

The Power of Tradition: Trauma and Memory in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*

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Abstract

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson (1916-1965) represents a short story that has been inspiring readers' attention since its publication in 1948. The major themes of the story include tradition, trauma, and memory and all these themes are depicted in the context of a small-American town. A faraway culture practices religiously selecting a sacrificial victim by drawing lots. Through the ritual's participants, Jackson masterfully portrays a culture mired in its traditions and the past. On the day of the lottery, people assemble in apprehension. Initially, it is an innocent occasion that builds on commonness and friendship. While the conception of this lottery is slow burning, its culmination is shockingly savage; it provides the best of both tradition and its impact on the community type on the community. All of them dance as the spirits force them to do so and not of their own will. This blind devotion to tradition only serves as a metaphor for Jackson's statement of societal conformity and the problems with mindless traditions. It then goes ahead to explain the consequences of societal acceptance of violence and indoctrination on our psychology. The paper employs thematic analysis in the qualitative data examination. The study is significant since it explores the deeply engrained practices which keep collective trauma alive through memories that never fade away, reveals the act of conformity by society, gives an insight into how individual psychological lives are affected as well as critiques cultural practices.

Keywords: Community, cultural critique, psychological impact, ritual, violence