

# Margaret urquhart

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Margaret Urquhart Professor Daniels ENC1102 15 March 2013 An Outrageous Tale Standing in line for hours, impatiently waiting for the front doors of our favorite stores to open, to be nearly trampled upon for discounted items, is a tradition we, as Americans, like to call Black Friday. Black Friday is the day following Thanksgiving Day in the United States, often regarded as the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. To get people in the spirit, most major retailers open before the sun comes up and offers promotional sales to kick off the holiday shopping season. Americans consider "getting in the spirit," by waking at the crack of dawn to pry items out of other people's hands while at the same time getting pushed and shoved by crazy amounts of people on the same hunt. We call a tradition; a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance that has origin from the past. Black Friday is the one tradition that I thought was the worst until reading "The Lottery," by Shirley Jackson. Jackson uses irony to suggest an underlying evil, hypocrisy, and weakness of human kind. Jackson shows many important lessons about human nature in this short story including barbaric traditions in a supposedly civilized village, the community's hypocrisy, and how violence and cruelty take place. "The Lottery" tells the story of an annual tradition in a small village, where the people are close and tradition is paramount. The Lottery is a yearly event in which one person in the town is randomly chosen, by a drawing, to be violently stoned by friends and family. The villagers don't really know much about the lottery's origin but try to preserve the tradition nevertheless; they believed that someone had to be sacrificed to insure a good crop. "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon," said Old Man Warner. The villagers allow an

outdated tradition to run their lives and control whether they live or die. The black box symbolizes death; the name of the "winner" to be stoned is drawn from the box at every lottery, it represents tradition in the fact that it is old and worn. It has been in existence seemingly forever and though there is talk of replacing it, the reader can infer that there will be no such change. The villagers are aware that the sacrifice is inhumane but none want to stand and voice their opinion because they are afraid of how it may affect their lives. "The lottery" has been practiced in this town for such a long time that it makes tradition so powerful, it's like a force of nature, and the people of the village can't imagine rebelling against it. The black box represents tradition in aspects to it being old; the characters mention that they did not want to get rid of the old box because it was made of splinters of the original box. The town is so focused on how things were and how things have always been that they cannot see any new or improved ways of living. Nevertheless, the lottery continues simply because there has always been a lottery. In "The Lottery," the idea of hypocrisy is seen throughout the story. This theme is evident by the tradition of the lottery itself as well as the characters' actions. The theme of hypocrisy is often attached to the idea of religion. Mr. Adams questions the traditions of the lottery and Mr. Summers says, "There's always been a lottery," and that it would be "nothing but trouble." With these statements I feel that this tradition has been around for such a long time that if they were to get rid of it, in return it would turn the town upside down and the villagers wouldn't know how to react to not having it. They keep the tradition alive yet they create nothing but trouble in determining who dies. The character Mrs. Hutchinson's best friend, Mrs.

Delacroix, is one of the first to casually discuss the lottery and in contrast she is the first to pick up a rock to stone her so called friend. Jackson's use of such a tradition and these everyday characters demonstrates how hypocritical we are in society and is cautioning readers to questions those ideas set in stone. Shirley Jackson shows us that violence is a part of human nature, and that it can be disguised in many ways. The setting of the story is seemingly civilized and peaceful, while the stoning is a cruel and brutal act. This shows us that horrifying acts of violence can take place anywhere at any time, by ordinary citizens. Violence and cruelty are a major theme because we do not live in a " perfect" world where nothing bad ever goes wrong; there is violence and cruelty all around us. We see human cruelty in its worst form because there is no excuse for it. Jackson's example illustrates how mankind can become a victim to its own mindless traditions. For example, one child in the story was depicted this way: " Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example. "(Jackson 194) This quote shows how people are mindless followers just because everyone else is doing it. This strange tale is twisted in ways that show us so much about human nature and the way we are in society. The themes that are unraveled throughout the story are shocking, teaching us about human nature on a different level. People live by the term, " If everyone else is doing it, then I should too. " This shows how even though the tradition has been going on for so long, no one actually knows when it originated; they only continue it because it's the tradition of the town. The violence and cruelty that comes into play is brutal in the sense that Mrs. Hutchinson's friends were the first to stone her and not have any

problem with it, which shows the hypocrisy of human beings. The people of the town disguise the evil tradition of the lottery by following orders without asking any questions. Getting pushed and shoved in line for long hours for an item is a tradition that we should not have in America anymore, but still do because everyone does it. In the same sense, dying is drastically worse than getting pushed and shoved; they can't stop the tradition of "The Lottery" because it's what everyone in town does.