

the lottery by shirley jackson story map

The lottery by Shirley Jackson is a profound short story that explores the dark side of human nature and societal traditions. First published in 1948, this narrative has left a lasting impact on readers, prompting discussions about conformity, violence, and the inherent brutality that can lie beneath the surface of seemingly innocent communities. The story is set in a small village where the locals gather annually for a lottery – an event that ultimately culminates in a shocking and brutal conclusion. In this article, we will create a detailed story map of "The Lottery," breaking down its essential components, themes, and character dynamics.

Setting

The setting of "The Lottery" plays a crucial role in establishing the story's tone and atmosphere.

Location

- The story takes place in a small, unnamed village, which represents a microcosm of society. The setting is important as it reflects an idyllic community that is initially perceived as peaceful and harmonious.
- The villagers gather in a grassy area, symbolizing a familiar and safe environment that contrasts sharply with the story's dark events.

Time Period

- The narrative unfolds in late June, during a sunny day. The season suggests growth and renewal, which enhances the shock when the story reveals its darker themes.
- The annual nature of the lottery indicates a long-standing tradition that the villagers adhere to without question, hinting at the dangers of blind conformity.

Plot Overview

The plot of "The Lottery" unfolds in a structured manner, leading readers through a seemingly normal day that escalates into horror.

Exposition

- The story begins with the villagers gathering in the square for the lottery, characterized by a festive atmosphere. Children collect stones, which foreshadows the violent conclusion.
- Key characters are introduced, including Mr. Summers, who conducts the lottery, and Tessie

Hutchinson, who arrives late but is eager to participate.

Rising Action

- The villagers engage in casual conversations, displaying a sense of normalcy and community spirit.
- As the lottery progresses, the tension begins to build. The reader senses an underlying unease, particularly as the characters' interactions hint at the grim purpose of the event.

Climax

- The climax occurs when the lottery drawing reveals Tessie Hutchinson as the "winner." The atmosphere shifts dramatically from festive to tense, marking a crucial turning point in the narrative.

Falling Action

- Tessie's protests and pleas for fairness highlight her desperation as the villagers prepare for the ritualistic stoning.
- The townspeople's willingness to participate in the violence against Tessie reveals the chilling effects of tradition and conformity.

Resolution

- The story concludes with Tessie's tragic fate as the villagers stone her to death, solidifying the horror of the lottery and leaving readers with a sense of shock and disbelief.
- The abrupt end forces readers to confront the brutality of the event and the implications of blind adherence to tradition.

Characters

The characters in "The Lottery" are central to conveying the story's themes and moral dilemmas.

Major Characters

1. Tessie Hutchinson:
 - The protagonist of the story, Tessie is portrayed as a typical villager who initially participates in the lottery with enthusiasm.
 - Her character arc shifts dramatically as she becomes the target of the lottery, showcasing the fragility of social standing and the randomness of violence.

2. Mr. Summers:

- The man in charge of the lottery, Mr. Summers embodies the authority that perpetuates the tradition.
- His casual demeanor contrasts with the horrific outcome of the lottery, emphasizing the normalcy with which the villagers approach the ritual.

3. Old Man Warner:

- The oldest villager, Old Man Warner represents the voice of tradition and the dangers of unexamined customs.
- His disdain for change and his staunch support for the lottery reflect the resistance to questioning societal norms.

Minor Characters

- The villagers, including families like the Hutchinsons and the Delacorts, serve to illustrate the collective mentality of the community.
- Their interactions and reactions during the lottery reveal the complexities of human behavior when faced with societal expectations.

Themes

"The Lottery" is rich with themes that provoke deep reflection and discussion.

Tradition and Conformity

- The story critiques the blind adherence to tradition, illustrating how rituals can become detached from their original purposes.
- The villagers' unquestioning participation underscores the dangers of conformity, as they prioritize tradition over morality.

Violence and Human Nature

- Jackson exposes the potential for violence within ordinary people, suggesting that brutality can emerge under the guise of societal norms.
- The stoning of Tessie Hutchinson serves as a chilling reminder of humanity's capacity for cruelty.

The Role of Women

- The story reflects on the role of women in society, particularly through Tessie's character, who is initially relegated to a domestic role.
- Tessie's eventual fate raises questions about gender dynamics and societal expectations.

Symbolism

Symbolism is prevalent throughout "The Lottery," adding layers of meaning to the narrative.

The Lottery Itself

- The lottery symbolizes the randomness of violence and the arbitrary nature of victimization.
- It serves as a metaphor for societal rituals that can perpetuate harm under the guise of tradition.

The Black Box

- The black box used for the lottery represents the tradition itself. Its worn and deteriorating state suggests the reluctance to change or question longstanding customs.
- The box's ominous nature foreshadows the violence that the lottery entails.

Stones

- The stones collected by the children symbolize the innocence that can be corrupted by societal norms.
- They serve as tools of violence, highlighting how even the youngest members of society are complicit in the brutality of tradition.

Critical Reception

Since its publication, "The Lottery" has garnered significant critical attention.

Initial Reaction

- Upon its release, the story generated widespread controversy and backlash, with many readers expressing shock and outrage at its violent conclusion.
- Some critics praised Jackson for her bold exploration of dark themes, while others criticized her for the story's unsettling nature.

Legacy

- "The Lottery" has since become a staple of American literature, studied for its rich thematic content and psychological depth.
- Its impact is seen in various forms of media and literature, prompting ongoing discussions about

tradition, morality, and violence in contemporary society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the lottery by Shirley Jackson is a masterful short story that uses its setting, characters, and symbolism to delve into the complexities of human nature and the dangers of tradition. Through the shocking outcome of the lottery, Jackson compels readers to reflect on the implications of conformity and the capacity for violence that exists within us all. The story's enduring relevance continues to spark conversations about societal norms, making it a powerful commentary on the human condition. The narrative serves as a haunting reminder that sometimes, the most terrifying monsters are those that reside within our own communities.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson?

The main theme of 'The Lottery' is the danger of blindly following traditions and the capacity for cruelty within human nature.

How does Shirley Jackson build suspense in 'The Lottery'?

Jackson builds suspense through the use of foreshadowing, an unsettling atmosphere, and the gradual revelation of the lottery's true purpose.

What role does the village setting play in 'The Lottery'?

The village setting serves to highlight the normalization of violence and the conformity of the townspeople to outdated customs.

Who is Tessie Hutchinson and what is her significance in the story?

Tessie Hutchinson is the protagonist who becomes the scapegoat in the lottery, symbolizing the arbitrary nature of victimization in society.

What literary devices are prominently used in 'The Lottery'?

Shirley Jackson uses irony, symbolism, and imagery to enhance the story's impact and convey its deeper meanings.

How does the ending of 'The Lottery' impact the reader?

The shocking and brutal ending leaves readers in disbelief and prompts them to question societal norms and the human capacity for violence.

What is the significance of the black box in 'The Lottery'?

The black box symbolizes tradition and the villagers' reluctance to change, representing the darker side of human nature and societal rituals.

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