

"the lottery" literary analysis analytical essay

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



The short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson reveals the underlying many evils committed by mankind. It should be noted that, this story takes place in a remote village setting, where the people are dominated by traditional cultures and practices.

Basically, 'lottery' in this story is a yearly occasion in which an individual in the town is chosen at random to be stoned by hi/her allies and family members. Notably, the atmosphere created by Jackson in presentation of the sureness and the norm of the practice of lottery within the village is quite convincing that, this practice was readily welcomed.

The ultimate fate of all the practices presented in this short story is marked by 'death', perceived as redeemer for many evils people commit against each other. This paper presents the tools of characterization and the setting of the short story "The Lottery"

One of the most outstanding tools of characterization in this short-story is actions. Though this story is not dominated by many actions, characterization is well defined by the few actions the characters are involved.

For example, Mrs. Delacroix is brought out in the story as being highly determined and quick tempered lady. This is reflected by her action of selecting a large stone 'so large that she had to pick it with two hands in anger of' (Shirley 76).

More so, the unfolding of events in this short story seems as if Jackson is revealing the hypocrisy and evil-nature of human kind. As stated in the story,

" They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip...manhandling each other without a flinch of pity..." (Shirley 281). Though the reader of this short story expects the practice of lottery to be beneficial to the villagers in a way, nothing of worth is gained from such practice of lottery.

It should be noted keenly that, this short story portrays extreme evil committed in just ordinary manner, which implies an underlying evil of man. This is quite evident in the way such evils presented in this short story are happening in just a friendly atmosphere, reflecting the camouflaging nature of humans.

Despite the short story being not insidious until near its end, the author seems to be foreshadowing this notion of deadliness as brought out through Mr. Summers, who is in charge of lottery, and his colleague Mr. Graves. The picture brought out of Mr. Summers in this short story makes him seem a respected man as he coordinates various social activities.

This humble nature of Mr. Summers, yet a very dangerous one is reported by Shirley (282) that, " Mr. Summers was very good at all this with one hand resting carelessly on the black box, he seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins". Such activities may seem normal with regard to the village norms, but they reflect a high degree of human rights violation.

The main characters used in this short story depict the mood of the actual events in this short story. For instance, the name ' Summers' symbolizes the

fundamental theme of the story, and ultimate outcome of the entire events (Marshall 3).

Further, the name of Mr. Summer's colleague, Mr. Graves, who happens to be his assistant in activities of lottery, prefigures iniquity of ordinary people. Basically, imagery is clearly brought out in this short story by having the author give the names of the main characters portray the entire theme.

Together with hypocrisy, 'lottery' in this short story presents the weak nature of human nature. Considering that this act of lottery had been a routine in this village for many years, no one seems to question its negative impacts in the general human welfare.

As reflected in Shirley (282), "There's always been a lottery and no one has been nervous about it...everyone goes on with it..." reveals how hypocritical the people in the village were.

According to Hyman (35) no one had expressed fear of disgust of the act, despite it being depriving human nature of their human rights for survival. The kind of evil and malevolence presented in this short story goes beyond human violence since all is done calmly and in unity.

As Marshall (3) suggests, the use of protagonism in this short story is a real reflection of how people are deeply engraved in hypocrisy and wickedness. Ironically, Mrs. Hutchinson, who emerges to protest and rebel against lottery, emerges as the victim of the act of lottery the day she was going to protest against it.

This retracts all acts of rebellion against the act of lottery, and everything goes on as usual. Though before drawing from her fellow women to face her fate she seems happy, Mrs. Hutchison she is brought out to be happy to leave to see the way her fellow humans are mistreated (Hyman 46).

This reveals the way oppressive norms and cultures deem hopes of liberalization from such oppressive cultures. Particularly, the death of Mrs. Hutchison marks the continuity of evil nature of human kind eternally, despite their facial appearance seeming friendly.

Generally, the unfolding of the short story reflects the way humans mistreat each other, presumably in conformation to cultural beliefs and practices. Since the act of lottery as presented in this short story seems to undermine human nature, people seem to condone such evils with less regard on their negative impacts.

As the story ends, the 'light of hope' for liberalization, Mrs. Hutchison, dies which implies the unending nature of human wicked nature and evil.

Generally, the short story reflects the societal malpractices committed by mankind to each other, as though they are ordinary events.

Hyman, Stanley. *The Presentation of Evil in "The Lottery"*. New Jersey: Bantam Publishing Co., 2000.

Marshall, Garry. *Analysis of "The Lottery" a Short Story by Shirley Jackson*. New York: Lori Voth Publishers, 2003.

Shirley, Jackson. *The Lottery*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1948.

The most prominent characters of *The Lottery* are Tessie Hutchinson, Bill Hutchinson, Mr. Joe Summers, and Mr. Harry Graves. There are also Mrs. Delacroix, Mrs. Dunbar, Old Man Warner, and other secondary characters.

The main theme in *The Lottery* is the vulnerability of the individual. The importance of questioning tradition plays a crucial role in the story as we follow Tessie Hutchinson's journey.

In Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*, the two main symbols are the black box and the stones. The box indicates the connection to the origins of the lottery, though it's evidently fading. The stones as the execution tools refer to the Bible and show the crowd's cruelty.

The meaning behind the story is the danger of blindly following traditions. In *The Lottery*, the entire community gathers in the town square to take part in the annual lottery. No one questions it, no matter how violent and cruel it is.