hairs and bones or pieces of cross. However, Jackson mends this Christian iconography a little by discerning that the villagers make use of these antiques to reach out to their implacable tradition.

In the "The Lottery" the black box has withstood time and despite its worn appearance has been relatively unchanged. The black box is representative of tradition. For the people of the community the lottery has always been held. The black box and the lottery are a tradition. No one really knows when it began or where it came from, but remains. Some of the younger people questioned discontinuing the lottery, but they were put down, so it continued to be held.

The black box is also a representation of death. The names go into the box and the one that is chosen is not the lucky winner but the one chosen to die. Tied into this symbol is the symbol of irony. The story initially makes the

black box and the lottery seem like something good. People rush to gather for the opportunity to draw their names from the box. However, in the end of the story, one realizes the irony of the situation.

The color of the box symbolizes evil and death. The evil has been representing the black color which has always been a universal symbol to represent darkness, agony, evil and torture.

Another symbolism to be seen in regard to the black box is the ignorance of the uncivilized times that continues in societies without any thought. For example in the past infant girl were buried alive. It was held a common ritual in the history. Similarly the ' old' black box also conveys the concepts of the society that they follow the rituals blindly and do not think sensibly of its outcomes. The attach themselves to that ritual just as the villagers had attached themselves to the old black box and they are not willing to replace it, as it is made up of the pieces of old black box just as they are not willing to abandon their sacred ritual of lottery, carried out for years by their ancestors.

Conclusion:

As mentioned earlier, the story aims to draw upon the darker side of human nature by illustrating traits like weakness, violence and hypocrisy. Weakness is evident from the fact that the main objective of everyone in the village is to sustain their traditions no matter how cruel they might be. " The lottery" depicts this weakness i. e. the town is performing such an act of cruelty without exhibiting any tremor or without raising their voices of objection to this practice (Johnson).

The forefront conclusion that can be derived from reading this story is that

the plot on which the story is based seems to have been taken from the recent times only because the situation highlighted in this story is quite pertinent to what we see today. It says that people are more interested in spreading nasty gossips rather than maintaining the privacy of the information and they are least concerned about how confidential the issue may be and are more concerned about making use of that information as a tool of our entertainment. This phenomenon is quite common in topics like a dispute between individuals, an accident or love relationships. People feel rather comfortable and enjoy commenting on the adultery committed by someone else. Furthermore, they become so indulged in the moments of revelry that we forget to understand the gravity of the situation unless it is us who become the subjects of such inane mockery. Again, they have no problem adhering stereotypes to individuals until it is us to whom those stereotypes get adhered to. People are also egoistical in the sense that they do not admit their mistakes or identify their characteristics which have the tendency to put them in an inferior position but they are strong enough to put other people at spotlight. It may seem ironic and hypocritical but now it has become so common that it is a part of most of the individuals.

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