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## Shirley Jackson

[1919–1965]

At once a doting mother who wrote humorous accounts of her family life and a self-described witch who penned incisive studies of psychologic aberration and unsettling tales of the supernatural, SHIRLEY JACKSON explored the unstable boundary between domesticity and horror. Considered one of the finest American fiction writers of the 1950s and 1960s, Jackson is now best known for the widely anthologized short story "The Lottery" (1948).

Jackson was born in 1919 in San Francisco, the first child of an affluent and conservative family. During childhood and adolescence and well into adulthood, this unruly and overweight daughter struggled against her mother Geraldine's firmly held standards of propriety and femininity. As she resisted the conventions of class and gender, Jackson developed her gift of seeing beneath the decorous surface of middle-class life into its vicious core. In the sunny and seemingly placid northern California suburb of Burlingame, where she attended high school and began writing poetry and short stories, Jackson discerned her neighbors' intolerance and cruelty—traits that later characterized the suburbanites of her fiction.

In 1933 Jackson's family moved to Rochester, New York. After attending the University of Rochester from 1934 to 1936, Jackson withdrew from school and spent a year at home, writing a thousand words a day. In 1937 she entered Syracuse University, where she edited the campus humor magazine, won second prize in a poetry contest, and founded the literary magazine *Spectre*. She married the magazine's managing editor, Stanley Edgar Hyman, immediately after her graduation in 1940. The couple moved to New York City, where Jackson held a variety of unsatisfying jobs while continuing to write. In 1941 her experience selling books at Macy's formed the basis for "My Life with R. H. Macy," published in the *New Republic*. This success was followed by the birth of her first child and the publication of many stories in the *New Yorker*. Her reputation as a writer of short fiction grew, and in 1944 "Come Dance with Me in Ireland" was the first of her four stories chosen for Best American Short Stories.

Jackson's family continued to grow, and her body of writing continued to expand after she moved to North Bennington, Vermont. She had three more children and published short stories, novels, family chronicles, a one-act play, a children's book, and a nonfictional account of witchcraft in Salem. Her works were made into plays, films, and television shows. "The Lottery" appeared as a short play, a television drama, a radio show, an opera, and a ballet. The family chronicles *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and *Raising Demons* (1957) were best-sellers, and Jackson's popular success was matched by critical acclaim for her short fiction and novels alike. These latter include *The Road Through the Wall* (1948),

a look at the dark side of suburban life in *Hangsaman* (1951) and *The Bird's Nest* (1958); a study of mental illness; and *The Sundial* (1958) in the real world. Jackson's last two novels, *The Hours* (1962) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), are, like the former, under-der, these haunted-house stories transcend the boundaries of a strained relationship between mother and daughter, and skill. Three years after *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* reached the bestseller list and was named one of the best novels of the year, Shirley Jackson died of heart failure on August 6, 1965.

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## The Lottery

SHIRLEY JACKSON

THE MORNING OF JUNE 27TH was clear and sunny, 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, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, 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.

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands. Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Delacroix—the villagers pronounced this name "Dellacroy"—eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.

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The lottery was conducted—as were the Halloween program—by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic activities. He was a round, middle-aged man with a good business, and people were sorry for him because his wife was a scold. When he arrived in the square, there was a murmur of conversation, and he called, "Little late today, folks." The people were carrying a three-legged stool, and the stool was set up in the square, and Mr. Summers set the black box down on it, leaving a space between them. Mr. Summers said, "Some of you fellows want to draw before two men, Mr. Martin and Mr. Summers, to hold the box steady on the stool while I draw inside it."

