

The lottery by shirley jackson

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



'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson is a short story that uses plot, characterisation and suspense to develop several themes. In doing so Jackson deepens our understanding of people and the nature of society. The story begins in a growing village which holds an annual lottery, but instead of being rewarded the person who receives the marked paper gets stoned to death. This itself demonstrates one of the main themes of man's inhumanity to man. Jackson also shows this by telling the reader that it is a small community that murders one of its own members which shows the shocking and cruel nature achieved by humans.

We can see this by looking at the start of the story when a group of boys play at the lake: "Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example" This shows inhumanity in an unclear way because the reader doesn't know why they are doing collecting stones but soon realise at the end that it was so they could throw them at the person who was about to get stoned. Another aspect which shows that the civilisation is inhumane is that the village barely conceal the savagery of killing a member of its own community.

Jackson shows this by telling us that the killings are done by 'decent' people who are show themselves to be kind generous people, but a family realises that it is no their family they proceed with an unsympathetic disinterest for the family that does receive the marked paper. Also, the village does not attempt to hide their actions from other villages, which tells us that they think that their actions are the right actions to take. This story also makes the reader question: "Is life expandable? It may make us think of this

because good innocent people still suffer, and that it was all down to chance that decides what happens to whom. Characterisation adds something to our understanding of nature and society because the author does not focus on one character alone or tell anything about them; instead Jackson focuses on a group of people united by a common objective, which is to avoid receiving the marked paper which will conclude in the person being stoned to death.

When looking at the characterisation of the characters, it is important to know that Jackson does not give any detail about any of the characters. We can see this when Tessie Hutchison first arrives at the lottery ceremony: “ Mrs Hutchison came hurriedly along the path to the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place. ” This proves that Jackson doesn't go into any detail when it comes to the characters, because when we first see Mrs Hutchison, it tells us that she has a jumper over her shoulders, yet does not tell us what she looks like or what else she is wearing.

This does not happen to just one character but all characters throughout the story. Although all the characters aren't given in any detail, there are a few characters that stand out through the story. The main person who stands out is the character who gets stoned to death, which happens to be Tessie Hutchison who was also late for the lottery ceremony. When it was Mrs Hutchison who received the marked paper and was chosen to be stoned to death she exclaims: ““ It isn't fair, it isn't right! ” Mrs Hutchison screamed, and then they were upon her. This shows Tessie's selfish nature because she hasn't objected to any of the stoning's before, even though it is wrong and cruel. In this context ' fair' and ' right' mean the same thing to Tessie

because it was her who received the marked paper and not someone else, and if it was someone else she would've took part in the stoning. This also reflects the cruel nature of the whole community because they are happy to murder one of their own members as long as it is not themselves that gets stoned.

Another character which stands out is Mr Summers, the organiser of the lottery. Mr Summers is perceived as a cold hearted person near the end of the story even though at the start he is saw as a person who " had time and energy to devote to civic activities" which tells us that he is saw as a nice kind person. We can see that he is actually a cold hearted person after Tessie receives the marked paper. "' That was done pretty fast, now we've got to be hurrying a little more to get done I time. '"

This shows that he is cold hearted because he says that sentence as if he has better things to do. It also tells us that he is a very organised person because he talks like he is sticking to a specific timetable. Another important group of characters are at the very beginning of the story. They are the children. The children are important because they create suspense in the beginning of the story and also show how the savagery of the parents is transferred onto the children and they will then grow up believing in the same things as their parents.

It also shows that the nature of people and society are cruel because they are only children and no one thinks that children playing by a lake are evil. We can see that the children are related to the savagery of man towards

man when we look at the children by the lake. " Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example" This shows the barbaric nature of the village because it is only the start of the story and already children are preparing for the stoning of a person in their village. The Lottery' is quite different from other short stories, because short stories are usually made up of three main things: * A normal beginning * Some sort of adventure occurs and the main character gets dragged into the plot * And some sort of twist at the end. ' The Lottery' is not like most short stories because it has the same story line all the way throughout, and doesn't involve any action or adventure.

However there is a twist at the end because the reader doesn't suspect that the person is going to be stoned to death, and it is only until we re-read the story that we realise that everything was connected to each other in some way. For example the boys picking up the stones at the beginning and then throwing them at Tessie at the end. Jackson also creates suspense to add something to our understanding of people and the nature of society. Jackson creates suspense by giving full details of the preparation of the lottery to stall for a while before actually talking about the lottery.

She also creates suspense by creating lots of conversations among the villagers, which also shows the barbarity of the village because they all talk to each other like normal neighbours would, and makes the reader unaware of what is about to happen. In conclusion, Shirley Jackson has made me aware that people may think that they are civilised, but we also have the potential to be barbaric savages who all follow one leader. It has also made

me aware that society can turn against you if people think it is for the right reasons.