

Tranditions#2

Linguistics, English



On Traditions Merriam-Webster defines tradition as an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior as a religious practice or a social custom (Merriam-webster. com). In every culture, there are traditions that have been passed on from generation to generation which are celebrated annually. For instance, Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ every Christmas season; Muslims observe the pilgrimage to Mecca as the most important aspect in their religion while Buddhists practice meditation. However, not all traditions are good or constructive. There is a danger side of tradition which does not build people but rather make them miserable. For example, fraternity practices hazing which can lead to death; polygamy causes division and rivalry among wives and half-siblings and political power caused wars throughout the history of civilization. This paper entails two literary works namely, “ Mending Walls,” by Robert Frost and “ The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson. The two works suggest that tradition should not simply be practiced and passed to the next generation. Rather, traditions should be well scrutinized whether they are helpful and relevant to the present and the culture.

In “ Mending Walls,” the notion that “ good fences make good neighbors,” as indicated by Frost (222), is the belief that makes the characters build the walls every spring. The practice seems to be harmless but instead, has a purpose as the neighbor implies. However, the fence seems irrelevant to the characters time and place because there is nothing to be walled in or walled out. The narrator hates building the wall but his neighbor insists that “ good fences make good neighbors” (Frost, 222) so they both have to build the wall. However, the narrator cannot make any sense of building the wall every

year because they do not have any cows to keep away from each other's yard. Obviously, the neighbors are not farmers who would have needed to build fences in order to keep their animals from messing with their neighbor's yard. Therefore, unlike the neighbor, the narrator questions the tradition that has been passed on to them. If they continue with their practice, they might pass the insensible tradition to their children without them questioning it. Thus, in exasperation, the narrator can only pose a challenge to question the importance of what has been established as a tradition. In essence, it appears that the tradition is important in creating good neighbors. This tradition strengthens the people staying in it.

Shirley Jackson, on the other hand, shows how people tightly cling to tradition even though it is obviously destructive. The brutality of the tradition in "The Lottery" is perhaps intended to emphasize that traditions should not only be questioned but should be changed as well, especially when they are not helpful at all. Even modern cultures embrace old-fashioned traditions that are destructive but simply because of tradition, modern people insist on living in barbaric periods. Metaphorically, there are many harmful traditions like the lottery that individuals practice nowadays and it is the fear of the author that this may continue through many generations more. Therefore, she uses such a brutal presentation to compel readers to change or even discontinue harmful traditions. The tradition presented in this case is an example of the traditions that deserve to fade as time goes by. In fact, the lottery, played by town folks, has resulted to the death of one of their people. Nevertheless, people in the tradition have high expectations (Shirley, 31).

Since traditions have been practiced by our forbears, they oftentimes are practiced without question. Sometimes, we even argue that the generations before us survived the troubles in this world because of their traditions. However, people should open their minds and consider well if their practices are really beneficial or not. Indeed, there are good traditions which we must keep but there are also some which need to be changed to make them better. There are also traditions that obviously need to be abandoned altogether. As a civilized society which has seen the good and bad effects of tradition, this generation should know better and pursue a world with thinking, vigilant individuals.

Work Cited

Frost, Robert. Mending Walls. 222-223. Print.

Jackson, Shirley. The Lottery. 1238-1242. Print. n. a. Tradition. Merriam-Webster. 2014. Web. July 10, 2014. .