The original paraphernalia for the lottery, the black box now resting on the stool had been made by Mr. Warner, the oldest man in town, was bought by the villagers about making a new box, but the tradition as was represented by the black box had been made with some pieces of wood, one that had been constructed when the village here. Every year, after the lottery, there was talk about a new box, but every year the subject of anything's being done. The black box grew old and no longer completely black but splintered and showed its original wood color, and in some places

Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxton, had used the stool until Mr. Summers had stirred them. Because so much of the ritual had been passed down, it had been successful in having slips of paper that had been used for generations. Chips of paper had been all very well when the village was small, but now it was more than three hundred and likely to use something that would fit more the times. Before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Martin had put them in the box, and it was the box that the coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers came to the square next morning. The rest of the year the box was in one place, sometimes another; it had spent the winter of another year underfoot in the post office and the summer in the Martin grocery and left there.

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There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up—of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse. There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this also had changed with time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. Mr. Summers was very good at all this; in his clean white shirt and blue jeans, with one hand resting carelessly on the black box, he seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins.

Just as Mr. Summers finally left off talking and turned to the assembled villagers, Mrs. Hutchinson came hurriedly along the path to the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place in the back of the crowd. "Clean forgot what day it was," she said to Mrs. Delacroix, who stood next to her, and they both laughed softly. "Thought my old man was out back stacking wood," Mrs. Hutchinson went on, "and then I looked out the window and the kids were gone, and then I remembered it was the twentyseventh and came a-running." She dried her hands on her apron, and Mrs. Delacroix said, "You're in time, though. They're still talking away up there."

Mrs. Hutchinson craned her neck to see through the crowd and found her husband and children standing near the front. She tapped Mrs. Delacroix on the arm as a farewell and began to make her way through the crowd. The people separated good-humoredly to let her through; two or three people said, in voices just loud enough to be heard across the crowd, "Here comes your Missus, Hutchinson," and "Bill, she made it after all." Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers, who had been waiting, said cheerfully, "Thought we were going to have to get on without you, Tessie." Mrs. Hutchinson said, grinning, "Wouldn't have me leave m'dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?" and soft laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back into position after Mrs. Hutchinson's arrival.

"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?"

"Dunbar," several people said. "Dunbar, Dunbar."

Mr. Summers consulted his list. "He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's draw

"Me, I guess," a woman said, and "Wife draws for her husband," Mr. Summers asked the boy to do it for you, Janey?" Although the village knew the answer perfectly well, the boy drew the name of the man in the lottery to ask such questions formally. The boy's attention was a matter of opinion of polite interest while Mrs. Dunbar

"Horace's not but sixteen yet," Mrs. Dunbar said. "He'll fill in for the old man this year."

"Right," Mr. Summers said. He made a mark on the list. Then he asked, "Watson boy drawing the name?"

A tall boy in the crowd raised his hand. "Watson boy drawing the name for m'mother and me." He blinked his eyes. "The name of the man in the crowd said things like 'Watson boy drawing the name for your mother's got a man to do it.'"

"Well," Mr. Summers said, "guess the name is Watson, is it?"

"Here," a voice said, and Mr. Summers

A sudden hush fell on the crowd as Mr. Summers looked at the list. "All ready?" he called to the men. "Draw the names of the families first—and the men come up and draw the names of the men. The paper folded in your hand without looking at it. Everything clear?"

The people had done it so many times before that they knew the directions; most of them were quiet, waiting. Then Mr. Summers raised one hand to his forehead and disengaged himself from the crowd and came forward. "Watson boy," he said, and Mr. Adams said, "Hi, Joe." The boy drew the name of the man in the crowd and nervously. Then Mr. Adams reached for the folded paper. He held it firmly by one corner. "Watson boy," he said, and he turned back to his place in the crowd, where he stood with his back not looking down at his hand.

"Allen," Mr. Summers said. "Anderson boy drawing the name?"

"Seems like there's no time at all," Mrs. Delacroix said to Mrs. Graves in the back of the crowd. "The last one only last week."

"Time sure goes fast," Mrs. Graves said.

"Clark . . . Delacroix."

"There goes my old man," Mrs. Delacroix said. Her husband went forward.

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 "Dunbar," Mr. Summers said, and Mrs. Dunbar went steadily to the box while one of the women said, "Go on, Janey," and another said, "There she goes."

