Noor Hasan

GEEN 2312

Prof. Milagros Commander

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**The Lottery Discussion Questions**

1. Were you surprised by the ending of the story? If not, at what point did you know what was going to happen? How does Jackson start to foreshadow the ending in paragraphs 2 and 3? Conversely, how does Jackson lull us into thinking that this is just an ordinary story with an ordinary town?

The ending did surprise me when I first read it, as the story seemed to not be so ominous and violent at the beginning. I began to get the sense that something about the lottery wasn’t normal when the families began lining up to draw a paper. It was foreshadowed in the beginning when the children began gathering stones in anticipation for what was about to happen. The carefree and stress-free attitude most of the town inhabitants had as they gathered with their children was at odds with what they were gathering for. This gives the readers a false sense of security in the ceremony.

1. Where does the story take place? In what way does the setting affect the story? Does it make you more or less likely to anticipate the ending?

The story takes place in a rural farming town located in the South, as tractors and planting was mentioned at one point. With such a small tradition-bound group of people, the ending of the story makes more sense. The Lottery is seen as a ceremony that happens every year and has happened since the creation of the town, this ties in with how the inhabitants want to stick to traditions and why they are so eager to go through with this gruesome act. In contrast, it is mentioned that places in the North have already stopped doing the lottery or are already in the process of cancelling it.

1. In what ways are the characters differentiated from one another? Looking back at the story, can you see why Tessie Hutchinson is singled out as the "winner"?

They are differentiated by age and how much they enjoy what happens during The Lottery. Some inhabitants show a deep-set belief in this tradition, such as the oldest man in town, while others show more apprehension or fear. Tessie is singled out as she begins to protest and call out the unfairness of the process when her family is selected. She demonstrates opposition to a tradition most people in the town are ready to willingly participate in.

1. What are some examples of irony in this story? For example, why might the title, "The Lottery," or the opening description in paragraph one, be considered ironic?

It is ironic because most people, when thinking of a lottery, associate it with winning a big prize and it being a generally positive process and activity. The tradition and actions presented in the story is the opposite of a prize or something good, instead if you win in this type of lottery, you are killed by stoning at the hands of your family, friends, and neighbors. This presents a contradiction that helps hide the ending of the story.

5.Take a close look at Jackson's description of the black wooden box (paragraph 5) and of the black spot on the fatal slip of paper (paragraph 72). What do these objects suggest to you? Why is the black box described as "battered"? Are there any other symbols in the story?

Black is a color associated with death, it is the absence of life the same way it is the absence of color and light. The box is black because it is dictating and determining a death in the community. All the other slips are white, except the one of the family chosen by the box as it has a black dot. The box is described as being old and chipping away, as it is made of wood. This box symbolizes the years of history behind this tradition, and which help bolster its importance in the eyes of the community. The box is viewed as an important part of the process, and the community is hesitant to replace it due to this importance. The stones are another symbol, and they represent the brutality and sudden uncivilized nature of the town. They go from an ordered society with tradition and structure, to utilizing an archaic means of execution.