

Compare and contrast the rocking horse winner and the lottery

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



THESIS: The two short stories, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson and "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence both use symbols to help the reader understand the theme of the story; however the themes of both stories were completely different, one about love the other the lack of love.

In "The Lottery" and "The Rocking Horse Winner" both authors use symbols to help convey the central message of the story to their readers.

In "The Lottery", Jackson uses the black box to symbolize the villagers' connection to the tradition of the lottery.

"The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago" The villagers were willing to let some parts of the lottery change but never question why or even think about changing the lottery itself

"The black box grew shabbier each year". Falling apart but villagers show no interest in replacing it

The Black box had no significance the rest of the year and could be found in several different locations throughout the town

In "The Rocking Horse Winner", Lawrence uses the whispering house and the rocking horse to show how greed gets you nowhere.

"There must be more money" The house spoke of it often, usually when the children received things that they knew that the family could not afford. They had servants but no car of their own, because they were poor.

Paul thought he could stop the house from whispering if he could win enough money. After giving his mom all of his earnings the house simply got louder.

"The voices in the house went mad"

This scared Paul and made him want to get more money. He could no longer hear from the rocking horse. This made him ride it faster and longer. In the end Paul died trying to quiet the whispers in the house.

While both authors used symbolism to convey the message of their stories the themes of the stories could not have been more different.

In "The Lottery" the theme of the story is the lack of love shown by the villagers

The villagers follow custom with no questions asked

The villagers are not willing to give up the customs

They are teaching lack of compassion to the next generation

The theme in "The Rocking Horse Winner" is love.

Paul loves his mom so much he is desperate to prove himself lucky and perhaps this would make her love him. Paul was angered by his mother not believing that he was lucky and set out to prove her wrong.

Paul risks himself to give her what she needed, money. He sacrificed his own life for his mother. Paul gave his mother all of his earnings because he thought he could always get more. He then stopped having all the answers and lost money. He rode his horse nonstop until his ultimate death.

When people hear the word "lottery", their minds usually turn to positive things and most likely the chance of winning something such as money. The title "Rocking Horse Winner" would make readers think that this story would be about a child winning a rocking horse. From the simple titles alone, most

readers would think that these stories would have a positive outcome. They both draw you completely in and turn out to have a much different ending than you would imagine. The two short stories, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson and "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence both use symbols to help the reader understand the theme of the story; however, the themes of both stories were completely different, one about love and the other about the lack of love.

In "The Lottery" and "The Rocking Horse Winner," both authors use symbols to help convey the central message of the story to their readers. In "The Lottery," Jackson uses the black box to symbolize the villagers' connection to the tradition of the lottery. The black box was not the original box that was used for the lottery and was old and worn down. "The box grew shabbier each year" (par. 5) but the villagers showed no interest in replacing or fixing it. Many of the old traditions of the lottery had been abandoned, but for whatever reason the lottery was still held each summer without questions from the villagers. Even though "the original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago" (par. 5) and many of the customs had been abandoned or changed to suit the needs of the growing town, the villagers were unwilling to change or even question giving up the lottery itself. The black box had no significance the rest of the year in the town.

It could be found in several different locations throughout the town. In "The Rocking Horse Winner," Lawrence uses the whispering house and the rocking horse to show how greed gets you nowhere. When the children in the story

received gifts that their family could not afford, the house would whisper “there must be more money” (par. 5). The family seemed to outsiders to be well off because of the house they lived in and that they had servants, but they had no car. Paul thought that he could stop the voices in the house if he could just make enough money gambling. After he gave his mom all of his winnings, the voices in the house only got louder and “the voices in the house suddenly went mad” (par. 176). This scared Paul and only made him want to get more money, but he suddenly could not hear the winner from riding his rocking horse. Paul began to ride his horse longer and faster than ever before. In the end Paul, dies trying to quiet the whispers in the house.

While both authors used symbolism to convey the message of their stories, the themes of the stories could not have been more different. In “The Lottery,” the theme of the story is the lack of love shown by the villagers. The villagers were all willing to follow the customs of the lottery without asking any questions. Even when Mrs. Hutchinson was chosen as the person to be stoned, she never once asked why or tried to get out of it; her only defense was “it wasn’t fair” (para. 50). The village people were willing to give up most of the original traditions of the lottery but not the lottery itself. Several of the other towns had already stopped doing the lottery, but in this town the peoples’ only defense was “there’s always been a lottery” (para. 31). The villagers were teaching lack of love and compassion to the next generation.

Even Mrs. Hutchinson’s own son was given rocks and took part willingly in stoning his own mother to death. The theme in “The Rocking Horse Winner”

is love. Paul loves his mom so much he is desperate to prove himself lucky and perhaps this would make her love him. Paul is angry when his mother does not believe that he is lucky and sets out to prove her wrong. He risks himself to give her what she needed, money. He sacrificed his own life for his mother. Paul gave his mother all of his earnings because he thought he could always get more. He then stopped having all the answers and lost money. He rode his horse nonstop until his ultimate death.

In “ The Lottery” and “ The Rocking Horse Winner,” both stories use different symbols to help the reader to understand them, even though the themes of both stories are completely different. One story tells about the lack of love and compassions shown by villagers to each other, and the other tells about the love a boy has for his mother. Lawrence and Jackson were both able to use symbolism to effectively add depth and richness to their stories.

References

Lawrence, D. H. (2013). “ The Rocking Horse Winner”. In Kennedy, X. J., & Gioia, D. (Eds.), *Literature: an introduction to fiction, poetry, drama, and writing* (pp. 234-245). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.

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