

The Irony in "The Lottery"

Shirley Jackson wrote the story "The Lottery." A lottery is typically thought of as something good because it usually involves winning something such as money or prizes. In

this lottery it is not what they win but it is what is lost. Point of views, situations, and the title are all ironic to the story "The Lottery."

The point of view in "The Lottery" is ironic to the outcome. Jackson used third

person dramatic point of view when writing "The Lottery." The third person dramatic

point of view allowed the author to keep the outcome of the story a surprise. The outcome is ironic because the readers are led to believe everything is fine because we do

not really know what anyone is thinking. This point of view enables the ending to be ironic.

The situations in "The Lottery" are ironic. The author's use of words keeps the

reader thinking that there is nothing wrong and that everyone is fine. The story starts by describing the day as "clear and sunny"(309). The people of the town are happy and going

on as if it is every other day. The situation where Mrs. Hutchinson is jokingly saying to

Mrs. Delacroix "Clean forgot what day it was"(311) is ironic because something that is so

awful cannot truly be forgotten. At the end of the story when Mrs. Hutchinson is chosen

for the lottery, it is ironic that it does not upset her that she was chosen. She is upset

because of the way she is chosen. She shows this by saying "It isn't fair, it isn't right" (316).

The situation is extremely ironic to the story.

The title of the story "The Lottery" is ironic. By reading the title of the story the

reader may think that someone is going to win something. In actuality when the reader

gets to the end of the story, he finds just the opposite to be true. Jackson shows every day

as if it is any other summer day. Jackson foreshadows the events to come by writing:

School was recently over for the summer . . . Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; . . . eventually made a pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of other boys. (310)

After reading this, the reader thinks the children are just collecting stones because that is

what children do. They do not expect the outcome to turn out like it does. The title has

the reader believing that something good is going to happen, and will not know any different until the end of the story.

The point of view, situation, and title all contribute to the irony in the story. These

are all equally important to the irony and without them the story would not have

been as
interesting as it was. If these were not included then the story would not be the
same and
would not keep the readers' interest.

Work Cited

Jackson, Shirley. "The lottery" Literature:
Reading, Reacting, Writing. Ed. Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell.
Third Ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt, 1997. 309-16.