

# Marxist criticism on shirley jackson's the lottery

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“ It isn’t fair, it isn’t right, Mrs.

Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her” (Jackson). Shirley Jackson was born in San Francisco on December 14th, 1916. Mainly known for her short story *The Lottery*, Jackson is also praised for being one of the most brilliant and influential authors in the twentieth century (Allen). *The Lottery* is a story of a small town who engages in a rather unusual lottery. In most cases a lottery can be related to winning something good, but in this case the towns’ people draw for their death. In the short story *The Lottery*, Jackson shows how positions of power are important to the characters that possess them and have consequences for other characters.

First, positions of power are important in *The Lottery*. Members of society such as Mr. Summers are more wealthy than others; “ He was a round jovial man and ran a coal business” (Jackson). Mr. Summers was the head of the town, financially wise.

He ran a coal business indicating that he was rather wealthy, which allowed for him to possess more power within the town. Although it is mentioned that all names are put in the box, it is Mr. Summers who marks the dot on the person that will die after the lottery is over. Having a position of power allowed Mr. Summers to control the lottery, “ Mr.

Summers was very good at all this; in his clean white shirt and blue jeans... he seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins” (Jackson). Mr. Summers was chosen by the people to be in charge of the lottery. His wealth allows him to control the most important aspect of the town, the lottery.

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While Mr. Summers is able to have an impact on the town, characters that are under Mr. Summers suffer consequences. He is a normal man who is allowed to exhibit powers over things such as life as death, because in the end it is up to him who will die as a result of the lottery. Next, the characters that do not possess power in The Lottery are not at liberty to refuse being killed.

Tessie speaks out against the lottery; “ You didn’t give him enough to take any paper he wanted. I was watching you. It wasn’t fair” (Jackson)! Tessie not being an important member of society doesn’t get to argue what is fair and what isn’t. According to Mr. Summers, the head of the town, everyone was given a ‘ fair’ chance to draw, so everyone simply agreed with Mr. Summers because he has power in the society.

Mr. Summers announced the stoning to begin, “ All right, folks...Let’s finish quickly” (Jackson). Tessie was stoned to death because she was chosen in a lottery that Mr. Summers oversees. Tessie does not get to argue the choice that has been made; she is only to be quiet while others essentially murder her. Tessie sacrificed her life as a consequence for not holding any power within the town.

She is suspiciously late to the lottery in the first place, and she, in the end is the one that wins the lottery. Her family members don’t even try to fight the decision, and her son is given a few pebbles to throw at his own mother. In the short story The Lottery, Jackson shows how positions of power are important to the characters that possess them and have consequences for other characters. Jackson wrote The Lottery to show how in small areas

usually people that are wealthy get all or in this case most of the power. While one person may have most of the power, the others suffer at their hands without realization.

The significance of The Lottery is to show that because Tessie was chosen in the lottery, it was okay for her to be killed. She was giving up her life for the greater good of the society.