

# Compare and Contrast: the lottery and the rocking horse winner

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



There are many elements of literary devices, imagery, style, and tone that contribute to the creation of the overall spirit of works in literature. They shape the reader's perception of the plot, the main characters, and the overall message of the literary piece. These elements are often used in their direct meaning, thus enforcing a direct effect on the reader; however, there also are cases when they are used controversially, making the impression from the read piece stronger and even more emphatic. This paper's main goal is to compare and contrast "The Lottery" and "The Rocking Horse Winner" and examines themes, characters, settings, and literary devices of the two stories.

The tone of the work is significant in its terms as well because it creates the fleur of seriousness, light-mindedness, sadness or cheerfulness, introducing the reader to the world of the literary work, and even making him or her the participant of events. Symbols are the fruitful addition to the literary stylistic devices, since they add the third dimension of the plot and message, showing what cannot be expressed by words, and making the work lively.

All these issues have found their direct and at times, sophisticated realization in the works of Shirley Jackson and D. H. Lawrence. These two works are remarkable from the perspective of investigating the impact of tone, style, and symbol in a literary work. Thus, for example, the topic of the question of tone becomes extremely topical in Jackson's work "The Lottery" that in itself represents a contradiction, controversy, and conflict.

The opening lines of the short story presuppose some cheerful scenario, some picturesque place, and a holiday-suggesting lexicon: "The morning of

June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green" (Jackson, 1949, p. 5). The beginning clearly suggests a lovely landscape, a beautiful day, and a similarly pleasant continuation of the plot.

Nonetheless, the short story's essence, plot, and message are quite different from the beginning, setting people in a positive tone and perceiving the lottery as something rewarding and exciting for the villagers. The only fact that the ritual is of vital importance does not cause any doubts since there is much attention to every detail, to every participant of the events, to the black box, and the responsibilities of the lottery's chairman as well.

The meaning of being the chosen, picking the black spot from the box, is not evident until the end of the work, though the tone comes to its correct form by the end of the short story. It changes rapidly after the choice falls on Mr. Hutchinson, and the fierce protection he gets from his wife, Tessie, the ultimate victim of the medieval, bloody tradition.

In Lawrence's story, "The Rocking Horse Winner," the tone is plain and unhappy. Moreover, the story is much more consistent in terms of plot, and style. However, though the mood of the story is quite pessimistic, gloomy, depressing, with short sentences and broken phrases, there is much irony at the beginning of the work. The irony shows that the author himself does not consider the hardships faced by the family so hard and awful as they are depicted. From his point of view, the problems are over-exaggerated. This irony may be quite well felt in the phrases such as:

“...there must be more money. The father, who was always very handsome and expensive in his tastes, seemed as if he never would be able to do anything worth doing. And the mother, who has a great belief in herself, did not succeed any better, and her tastes were just as expensive” (Lawrence, 1926, p. 552).

The irony is striking – people who cannot find any money to let their children study well can afford expensive tastes, and at the same time, they call themselves “ the poor members of the family” (Lawrence, 1926, p. 553). They buy expensive toys for their children, use the services of a taxi, but they remain poor because they do not live up to their wishes and ambitions.

The talk of the mother with her son Paul is also quite ironic, though it also contains some symbolism of the concept of luck. Their family traditionally ties luck with money, but Paul dies a young and rich person, which cannot be considered luck at all. Hence, the crisis of belief, understanding, and morale in the family is shown through an ironic representation of their so-called ‘ poverty’ and the dramatic effect of that perception imposed on Paul at an early age.

The irony is also present in “ The Lottery,” though it is quite far from being ironic in its complete sense. The talk between Old Man Warner and Mr. Adams is very ironic – Old Man Warner compares the refusal from the lottery in other towns to degradation – “ they’ll be wanting to back to living in caves, nobody work anymore” (Jackson, 1949, p. 14).

However, it is clear that the ritual is a remnant of the dark, medieval, illiterate, cruel, nearly pagan times when people believed that killing one chosen person was useful for their harvest - " Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon" (Jackson, 1949, p. 14). There are multiple examples of imagery in " The Lottery," meanwhile " The Rocking Horse Winner" abounds with metaphors.

Contrasting the works according to their style and tone, one should surely note that they can also be compared concerning the symbolism in works; besides the proverb about the good harvest, the symbol of the black box is powerful in Jackson's story, and the symbol of the rocking horse also occupies the central place in the work " The Rocking Horse Winner".

It is evident that the mistaken perception of luck compared directly with money leads to further misconceptions, and the boy draws a parallel between his luck and the rocking horse. Hence, these symbols distinguish both works and allow a reliable comparison between them. From this comparison essay, symbolism in " The Rocking Horse Winner" and " The Lottery" is evident.

As it comes from the present comparison and contrast, the stylistic devices such as tone and style are vastly used by writers to enhance the impact on the reader, to create the spirit of the unexpected, to surprise him or her, and to make the work highly emphatic.

Symbols are also widely used equally to the characters of the stories, as they produce the impact on the characters only by their presence, by the

profound meaning they have. If to compare and contrast “ The Lottery” and “ The Rocking Horse Winner,” it is possible to say that both authors have skillfully used the discussed techniques, though each of them in their own way.

Jackson, S. (1949). *The Lottery*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus.

Lawrence, D. H. (1926). *The Rocking Horse Winner*. In D. H. Lawrence. *Full Score: Twenty Tales by D. H. Lawrence* (2008). Rockville, MD: Wildside Press LLC.