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## The Role of Tradition in Community in "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

Tradition can be viewed as a way of life, creating a reluctant response in a civilization when the idea of change comes about, no matter how barbaric these traditions may be. Shirley Jackson in her short story, "The Lottery", with the use of symbolism displays how strong tradition can be upheld in a community.

When a black box is brought into the room, the story focuses on the specific features of its appearance, provoking symbolic meaning. By using the technique of mis anticipation, Jackson is able to draw attention off the true dark meaning behind this "lottery". Digging deeper into the story we can catch a change in mood as we realize the true fact of the matter; a stoning. This tradition remains after all this time and becomes a social norm that even children would be willing to stone others and occasionally members of their own family.

Many symbols in the story had a paralleled meaning to the idea of tradition. One example would be the black box in the story that was used as a common paper draw box, where the head of each household would select a strip of paper, but symbolically served its purpose in the story to reflect the tradition that has stuck for many years. This depiction becomes evident when the box is portrayed to be "an old black wooden box", that some townspeople believe still have pieces of the original box attached to it. The fact that this box is believed to still hold parts of the original, portrays an idea that after many years this box being a symbol of tradition for the townspeople, has been able to stay without any outside forces being able to break it or replace it with something new as generations pass. A reinforcement that indicates that these people did not want to let go of this old tradition is when "Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box." (Jackson, Pg. 5) This allows the reader to better understand the significance of the black box through the embodied symbolic meaning.

Restating the idea that tradition can be a powerful concept, we notice that this cruel custom has become an acceptable concept within the community because of the fact that the whole town gathers around with what seemed to be exciting, to a death assembly but it follows through so casually because all moral repulsion has been blocked. To some extent, some characters see it as a necessity, a way of life that cannot be broken. As the story explains that, "the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born", we can realize that "Old Man" Warner is used as a symbol as well, and when he hears about a town that has gotten rid of that tradition he grumbles. He dislikes the idea as

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he's lived his whole life experiencing this very old tradition.

Old Man Warner takes it upon himself to uphold this tradition in the story by mis anticipating the tone of story Jackson is able to draw the attention away from the fact that this lottery is one that ends in death of whoever wins it. Witnessing each character's nervous reaction to the draw of paper, gives us an idea that there might be a bit more at stake. When describing the setting, it has a warm feel to it as they explain that it is June (summertime) and that the townspeople all casually gather around to begin what almost seems to be a holiday with excited children running around picking up stones for an unknown reason which becomes more evident as the story develops. The fact that each person in this town is very willing to participate, brings a general idea that this behavior has become a social norm.

As the story goes on, we can quickly develop the idea that this lottery chooses one person to get stoned to death, almost like a one-day free pass to allow people of the town to kill someone and cure the bloodlust of murder or generally crime to be tamed until the next year. By doing so, the story successfully creates a plot twist that grasps the audience's interests.

The story inclusively ends with the death of a female who was chosen to be stoned to death by the rest of the townsfolk in this twisted lottery. These people had no mercy as to killing another individual because they see this process as a way of life that in using the literary technique of foreshadowing, the story successfully creates a sense of questioning.

Many hints are placed throughout the story when even children, or more specifically the little boys who "eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys". In this instant we can gather an idea, but still uncertain, as to what is truly going on. Not only is questioning provoked but also a sense of suspense in wondering how these odd scenarios correspond to the current moment in the story. By doing so, their eyes must continue. Tradition will and must be upheld or all else will fail as a community in the eyes of the civilization, but some shy away from bringing change in fear. Nevertheless, any factor as to why this "lottery," continues is all the more reinforcement in the fact that tradition, if taken seriously, is a powerful idea that can change a whole civilization's views, beliefs, and way of life in general.

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