"We're next," Mrs. Graves said. She watched while Mr. Graves came around from the side of the box, greeted Mr. Summers gravely, and selected a slip of paper from the box. By now, all through the crowd there were men holding the small folded papers in their large hands, turning them over and over nervously. Mrs. Dunbar and her two sons stood together, Mrs. Dunbar holding the slip of paper.

"Harburt . . . Hutchinson."

"Get up there, Bill," Mrs. Hutchinson said, and the people near her laughed.

"Jones."

"They do say," Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, "that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery."

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 any more, live *that* way for a while. Used to be a saying about 'Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon.' First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's *always* been a lottery," he added petulantly. "Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody."

"Some places have already quit lotteries," Mrs. Adams said.

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

"Martin." And Bobby Martin watched his father go forward. "Overdyke . . . Percy."

"I wish they'd hurry," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son. "I wish they'd hurry."

"They're almost through," her son said.

"You get ready to run tell Dad," Mrs. Dunbar said.

Mr. Summers called his own name and then stepped forward precisely and selected a slip from the box. Then he called, "Warner."

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

"Watson." The tall boy came awkwardly through the crowd. Someone said, "Don't be nervous, Jack," and Mr. Summers said, "Take your time, son."

"Zanini."

After that, there was a long pause, a breathless pause, until Mr. Summers, holding his slip of paper in the air, said, "All right, fellows." For a minute, no one moved, and then all the slips of paper were opened. Suddenly, all the

women began to speak at once, saying "Dunbars?" "Is it the Watsons?" Then they said, "It's Bill," "Bill Hutchinson's got it."

"Go tell your father," Mrs. Dunbar said.

People began to look around to see who was standing quiet, staring down at the ground. Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers, "Take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It was your paper."

"Be a good sport, Tessie," Mrs. Delacroix said. "None of us took the same chance."

"Shut up, Tessie," Bill Hutchinson said.

"Well, everyone," Mr. Summers said, "we've got to be hurrying a little more to get to the next list. 'Bill,' he said, 'you draw for the other households in the Hutchinsons?'"

"There's Don and Eva," Mrs. Hutchinson said. "What chance!"

"Daughters draw with their husbands," Mr. Summers said gently. "You know that as well as anyone."

"It wasn't *fair*," Tessie said.

"I guess not, Joe," Bill Hutchinson said. "You draw with her husband's family, that's only fair. It's the kids."

"Then, as far as drawing for families goes," Mr. Summers said in explanation, "and as far as drawing for children goes, you, too. Right?"

"Right," Bill Hutchinson said.

"How many kids, Bill?" Mr. Summers said.

"Three," Bill Hutchinson said. "The boys, and Tessie and me."

"All right, then," Mr. Summers said. "Mr. Graves nodded and held up the slip. Then," Mr. Summers directed. "Take Bill's paper."

"I think we ought to start over," Mr. Summers said. "I tell you it wasn't *fair*. You didn't draw. *Everybody* saw that."

Mr. Graves had selected the five slips and dropped all the papers but those onto the ground. Then he turned to the people and lifted them off.

"Listen, everybody," Mrs. Hutchinson said. "It's her."

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"Ready, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked, and Bill Hutchinson, with one quick glance around at his wife and children, nodded.

"Remember," Mr. Summers said, "take the slips and keep them folded until each person has taken one. Harry, you help little Dave." Mr. Graves took the hand of the little boy, who came willingly with him up to the box. "Take a paper out of the box, Davy," Mr. Summers said. Davy put his hand into the box and laughed. "Take just *one* paper," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you hold it for him." Mr. Graves took the child's hand and removed the folded paper from the tight fist and held it while little Dave stood next to him and looked up at him wonderingly.

