

## “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson

### Plot Overview

The villagers of a small town gather together in the square on June 27, a beautiful day, for the town lottery. In other towns, the lottery takes longer, but there are only 300 people in this village, so the lottery takes only two hours. Village children, who have just finished school for the summer, run around collecting stones. They put the stones in their pockets and make a pile in the square. Men gather next, followed by the women. Parents call their children over, and families stand together.

Mr. Summers runs the lottery because he has a lot of time to do things for the village. He arrives in the square with the black box, followed by Mr. Graves, the postmaster. This black box isn't the original box used for the lottery because the original was lost many years ago, even before the town elder, Old Man Warner, was born. Mr. Summers always suggests that they make a new box because the current one is shabby, but no one wants to fool around with tradition. Mr. Summers did, however, convince the villagers to replace the traditional wood chips with slips of paper.

Mr. Summers mixes up the slips of paper in the box. He and Mr. Graves made the papers the night before and then locked up the box at Mr. Summers's coal company. Before the lottery can begin, they make a list of all the families and households in the village. Mr. Summers is sworn in. Some people remember that in the past there used to be a song and salute, but these have been lost.

Tessie Hutchinson joins the crowd, flustered because she had forgotten that today was the day of the lottery. She joins her husband and children at the front of the crowd, and people joke about her late arrival. Mr. Summers asks whether anyone is absent, and the crowd responds that Dunbar isn't there. Mr. Summers asks who will draw for Dunbar, and Mrs. Dunbar says she will because she doesn't have a son who's old enough to do it for her. Mr. Summers asks

whether the Watson boy will draw, and he answers that he will. Mr. Summers then asks to make sure that Old Man Warner is there too.

Mr. Summers reminds everyone about the lottery's rules: he'll read names, and the family heads come up and draw a slip of paper. No one should look at the paper until everyone has drawn. He calls all the names, greeting each person as they come up to draw a paper. Mr. Adams tells Old Man Warner that people in the north village might stop the lottery, and Old Man Warner ridicules young people. He says that giving up the lottery could lead to a return to living in caves. Mrs. Adams says the lottery has already been given up in other villages, and Old Man Warner says that's "nothing but trouble."

Mr. Summers finishes calling names, and everyone opens his or her papers. Word quickly gets around that Bill Hutchinson has "got it." Tessie argues that it wasn't fair because Bill didn't have enough time to select a paper. Mr. Summers asks whether there are any other households in the Hutchinson family, and Bill says no, because his married daughter draws with her husband's family. Mr. Summers asks how many kids Bill has, and he answers that he has three. Tessie protests again that the lottery wasn't fair.

Mr. Graves dumps the papers out of the box onto the ground and then puts five papers in for the Hutchinsons. As Mr. Summers calls their names, each member of the family comes up and draws a paper. When they open their slips, they find that Tessie has drawn the paper with the black dot on it. Mr. Summers instructs everyone to hurry up.

The villagers grab stones and run toward Tessie, who stands in a clearing in the middle of the crowd. Tessie says it's not fair and is hit in the head with a stone. Everyone begins throwing stones at her.