

Essay on the lottery by shirley jackson

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“ It isn’t fair, it isn’t right,” Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her” (Jackson). “ The Lottery” is a short story by Shirley Jackson; it was published in 1948 and caused a large amount of controversy.

Jackson was the kind of writer that could, “ write a tenebrous horror story in the Gothic mold in which abnormal behavior seemed perilously ordinary” (NY Times); which is exactly how her story “ The Lottery”, is perceived. When a reader begins reading the story, the atmosphere seems happy and festive; however it isn’t until the end of the story where the story shifts and it suddenly becomes somewhat nightmarish. Even though it is a fictional story, it can be related to factual historical events that have taken place throughout time. Using the aspects of Marxist Criticism, “ The Lottery” can be analyzed by comparing the events in the story to the history of sacrificial traditions. First off, in “ The Lottery”, the townspeople partake in the stoning of a member of society because it is tradition.

When Old Man Warner hears that people in neighboring villages have stopped the lottery, he responds with “ Pack of crazy fools. Listening to the young folks, nothing’s good enough for them. Next thing you know, they’ll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work anymore, live that way for a while” (Jackson). Old Man Warner has done with lottery seventy-seven times; it has become a tradition for himself, as well as everyone else. The true reasoning behind the tradition of the lottery is never really mentioned, as if the whole purpose was lost.

The storyline behind “ The Lottery” is in fact fictional; however cultures all over the world have, and still do, practice their own traditions. For example,

stoning has been a tradition that's been around since biblical times and has actually even been kept alive since then. It is quite common in Islamic countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates (Davis). As for the characters in the story, " Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones," even though some things have changed, the tradition is still alive and strong (Jackson). Second off, besides the lottery being an annual tradition, it also comes off as being a human sacrifice for good harvest.

In the story, Old Man Warner is found quoting, " Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon," which a reader can say that, in giving the life of a human being, they will receive a good, successful harvest in return (Jackson). The act of sacrificing for harvest has taken place all over the world, and has been around for centuries. For example, the Greeks were a civilization that believed in this theory. They, as well as many other civilizations, thought that offering blood was a " powerful method of talking with the gods" (Davis). What societies believed came from human sacrifices was that it would please the god(s) which then led to rain, which resulted in healthy crops.

They feared that if they failed to do so they would go hungry; which is interesting because, in " The Lottery", the elderly became defensive because the idea of getting rid of the ritual was foolish due to the fact that without it, " First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always been a lottery" (Jackson). The lottery has not only become a sacred tradition in their town, but it has also become a blood sacrifice for the <https://assignbuster.com/essay-on-the-lottery-by-shirley-jackson/>

good of the harvest. In conclusion, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson is a dark piece of work that can be analyzed into so many different depths. It is an iconic story which shows how foolish people can be when it comes to traditions and following the crowd, as well as certain beliefs. The story relates to historical events in the way that people have been following traditions from the very beginning and the act of sacrificing for harvest isn't as uncommon as one might think.

Jackson's story is successful because she was able to portray the evil side of human nature and show how we sometimes do things just because "that's just the way it is." When reading this short story, a reader can analyze it using Marxist Criticism to relate the events taking place to the events that have, and are, taking place in our world today. Works Cited Davis, Wendy. As Old as the Moon: Sacrifice in History. 2006. April 2011

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