

# The lottery

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



The lottery — critical evaluation Kathleen Bruce “ The lottery” is a short story written by Shirley Jackson. In 1951 it was published in the magazine “ The New Yorker”. The story is about a small village that seems normal with a positive attitude to life and everything in it but in the end Jackson portrays how humans can be evil by writing about a women who is loved by everyone in the village and has many close friends and family within the village but is stoned to death by the people in the village including by her family and friends due to their beliefs that if they stone one person to death every year then their crops will grow. It shocked the readers immensely because it had such an unexpected ending to it. I am going to show in this essay how Shirley Jackson uses literary techniques to create depth of meaning in “ The lottery”. The story has an ironic setting. At the beginning, the reader is lured into a false sense of security due to the setting seeming so peaceful, but it later becomes a dark evil place. “ The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny...; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green”. This description contrasts dramatically with the ending because it makes the reader believe that the story will be happy and joyful but ends with an extremely dark and horrific ending. It is more shocking than most horror stories due to setting being an unlikely setting for something so unpleasant to happen where as traditionally, horror stories have dark, depressing and frightening setting. The ordinariness of the villagers also helps to build up a false sense of security. In this story Shirley Jackson is trying to highlight that people can be so inhumane and horrible as to kill someone and that it can happen anywhere at any time to anyone. Throughout the story the narrators stays very distant and describes what

happened in an emotionless tone as if Tessie Hutchinson's death wasn't important. " And then they were upon her". The narrator portrays no involvement, as if what the villagers are doing is normal and happens regularly. " A stone hit her on the side of the head". The narrator continues to be distant in this quote. She never becomes emotionally involved during the story, describing it in a tone of voice that shows she doesn't care just as the villagers don't, almost as if she is one of the villagers. Shirley Jackson is trying to show that humans follow one another and join in on what everyone else is doing to fit in and not be shunned away. At the part when Tessie begins to shout at the villagers that what they are doing is wrong. Jackson is showing that humans don't complain about terrible things that happen to other people until it happens to themselves. Shirley Jackson uses symbolism throughout " The lottery" making the story come together well as it progresses further to the death. The narrator talks about the black box in the story and how they use it to pick out the pieces of paper for the ritual. Although at first it appears not to have any significance, it is very important to the story: " The black box grew shabbier each year: by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side, showing the original wood colour, and in some places faded or stained" The word " black' has connotations of death and darkness which suggests whatever the box is used for is a negative thing and rather unpleasant. Also the word " faded" shows how long they have been doing the ceremony and that they have been sticking to their tradition for many years. Furthermore, the word " stained" reflects that the villagers are stained with guilt of what they have done and the tradition , almost as if they are stuck in their old fashioned

ways of life which shows how the people in their society are not individuals and do not speak up to voice their own opinions. In "The lottery", Tessie Hutchinson is a very important character. She was important, not only because she was stoned to death, but because she had a symbolic name. Her name is connected to Anne Hutchinson. As Tessie is about to be stoned to death, she screams at the villagers that what they are doing isn't right. She screams out: "It isn't fair, It isn't right" There is a connection between Tessie and Anne Hutchinson due to Anne being persecuted in 1637 for expressing her religious beliefs that were different from the men of her village. She was driven out of her town and eventually killed by Indians whilst out in the wild trying to survive. The connection between Tessie and Anne is important because they both spoke out against the villagers stating their opinions and they were both betrayed by their friends and family in the village. Shirley Jackson makes a powerful point about society being inhumane at times by using symbolic names to connect two stories that show men being in control. In "The lottery", the men organize everything and even the younger boys gather stones to hit Tessie Hutchinson with and at Anne Hutchinson's trial, it was also the men of the village who decided what would happen to her for speaking out her religious beliefs. Shirley Jackson also makes strong use of name symbolism throughout the story. She frequently uses religious symbolism in the story as well. "Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with two hands". Delacroix meaning "of the cross" relates to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ making western Christian religious readers recognize the obvious criticism of how it is another example of inhumane society. Shirley Jackson is trying to portray

that everyone is guilty of committing a sin and that no matter who you are, you are capable of being inhumane and evil to another human being. In conclusion, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson is a shocking but interesting story about a small village that seems normal but in fact is the complete opposite due to their beliefs of how to get their crops to grow every year by killing another human being in a horrific and unforgivable way. Shirley Jackson uses a great variety of techniques to create a story with depth of meaning.