

# The purpose of shirley jackson's 'the lottery'

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Written by Shirley Jackson, *The Lottery* focuses on the cruelty of man in its most raw state- the sacrifice of an innocent human being at the hands of the people with whom that person lives with. Written in 1948, this short story was published by Jackson in New York, where the audience of this story reviewed it ferociously, claiming that it was the most absurd story they have read. No one understood the message Jackson wished to convey across to the reader. However, looking deep, we find that there are several messages she wanted us to get. First and foremost is the fact that a group of people will go with what society lays before them, often without questioning it. Why was the lottery performed year after year? Even in the text, the people had long forgotten why and stopped doing the lottery the way it had been performed years ago. Yet, the lottery tradition continued. It makes you wonder why no one ever stopped to ask, " Hey, why are we doing this again? " By showing that no one had ever actually made a big deal out of it, Jackson shows the way people will not going against the norm of their society, even if they feel it is wrong. The mood of this story shifts in this story. This shift causes the story to have three phases: the beginning which gives off a sense of calm and curiosity as to why they are all gathered up and such' then as it goes towards the middle, we get a sense of something being out of place. And lastly, towards the end, we come to the awful realization of what is going on. These shifts in mood are mostly conveyed through certain phrases in the story. In the beginning, " The morning of June 27th was clean and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; " gives us that nice feeling of a happy story. Curiosity sparks when we read a little more and see, "... their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. " With a

name like 'The Lottery', one would expect happiness all around and a good time. But this fact of how people are acting invokes curiosity within. Why aren't they all giddy? What's happened? Etc. etc. The next shift occurs when they start talking about how the lottery had been done many years ago. " ; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; " A chant at a lottery is not something that usually occurs, and it's at this point that we come to realize that something is just weird about this lottery. To strengthen this idea, " that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery. " was said by a certain Mr. Adams at the lottery. If it's a lottery, why would they give it up? It just wouldn't make sense. The last shift occurs when Bill Hutchinson wins the first stage of the lottery. The second he wins, his wife goes into a rant saying how unfair it is and such. At this point, we know something is wrong because of the fact that the lottery winner does not want the prize. That's what a lottery is all about right? Winning the prize and going on your merry way. But when she speaks out against this saying that he didn't have a fair pick, something within us clicks and we come to find that the lottery is not at all a good thing but something people dread. By the end of the story, we come to realize that the 'winner' of the lottery gets killed, which, in retrospect, is just strange. This story comes out of nowhere, with a plot that makes no sense to most people. However, the more we dissect it, the more we come to realize that society can sometimes do this sort of murder in a more metaphorical way. Sometimes we feel that society is so overwhelming and that we must mold ourselves to fit in. However, while fitting in may feel good, it can also

break you. We are not society. We, as individuals, are unique. Molding to society takes away our identity, and therefore we must play it smart and stand up for what we believe it.