

the lottery plot diagram

The lottery plot diagram serves as a critical framework for understanding the narrative structure of Shirley Jackson's short story "The Lottery." The plot diagram outlines the key elements of the story, helping readers analyze the progression of events and the development of themes such as tradition, conformity, and the nature of human behavior. Through this article, we will delve into the essential components of the lottery plot diagram, examining the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, along with thematic insights and character analysis.

Introduction to "The Lottery"

Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," published in 1948, is a powerful short story that critiques societal norms and the inherent violence that can emerge from blind adherence to tradition. The story unfolds in a small, seemingly quaint village that participates in an annual lottery with shocking and tragic consequences. Understanding the plot diagram of "The Lottery" is crucial for grasping the nuances of Jackson's message and the chilling atmosphere she creates.

Components of the Lottery Plot Diagram

To effectively analyze the structure of "The Lottery," we can break down the plot into five key components:

1. Exposition

The exposition of "The Lottery" sets the stage for the events that follow. Key elements include:

- Setting: The story takes place in a small, rural village on a sunny summer day, creating a stark contrast between the idyllic environment and the dark events that unfold.
- Characters: Introduced early on, the main characters include:
 - Tessie Hutchinson: The protagonist who ultimately becomes the victim of the lottery.
 - Bill Hutchinson: Tessie's husband, who participates in the lottery.
 - Old Man Warner: The oldest villager, representing tradition and resistance to change.
 - Mr. Summers: The man in charge of the lottery, symbolizing the unquestioned authority of societal norms.

The exposition establishes a sense of normalcy and tradition, which serves as a foundation for the shocking climax.

2. Rising Action

The rising action builds tension and develops the story's central conflict.

Key events include:

- **Gathering of Villagers:** The villagers gather in the square, illustrating the community's participation in the lottery. Jackson describes the casual interactions among the townspeople, setting a deceptively serene tone.
- **Preparation for the Lottery:** Mr. Summers prepares the lottery box, and the villagers exhibit a mix of excitement and unease. The children collect stones, foreshadowing the violent conclusion.
- **Drawing of Names:** Families draw slips of paper from the box, heightening the suspense. The reader is aware of the ominous nature of the lottery, contrasting with the villagers' casual demeanor.

This section of the plot diagram effectively builds anticipation and tension, leading to the story's climax.

3. Climax

The climax of "The Lottery" is the turning point of the story, where the tension reaches its peak. This moment occurs when:

- **Tessie Hutchinson Draws the Marked Slip:** The moment Tessie draws the slip with the black dot marks the culmination of the rising action. The villagers' reactions shift from casual indifference to a palpable sense of dread.
- **The Revelation of the Lottery's Purpose:** As Tessie protests that the lottery is unfair, the true horror of the tradition is revealed. The lottery is not a celebration, but a ritualistic sacrifice meant to ensure a good harvest, exemplifying the dark side of blindly following tradition.

This climactic moment is shocking and forces readers to confront the disturbing reality of the villagers' actions.

4. Falling Action

The falling action of the story depicts the immediate aftermath of the climax. Key elements include:

- **The Villagers' Actions:** The community's response to Tessie's fate is chillingly indifferent. The villagers, including her own family, gather stones to carry out the ritualistic stoning.
- **Tessie's Pleas:** Tessie's frantic cries for mercy highlight the themes of isolation and the fragility of individual rights within a conformist society.

The falling action illustrates how quickly the villagers abandon their humanity in favor of tradition.

5. Resolution

The resolution of "The Lottery" concludes the narrative and reinforces its central themes. Key points include:

- **Tessie's Death:** The brutal culmination of the lottery occurs as the townspeople stone Tessie to death. This act serves as a grim reminder of the power of tradition and the ease with which people can commit violence when it

is socially sanctioned.

- The Enduring Nature of Tradition: The story ends on a haunting note, emphasizing that the lottery will continue in the future, suggesting that the cycle of violence and conformity will perpetuate itself.

