

# The lottery; conventions to create meaning assignment

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For generations and generations people have held onto various traditions. Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is a short story that highlights an unusual or unconventional tradition. Jackson uses various narrative conventions, including: characterization, repetition and symbolism to create the meaning in the story. The use of these conventions shape us to see the idea that the meaning and importance of tradition is lost, and that we follow it because it's tradition, but don't look at the true meaning behind it.

Jackson uses characterization to influence the audience to see the loss of meaning Of traditions in Our modern day society. In the Story the character "Old Man Warner" is heard making statements such as "Pack of crazy fools" (p. 129) when referring to other towns dropping the tradition. He is portrayed as a grumpy old man " " First thing you know, we'll be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always been a lottery He added petulantly" (p. 129).

The author has used the name of the character ' Old Man' as a representation of ' Old Ideas' in the story to show to audiences the difference between the old and new understanding of traditions. In today's society we have lost the true meaning of Christmas. It was originally seen as a celebration of the birth of Jesus, but today is seen for the exchanging of material goods, rather than the celebration of our savior. Repetition is used in the story in order to present the idea of this loss of meaning. The audience is shown this when the character Mrs..

Dunbar states " I wish they'd hurry' (p. 129) , twice. This shows the audience that Mrs.. Dunbar is not wanting the ritual to take much longer, highlighting

the unpleasantness of it all. This may also mean that she does not agree with the tradition, yet still takes part in it, simply because it is tradition, and it seems almost unfathomable not to follow it. The true meaning of the tradition has been lost, but she still follows, even if she is against the idea of it. The use of symbolism by the author also helps portray the loss of meaning of tradition in the story.

Jackson writes of the black wooden box in which the papers that are to be drawn are held " When he arrived in the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a murmur of conversation among the villagers" (p. 124). This black box symbolizes death, the main part of their long held tradition. The box is however falling apart, and the villagers are reluctant to make a new one, as so not to disturb tradition. While proving how little is embedded of the tradition, this also could be interpreted as the villagers almost rebelling against it, by refusing to repair it, thus letting it break, as if to see the tradition destroyed.

Jackson has effectively used characterization, repetition and symbolism in order to portray a strong meaning; that through time, the meaning and importance of tradition is lost, yet people will still continue completing the rituals involved, simply because they are traditions, whether they like it or not. Her story begs the question: What traditions do we follow that have lost their true meaning, and thus could be considered useless.