

Name of short story **The Lottery** Author **Shirley Jackson**

SHORT STORY ELEMENTS WORKSHEET - Fill in the following as appropriate. If the element in question is unknown, say so. Remember to support your observations with examples from your story.

SETTING –

- a) Place** – In a small village. “The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank[...]”
- b) Time** – Between 10 a.m. and noon on June 27th. “The morning of June 27th[...]” “[...]the whole lottery took less than two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.”
- c) Weather conditions** – It is a sunny day. “[...]was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day[...]”
- d) Social conditions** –
- e) Mood or atmosphere** – Strange and nervous because of the local tradition’s lottery. They are quieter than usual. “[...] and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed.”

PLOT –

- a) Introduction** - It is a warm June day in a wholesome good natured town where the people are kind, polite, and happy. “[...] with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square[...]”
- b) Rising Action** – The town is getting ready for its annual lottery that takes place on June 27th.

The lottery begins to take place. "Now, I'll read the names--heads of families first--and the men come up and take a paper out of the box."

The town gathers and the names are drawn as people take a piece of paper and wait to see who the "winner" is. "[...] take the slips and keep them folded until each person has taken one."

c) **Climax** – The drawing of the slips of paper is finished and the townspeople begin to unfold their papers with sighs of relief. “Mr. Graves opened the slip of paper and there was a general sigh through the crowd as he held it up and everyone could see that it was blank. Nancy and Bill, Jr., opened theirs at the same time, and both beamed and laughed, turning around to the crowd and holding their slips of paper above their heads.”

The "winner" is declared as the Hutchinson family. ““Tessie,” Mr. Summers said. There was a pause, and then Mr. Summers looked at Bill Hutchinson, and Bill unfolded his paper and showed it.”

Ultimately after the second drawing Tessie is declared the "winner". “Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal company office.”

d) **Falling action** - The townspeople gather around her and stone her to death, thus completing their tradition. . ““It isn't fair,” she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.”

e) **Denouement** – Life resumes as normal

People (including Tessie's family) go about their business as if nothing happened - - until the following year.

CONFLICT—

Types:

1) **External** – *we find that once Tessie is declared the winner of the lottery she turns on the very people that she loves and wants to redo the lottery so that another person can be declared the winner. [...] and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said.*

2) **Internal** - she finds that the lottery is not what everyone has made it out to be, peer pressure is what was controlling her entire life.

Kinds:

1) **Man vs. Man (physical)** – Towns people stone the winner of the lottery to death. “A stone hit her on the side of the head.” ““It isn't fair, it isn't right,” Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.”

2) **Man vs. Circumstances (classical)** –

3) **Man vs. Society (social)** –

4) Man vs. Himself/Herself (psychological) - Tessie has no problem with the town's tradition until it is her family who is faced to make the sacrifice and then she declares it is unfair. "I think we ought to start over," Mrs. Hutchinson said, as quietly as she could. "I tell you it wasn't fair. You didn't give him time enough to choose. Everybody saw that."

CHARACTER – Describe the characteristics of the main characters in one to two informative sentences

Character 1_Tessie Hutchinson: She is not entirely part of the group. She is eager to be at the lottery, but when her name is drawn, she refuses to adhere to the rules of it. She shows a lot of desperation and is naïve.

"[...] I remembered it was the twenty-seventh and came a-running."

"I think we ought to start over, [...]"

Character 2_Mr. Summers: He is the man in charge. He is all surface. He has the veneer of authority, but no actual power. He is filled with energy and really wants to give a new face to the lottery.

"Well, now." Mr. Summers said soberly, "guess we better get started, get this over with, so's we can go back to work. Anybody ain't here?"

Character 3_Old man Warner: is the oldest man in town and, therefore, having the most knowledge of what the original tradition was all about. He is holding the community back from the good changes that could occur.

"Old Man Warner snorted." "Pack of crazy fools," he said. "Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for them. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work anymore, live that way for a while."

Which characters from the story fit these descriptions and why?

1. **Individual** – The Townspeople: Because they are selfish and act like nothing is happening when they kill one of their own.

"Well, now." Mr. Summers said soberly, "guess we better get started, get this over with, so's we can go back to work. Anybody ain't here?"

2. **Developing** – Tessie Hutchinson: She is always excited about the Lottery, but once her name picked, she does not agree anymore.

See Character 2.

3. **Static** – Old man Warner: He does not evolve in the story. He wants the tradition of the Lottery to be maintained and criticize people who want to change it.

"Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery," Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. "Seventy-seventh time."

"Nothing but trouble in that," Old Man Warner said stoutly. "Pack of young fools."

POINT OF VIEW -- Point of view, or p.o.v., is defined as the angle from which the story is told. Circle which point of view is **most** reflective of the story you read, and write a sentence explaining why this is the best choice.

1. *Innocent Eye*

2. *Stream of Consciousness*

3. *First Person*

4. **Third person (omniscient or limited)** - Omniscient sometimes but leaves out the most shocking detail until the end. He always refers to the characters using their name.

"People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers."

THEME -- Describe the theme of the story you read in a couple of words, then, in two to three sentences, explain why these words best describe the theme.

One possible theme of this story: IRONY

The reason is because: The title "*The Lottery*", suggest that someone will win a big prize, but instead the so called "winner" will be losing the right to live. In real life, just as in the story, people are always enthusiastic about a lottery, but unlike the real world, the winner will actually be the biggest loser.

