

"the lottery" by shirley jackson and "the shawl" by cynthia ozick

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



The Lottery by Shirley Jackson and The Shawl by Cynthia Ozick are two short stories that when read in comparison can be seen as lacking similarity. It is often the case that when literature is read in contrast to another work there are a vast number of obvious differences between them. Aside from the two stories having apparent diversity in authors and characters it can be found that various other elements are exceptionally varied from one another. However, in many cases if a closer look is taken in the examination and comparison of two stories, similarities can be found.

Perhaps both stories use symbolism in a similar manner by presenting the reader with a powerful message or maybe the two have a similar plot.

Perhaps the similarity lies in something as simple as the theme the story portrays. By taking a closer look as to what The Lottery and The Shawl have in common, it can be seen that despite their differences they both have similar image presenting symbolism, a theme of survival, as well as a grim plot filled with tension.

It should come as no surprise that both of these shorts stories utilize the literary element of symbolism. Symbolism is used in a story to offer either strong or subtle images of a message that the author is trying to convey to the reader without saying it outright. In Jackson's The Lottery, the small village can be seen as a symbol primarily aimed at illustrating the dangers of the ignorant pursuit of tradition. Just because things have always been done a certain way in this village, does not mean that such practiced traditions are valuable for the people and community. It is possible that this symbol can convey and stress the importance of knowledge as opposed to the blind

adherence to rules and in this case traditions set forth by the village. In Ozick's *The Shawl*, we find the majority of symbolism is possessed in the shawl itself.

Within the story, the shawl in a sense could represent obedience because it provides the ability to hide and remain hidden from sight. Concealed by the shawl, Magda creates no opposition and is not noticed by officers who would kill her. In this, a subtle similarity can be found with the symbolism in *The Lottery*, because the people of the village blindly follow with no opposition just like Magda. The people of the village are just like Magda in the sense that they do not create opposition and try to remain unnoticed in order to not become a target for the sake of survival. The village and the shawl are both symbolic of the same idea, which is that while the town shields the people from opposing the lottery; the shawl shields Magda from the guards. Both stories use symbolism to express a concealed yet imperative idea in the story.

Aside from symbolism, both short stories obtain a theme of survival. In *The Lottery*, the story begins by presenting the reader with a setting of a pleasant simple town where everything seems ordinary, but as the tension builds it is understood as to what exactly is going on. Unlike the people of the town who are following rules and traditions, the people in *The Shawl* are being led to concentration camps. Both groups of people are faced with imminent death and are doing what they are told in hopes of not killed. In this sense, the theme of both stories are one in the same because both

groups are only trying to be inconspicuous and survive the day by doing as they are told so that they can be allowed the right to live.

Of course both short stories are diverse in relationship to who dies, why it is that they die, and the possibility of multiple deaths. However, it is the case in both stories that there is a powerful uncertainty about who will die which causes the plot to thicken with tension. As for the characters in the story, this causes all of them to exist in a state of constant stress and fear, which in return causes the reader as to what will happen. Despite the fact that The Lottery takes place in what seems to be a simple town and The Shawl in a concentration camp, the tension is similar in both because the characters in each do not know their fate or what gruesome events will take place.

In retrospect, it can be seen that although Jackson and Ozick did not intend for there to be similarity in their short stories; it exists. Despite the fact that their differences greatly outweigh the resemblance if a close look is taken into the elements that makes the stories what they are it can be seen that two stories which appear to be completely dissimilar can really be viewed as one in the same. Although there are many ways in which the elements in the two stories can be interpreted in comparing The Lottery and The Shawl it can not be overlooked that there is parallelism of the two short stories symbolism, plot, and theme.

Outlinel. Introa. Central Idea: Despite differences between the The Lottery and The Shawl, similarities of symbolism, theme, and plot can be found.

b. Thesis Statement: By taking a closer look as to what The Lottery and The Shawl have in common, it can be seen that despite their differences they

both have similar image presenting symbolism, a theme of survival, as well as a grim plot filled with tension.

II. Bodya. The symbolism in both stories is similar because both the village and the shawl shield from opposing forces.

b. Characters in both stories support a theme of survival as they strive to live another day.

c. The plot in both stories is filled with tension, which takes the reader on a rollercoaster of uncertainty.

III. Conclusiona. Topic Sentence: In retrospect, it can be seen that although Jackson and Ozick did not intend for there to be similarity in their short stories; it exists.

Works Cited

Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery." Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs. 3rd ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006. 208-14
Ozick, Cynthia. "The Shawl." Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs. 3rd ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006. 242-45