

# The lottery

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



In the Short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, the author uses symbolism in many ways. Symbolism is used to personify a meaning that is different than its literal in this story. Jackson uses symbols to show us that the lottery and its true traditions are falling apart. The utter disrepair of the black box, and stool, and the changing of the ballots symbolize the breakdown of the original tradition of the lottery. First, the condition of the black box emulates how the lottery is slowly becoming outdated and falling apart. The town obviously doesn't care about the true tradition of the lottery seeing as how the original box that was used had been lost. The black box is described as becoming "shabbier each year", and that is was "not completely black but splintered badly along one side to show original wood color, and in some places faded...". This illustrates that the box was not properly stored or taken care of by the people in the town. Second, the stool, which is not safe or steady, and not reliable symbolizes how the lottery itself has become unsafe and the original beliefs and tradition behind it are no longer sturdy. Now when the lottery is done, the black box had to be grasped and held "steady on the stool" because the stool could no longer hold the box by itself. The stool was in the lottery even before the "oldest man in town, was born". Like him the stool was becoming "somewhat outdated". The stool not being able to carry the box alone anymore shows that the tradition of the lottery is no longer stable or sturdy. Last, the lottery ballots being changed from wood chips to paper illustrates how the town has even thrown away some of the lottery's original parts. This shows that the townspeople are only still holding the lottery because this is all they have known and not for its true tradition for what it is. They had taken "the chips

of wood that had been used for generations" and replaced them with " slips of paper". The townspeople even throw away the old pieces of paper instead of saving them as they did the original woodchips. This shows the ignorance towards the true traditions of the lottery. In conclusion, the townspeople are not holding the lottery because they truly believe in the concept, but rather because it is all they have ever known. People do not take change as easily as one could think. It has become tougher to explain the meaning of the lottery when all the original traditions have been allowed to become so rickety, outdated, and even thrown away. The utter disrepair of the black box, stool, and the changing of the ballots symbolize the breakdown of the original tradition of the lottery.