The resolution leaves readers with a sense of unease and a challenge to reflect on the implications of societal norms.

Thematic Analysis

Understanding the lottery plot diagram also allows for a deeper exploration of the themes present in "The Lottery." Some of the most significant themes include:

1. The Dangers of Conformity

- The villagers' unquestioning adherence to tradition highlights the dangers of conformity. Their willingness to participate in the lottery, despite its horrific outcome, reflects a broader commentary on society's tendency to accept harmful practices without questioning their morality.

2. The Role of Tradition

- Jackson critiques the notion of tradition as inherently valuable. Through the lottery, she illustrates how traditions can perpetuate violence and cruelty, urging readers to critically evaluate the customs and practices they uphold.

3. The Nature of Humanity

- The story explores the darker aspects of human nature, suggesting that under the right conditions, ordinary people may commit extraordinary acts of violence. Jackson's portrayal of the villagers as both familiar and monstrous serves as a stark reminder of the potential for evil within us all.

Character Analysis

The characters in "The Lottery" play pivotal roles in conveying the story's themes and advancing the plot. Notable character analyses include:

1. Tessie Hutchinson

- Tessie serves as the story's tragic protagonist. Initially depicted as a carefree participant in the lottery, her fate underscores the theme of the individual versus society. Her desperate pleas for fairness highlight the vulnerability of individuals who challenge societal norms.

2. Bill Hutchinson

- Tessie's husband, Bill, exemplifies the conflict between familial loyalty and societal expectations. His passive acceptance of the lottery's outcome reveals the extent to which individuals can be complicit in violence against their loved ones.

3. Old Man Warner

- As a staunch defender of tradition, Old Man Warner represents the voice of authority in the village. His disdain for those who have abandoned the lottery serves as a cautionary representation of the dangers of clinging to outdated practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the lottery plot diagram serves as an effective tool for analyzing Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." By breaking down the narrative into its essential components—exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution—readers gain valuable insights into the story's structure and themes. Jackson's exploration of conformity, tradition, and the darker aspects of human nature continues to resonate, prompting critical reflection on the societal norms that govern our lives. Through "The Lottery," Jackson challenges us to confront the unsettling reality of human behavior and the consequences of blind adherence to tradition, leaving a lasting impact on literature and society.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the primary setting of 'The Lottery'?

The primary setting of 'The Lottery' is a small, rural village in the mid-20th century, during a sunny summer day.

What is the climax of 'The Lottery'?

The climax of 'The Lottery' occurs when Tessie Hutchinson is revealed as the chosen one during the lottery drawing, leading to a shocking and violent conclusion.

How does the exposition of 'The Lottery' establish the story's themes?

The exposition introduces the villagers, their routine, and the tradition of the lottery, setting the stage for themes of conformity, tradition, and the dark side of human nature.

What role does foreshadowing play in 'The Lottery'?

Foreshadowing in 'The Lottery' is evident through the villagers' nervousness and the children's gathering of stones, hinting at the horrific outcome of the lottery.

What is the significance of the lottery's ritualistic nature?

The ritualistic nature of the lottery highlights the theme of blindly following tradition without questioning its morality or purpose.

How does the falling action in 'The Lottery' unfold?

The falling action occurs after Tessie Hutchinson is chosen, as the villagers gather around her, and the atmosphere shifts from anticipation to horror as they prepare for her stoning.

What message does the resolution of 'The Lottery' convey?

The resolution conveys a chilling message about the dangers of conformity and the potential for violence within societal norms, as the villagers turn on Tessie without hesitation.

How does Shirley Jackson use character development to enhance the plot?

Shirley Jackson uses character development to show how ordinary people can commit horrific acts, as the seemingly friendly villagers reveal their true selves during the lottery.

What is the overall tone of 'The Lottery' and how does it affect the plot?

The overall tone of 'The Lottery' is unsettling and ironic, creating a sense of dread that builds throughout the story and culminates in a shocking and violent finale.

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