

Literary analysis on "the lottery" by shirley jackson using foreshadowing essay

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



How much would you anticipate in a game of chance where logic and reason surrender for fate to reign? It is exactly your guess that Shirley Jackson portrays in her story, "The Lottery". The setting of the story is a small population in a very small town that portrays an enormous opportunity for growth and development.

The clear and sunny morning adorned with flowers blossoming profusely and richly green grass simply affirms splendor and hope for days to come. The turnout for the lottery symbolizes unity and cohesion among the villagers.

Entrusting Mr. Summers with the responsibility of conducting the whole affair demonstrates leadership that enjoys the peoples' faith and confidence.

Ironically, this supposed hope turns into disillusionment characterized with anger, mistrust and disunity and a prematurely ended day.

The title of the story creates a playground where optimism and pessimism are the major players. This kind of technique manipulates the reader's mind leaving them guessing the outcome without necessarily being biased.

The title of the book "The Lottery" alone is a great example of how Shirley Jackson topples reader expectations (Smith, 2011). The extremes of the consequences of lottery normally create anxiety and dissatisfaction amongst the participants.

Little wonder then that the villagers descend on Tessie after she emerges the winner, "...and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her ...a stone hit her on the side of the head". The title

therefore sets the pace of the story, and interestingly keeps the story alive throughout.

Jackson further perfects this captivating tact by creating suspense at least in every paragraph. In fact, the title in itself is suspense. This urge to want to read more and more opens up the reader's mind and exposes them to the reality of life. Consequently, the title is a justification of the unfolding events - after all it is a lose-or-win situation, in which the winner takes it all.

The choice of characters for plot development is superb, although there may be need to introduce more characters to sustain the story thereafter. This is because more themes are generated as time goes by. For instance, themes such as arbitration, justice, change, among others would require new characters to develop.

Tessie faces 'mob justice' no sooner has Mr. Summer declares her the winner. There are also possibilities of Mr. Summer himself facing the wrath of the villagers.

If that would be the case then his family and close allies such as Mr. Grave would not fight in his support. This would exacerbate the situation thereby causing many more casualties, hence, the need for dialogue and arbitration.

The writer tactfully creates conflict of interests among the villagers. First is the difference in ideology between Mr. Adams and Old Man Warner. The former is trying to sell an idea to the old man who strongly and heartily holds

onto traditions. His sentimental attachment to the old-style norms prompt him to even call people names, " Pack of crazy fools".

On the other hand, Tessie questions the credibility of the lottery process, which in essence is directed to Mr. Summer. She describes it as ' unfair' and succeeds to convince Mr. Summer to employ a ' fair' method.

Unfortunately, the supposed fair method finally plays against her by making the crowd turn against her. There is likelihood that more conflicts of interest would still arise in future.

This can be attributed to the individualism factor that lottery implants and nurtures in the villagers. In fact the way they join forces to stone Tessie, a lady, without consideration of the consequences paints a picture of a rooted norm. This is a good test for their unity, and for sure it fails to stand the test.

Jackson intellectually provokes the reader to ask a number of questions: Is it a coincidence to have the stones available in the lottery square? Do all the villagers approve the lottery as a sign of bountiful harvest? Is there need to embrace new ways of life? Does everyone understand the rules of the lottery?

The answers to these and many more questions would arrest the confusion and disillusionment that arise from this communal rite. Such questions may be championed by characters such as Mr. Adams who has realized that their neighbors are considering abandoning such practices, "...that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery."

The space of the woman in the society is also portrayed in the story as a compromised one. They are the last to arrive at the lottery square. Tessie Hutchinson arrives even later because she was still performing some domestic chores. Tessie, a woman, is also the same one at the receiving end of the villagers' wrath.

The picking would rather be done by their older sons instead of them, " Don't you have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey?" Mr. Summer asked Mrs. Dunbar. This shows that women play a second fiddle to men.

Such a society is likely to suffer from inequality and inequity, hence an upsurge of hatred and contempt. Again this portends more fights as the women would at some point need more space, which men may not be willing to relinquish.

The perpetual reluctance to replace the black woodenbox with a better one, and the usage of the pieces of the box that had preceded the black one, all point at one thing: resistance to change by the villagers.

The hypocrisy that mars the lottery event seem to be deep rooted; the Old Man Warner ascertains that he has witnessed the ceremony seventy seven times, " Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery," " Seventy-seventh time." Along with hypocrisy, " the Lottery" presents a weakness in human individuals.

" Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for them. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work

anymore, live that way for a while. Used to be a saying about ' Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon.'

First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always been a lottery," he added petulantly. " Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody...

In summary, it can be deduced that a game of chance such as lottery creates uncertainty and anxiety to the participants. This leads to fear, and with fear there comes underutilization of resources, hence slow rate of development.

Choices made are determined by one's level of optimism and pessimism, and in either, one has to remain very courageous. Jackson has succeeded in conveying one message: human hypocrisy knows no gender, no age and no time. Given that we are not told whether such a death has occurred in the previous years, we may insinuate that it would be a turning point for the villagers.

Kosenko, Peter. A Reading of Shirley Jackson's " The Lottery". Spring, 1984.

Lori, Voth. Analysis of " The Lottery", a Short Story by Shirley Jackson. NY: Contributor Network, 2005.

Smith, Newman. Analysis of " The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson. Quirk Books, 2011.