Theme in a Worn Path and The Lottery: Power

A Worn Path and *The Lottery* were both written around the same time (1940-1948). In these two short-stories, the authors describe the life of two women who are living in societies where traditions are strongly respected. In fact, both stories take place in small villages and the people's mentalities are outdated. These stories both involve similar themes. However, they are presented differently in each story. This essay will aim at analyzing how the theme of power is illustrated by each author. In fact, this assignment will cover the power of the tradition in the lottery, the one of love that drives the woman in *A Worn Path* and the differences on how the power is perceived in each of these literary works.

In *The Lottery*, the villagers are completely dazzled by the lottery tradition, which consists in drawing pieces of paper from a wooden box (the black box) , in order to select a person who will be stoned to death, which is supposed to be positive for the harvest. This drawing seems to transform the people, in a spiritual way. In fact, the power of this tradition has a significant influence on the people's attitude, which makes them act hypocritically towards their peers. Before the drawing, they joke and laugh with each other, but sadly the only thing they hope for is that their peer will be drawn to save their lives. The villagers are literally being owned by this tradition and fear it. They could easily overthrow this ritual, however the strength attributed to the lottery is stronger than their savvy. Jackson clearly demonstrates that this cultural phenomenon prevails over their personal willpower.

In *A Worn Path*, the notion of power is not perceived in the same way by the reader. In this story, the character of Phoenix, an afro-American woman, goes on a journey where the path is full of obstacles. Throughout her journey, she struggles to achieve her aim, which is to reach the city. During this process, she is attacked by a black dog, thrown into a ditch, rescued by a white racist hunter but then she is harassed by this same person. One of Welty's intentions was to demonstrate the social conditions of that time, where black people were not considered and where racism was a reality in the United States. Phoenix is not a victim of a

social or cultural practice or phenomenon. Rather, she is thrived by the power of her love for her ill grandson and it provides her the strength to overcome all the boundaries she encounters during her quest. Love and determination are her greatest assets, which allows her to advance and support her burden. Old Phoenix is more than what meets the eye. In fact, she seems weak from the surface, but her selflessness makes this woman strong. Moreover, the name attributed to this character was premeditated. A phoenix is a fictional bird that is symbolically associated with sun, birth, death, sacrifice and re-birth. It is also associated with power and will, which clearly corresponds to this woman's personal conviction.

This idea of power is developed differently in each story. In *The Lottery*, the cultural power surpasses personal judgment as opposed to *A Worn Path*, where personal power, driven by love surpasses social pressure and cultural differences. On one hand, we agree that it is easier to follow the social or cultural trends, but on the other hand, it is way more rewarding to follow our own way. Our personal power should always be a priority, regardless of what is proposed to us. Taking action as an individual is sometimes more positive than following a community's ritual. External power can be easily taken but personal power that results from self-value, dignity, honour, love is much stronger.

To conclude, *The Lottery* and *A Worn Path* are two interesting short-stories which depict the idea of power differently. In Jackson's story, the villagers are being dominated by an outdated tradition, which makes an innocent victim each summer. The somehow spiritual power of this ritual frightens the villagers and the fear provoked, prevents them from progressing as a community. In the other story, despite the fact that she is oppressed by social phenomena of the 1940's, her power is not influenced by external factors such as racial discrimination. Even if she is unfavoured in life, she lets nothing interfere between her and her love for her grandson.

"The real power is the ability to take action"

-Martin and Nabil©- 2011

SONG LYRICS ACTIVITY

1. The main idea in Mayer's song is that people don't do anything to change. They wait because they think their actions won't do any difference in the world, but if everybody thinks this way, the world will never improve. We all have to do our little part to make the world evolve. We all assume that someone else will take care of the matter.

In Nickelback's song, the band deplores the people's individualism.

2. We think that in Mayer's song, the man vs. man conflict is when he sings:

*"Me and all my friends
We're all misunderstood
They say we stand for nothing and
There's no way we ever could"*

3. We think that in Nickelback's song the man vs. man conflict is when they sing:

*"There's bullets flying through the air
And they still carry on
We watch it happen over there
And then just turn it off"*

*'When we could feed a starving world
With what we throw away
But all we serve are empty words
That always taste the same"*

4. Nickelback's song has the most optimistic tone, because it tells people to stay united despite their differences.

*"We must stand together
There's no getting even
Hand in hand forever
That's when we all win"*

5. The major idea they have in common, is that the world has to change. We have to be united to make a difference. They are both disapproving how media is altering the information given to make it look better than reality.
6. Mayer's song: It mainly talks about the fact that even if we are one person, we can make a difference. We should stop thinking we cannot change things.

Nickelback's song: It states that as one, we can do it all. We must unite and not fight. We should give a hand to the people in need.
7. The images from Waiting for the World to Change shows normal people, doing their little things and waiting for better to arrive. We see taggers trying to pass a message by drawing anywhere around the city instead of doing concrete acts to make the world a better place to live.
8. The images clearly show how people ignore everything that is not conforming to the standards of society. It demonstrate how information can be adjusted the governing people wants it to be. We see that by helping each other, we can do it all. Finally, the drum solo representing the sound of a heartbeat refusing to give up gives the track an earthier, roots feel.
9. **Martin:** I would go with Mayer's song because not so long ago, I told a teacher that I was not doing something because "I" would not be the one doing a difference. But if we all think like this, things will never change and we will only suffer about the fact that we are not making changes.

*"So we keep waiting
Waiting on the world to change
We keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change"*

Nabil: For my part, I feel more concerned by the message embodied by Nickelback's song, mainly because of my political views. I believe that people are stronger if they are united and can shock the governmental tyranny. In fact, I recently joined an academic association which calls for the different teaching degrees of university to work together in order to change some aspects of the program's structure or enrollment modalities, so that the teaching programs could be more credible and could eventually make better teachers.