

# Foreshadows and suspense the lottery

Life



Many of the seemingly innocuous details throughout “The Lottery” foreshadow the violent conclusion. In the second paragraph, children put stones in their pockets and make piles of stones in the town square, which seems like innocent play until the stones’ true purpose becomes clear at the end of the story. Tessie’s late arrival at the lottery instantly sets her apart from the crowd, and the observation Mr. Summers makes—“Thought we were going to have to get on without you”—is eerily prescient about Tessie’s fate. When Mr. Summers asks whether the Watson boy will draw for him and his mother, no reason is given for why Mr.

Watson wouldn’t draw as all the other husbands and fathers do, which suggests that Mr. Watson may have been last year’s victim. Jackson builds suspense in “The Lottery” by relentlessly withholding explanation and does not reveal the true nature of the lottery until the first stone hits Tessie’s head. We learn a lot about the lottery, including the elements of the tradition that have survived or been lost. We learn how important the lottery is to the villagers, particularly Old Man Warner. We go through the entire ritual, hearing names and watching the men approach the box to select their papers.

But Jackson never tells us what the lottery is about, or mentions any kind of prize or purpose. She begins to reveal that something is awry when the lottery begins and the crowd grows nervous, and she intensifies the feeling when Tessie hysterically protests Bill’s “winning” selection. And she gives a slight clue when she says that the villagers “still remembered to use stones.” But not until the moment when a rock actually hits Tessie does Jackson show her hand completely. By withholding information until the last possible

second, she builds the story's suspense and creates a shocking, powerful conclusion.