"Nancy next," Mr. Summers said. Nancy was twelve, and her school friends breathed heavily as she went forward, switching her skirt, and took a slip daintily from the box. "Bill, Jr.," Mr. Summers said, and Billy, his face red and his feet over-large, nearly knocked the box over as he got a paper out. "Tessie," Mr. Summers said. She hesitated for a minute, looking around defiantly, and then set her lips and went up to the box. She snatched a paper out and held it behind her.

"Bill," Mr. Summers said, and Bill Hutchinson reached into the box and felt around, bringing his hand out at last with the slip of paper in it.

The crowd was quiet. A girl whispered, "I hope it's not Nancy," and the sound of the whisper reached the edges of the crowd.

"It's not the way it used to be," Old Man Warner said clearly. "People ain't the way they used to be."

"All right," Mr. Summers said. "Open the papers. Harry, you open little Dave's."

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.

"Tessie," Mr. Summers said. There was a pause, and then Mr. Summers looked at Bill Hutchinson, and Bill unfolded his paper and showed it. It was blank.

"It's Tessie," Mr. Summers said, and his voice was hushed. "Show us her paper, Bill."

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. Bill Hutchinson held it up, and there was a stir in the crowd.

"All right, folks," Mr. Summers said. "Let's finish quickly."

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made

earlier was ready; there were stones on paper that had come out of the box. Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in her breath, "I can't run at all. You'll have to pick it up with both hands and she said, "Hurry up."

Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in her breath, "I can't run at all. You'll have to pick it up with both hands and she said, "Hurry up."

The children had stones already. Hutchinson a few pebbles.

Tessie Hutchinson was in the center, held her hands out desperately as the villagers. she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.

Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, was in the front of the crowd of villagers.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson said upon her.

## QUESTIONS

SHIRLEY JACKSON, *The Lottery*

1. Where is the village located? How does the story's setting influence our response to its ending?
2. At what point do we suspect that the lottery is not what it appears to be? What is the significance of Old Man Warner's saying, "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon"? What was the lottery's original function, and what is its current function?
3. How do characters' names reflect their personalities and roles?
4. How does irony function in the story?
5. What does the black box symbolize? What other symbols are important to the story?
6. What does the story suggest about tradition and change? about gender roles? about community?
7. Write an essay focused on Tessie Hutchinson as the story's protagonist. Identify her antagonist(s), and consider why she is late to the lottery.
8. Jackson tells the story from an omniscient point of view. Write an essay analyzing how this point of view contributes to the story's plot, especially its ending. Speculate about how the story might differ if it were told from another perspective.



Jack London

[1876–1916]

JOHN GRIFFITH LONDON was born in San Francisco, California. He did not reveal his father's name though he was a journalist and lawyer. The boy's nanny was Flora Prentiss. In 1876, Flora married John London. London completed grade school. After school, London sailed the Pacific on a sealing ship; he returned to San Francisco. He became interested in socialism and ran for office several times on the socialist ticket. He decided to write short stories, jokes, and poems to various publications. The Yukon gave London the material for his first story, "The Call of the Wild," which appeared in the *Overland Monthly* in 1899. He published novels, plays, and political essays. *The Call of the Wild* and his short stories are classics of their genre. London criticized capitalism and John Barleycorn, alcoholism. In 1907 London sailed across the Arctic and then wrote books and stories about his experiences. London was among the most popular writers of his time and is remembered as a children's writer. His novel *The Wolf* was the basis for an especially popular play. London's suffrage and created some of the most interesting characters in American fiction. London's first marriage was to a woman whom he had two daughters, Joan and Elizabeth. As an example, he co-wrote, with Anna, a book which opines that mates should be selected by the state. He married Charmian Kittredge, five years his junior. She is the persona for many of his female characters. She is the basis for *The Log of the Snark*, *Our Hawaii*, and *The Sea Wolf*. London developed kidney disease of unknown origin and died on November 22, 1916, on his ranch in California. London's adult life. He brought to California elements of his upbringing and careful animal management. His work is more widely read in countries outside his country.

—David L. G. Arnold,



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