

Analysis of the tradition in shirley jackson's "the lottery"



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Analysis of the Tradition in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" Shirley Jackson illustrates the struggle between choosing personal morals, versus blindly following the masses.

When you stop questioning authority, you relinquish your individuality and the tools that you've been given to rationalize your decisions. Traditions and customs often lose their meaning and value once it becomes a game of follow the leader. In Jackson's short story, the tradition of the lottery began with the first village settlers, prior to Old Man Warner's birth, seventy-seven years ago. Over time, certain aspects of the ritual have been dropped, such as substituting slips of paper for chips of wood, a recital prior to the lottery, and a salute to address each person. However, the actual tradition of the lottery has remained a routine part of their lives.

It seems as if the details and reasoning behind the ceremony have been lost, while the basic act of throwing the stones remains. That, "the people had done it so many times that they only half-listened to the directions," demonstrates how the townspeople carry out the tradition without questioning the soundness of the practice. June 27th has become a date each year when the people simply gather in the village to mechanically and brutally murder one of their own. Do they even question why or from where this custom began? Mr.

Adams, one of the villagers, even pointed out that, "over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery." Old Man Warner's response to Mr. Adams is an example of how the old are reluctant to change. He calls the young a, "pack of crazy fools," and states that, "nothing's good enough for

them. Perhaps Jackson is showing how one aspect of tradition is simply the old influencing the young. As an example, we often see this now in our churches as tradition conflicts with new beliefs and practices.

Congregations are splitting as younger members stray from the customary structure, and elders often reject the change. Is Old Man Warner that afraid of change, or does he merely feel compelled to follow the custom he was raised with? "Sheeple" is a word that comes to mind that would describe this village perfectly. Each person is simply following the herd without questioning the reasoning. Repeatedly, villagers approach the box nervously and anxiously, with fear and hesitation. Sheeple.

No one is entirely sure why they do this, yet each person follows suit and gathers stones to murder a friend, family member, or neighbor. Sheeple. Nazi Germany and the Holocaust is an example of blind obedience from our past. Today, we witness Muslim extremists, such as suicide bombers and terrorists exemplifying the same obedience.

Do these people truly hold these beliefs within them, or are they simply doing what they're told? Perhaps Jackson's intention was to show how easily people will conform without considering what they're actually doing.

Everyone is capable of forming their own thoughts and opinions on a matter, and acting accordingly. However, when you're influenced by the pressure to follow the crowd, your judgment is impaired, and individuality is lost.