

Power and the Group: Meaning and Context in The Lottery

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Power and the Group: Meaning and Context in The Lottery

There is power in any group consensus. As long as the group thinks as a group they gain authority and power over single voice. The group deflects the problems of the individual by diffusing responsibility throughout its members. Diffusion of responsibility allows the group to think as an entity. Over time, the entity develops a set of mores. Mores within the group are very strong. The group takes on characteristics and functions as if it were possessed of individuals, but because its responsibility is to remain all knowing, all-powerful and obs equious. Claiming responsibility would in effect threaten the entity, so instead the entity threatens the individual that says I am responsibly for myself. Groups cry out, "it isn't fair" while the individual cries out "it isn't right" so it was for Tessie [Hutchinson](#).

Shirley Jackson's essay, "The Lottery" is a tale wherein an appointed official conducts a yearly lottery, presumably to ensure good crops and health throughout the village. The head of each family draws a ticket from a lottery box. One family draws the marked ticket. The individual [members](#) within the family then draw again, determining the winner. At first

it seems surprising that when stripped to its essential elements that the story holds the attention of the reader, but because the audience identifies with the details of the town, the villager, even the drawing of lottery tickets, we, like the group process itself, become part of the fiber of the story. The audience takes in stride that Jackson clues us in on a sinister undercurrent by the gathering of boys who “made great pile of [stones](#) in one corner of the square and gua...

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...remains in effect, he can deflect responsibility for poor crops and ill health onto the mystery of an outdated belief system. The reader may think that we are above such beliefs, but consider the tobacco industry’s self-serving lies and how many lives have been doomed by them. Then ask yourself, how many parents and children sit in courtrooms or mental institutions thinking, “it isn’t fair, it isn’t right”?

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