The Lottery Essay, Research Paper

Subtlety plays a most significant role in the setting of ?The Lottery.? The setting set forth by Shirley Jackson in the beginning of the short story creates a mood of peacefulness and tranquillity. It also creates a visual image in the mind of the reader, the image of a typical town on a normal summer day. Shirley Jackson effectively uses setting in ?The Lottery? to foreshadow an ironic ending. This is developed through a description of the physical setting, a general description of the residents, subtle hints throughout the story and the names of the main characters. These concepts all give the reader a better understanding of the setting and therefore a more enjoyable read.

Shirley Jackson begins ?The Lottery? by establishing the setting, she also comments that school has just been recently let out for summer break, allowing the reader to infer that it is early summer. The setting of the town is described by the author as that of any normal rural community. She describes the grass as “richly green” and that “the flowers were blooming profusely.? These descriptions of the surroundings give the reader a serene feeling about the town. These descriptions make the reader comfortable about the surroundings, as if there is nothing wrong in this quaint town. In the first paragraph, Shirley Jackson describes the town to her readers very generally. The town is mentioned in the opening paragraph, where she sets the location in the town square. The town square is an important location for the beginning and ending of the story will all occur there, witch leaves the impression of a full and complete story.

Also, Shirley Jackson successfully creates a comfortable atmosphere while describing the residents of the town. She describes the children gathering together and breaking into “boisterous play.? When the children are described to the reader, it is mentioned that they are gathering rocks. This is ironic because they will use the rocks to kill a member of their town. The men are described as gathering together and talking about “planting and rain, tractors and taxes.? The women of this community were “exchanging bits of gossip.? All three activities are common to today?s society. These descriptions give the reader a wider perspective of the setting and a deeper outlook into the development of the story. Up to this point in the story Shirley Jackson has not pointed out anything out of the ordinary that would reflect an ironic ending.

However, upon further reading, Shirley Jackson gives the reader hints about the unusualness of this town. First, she sets the time of day to be midmorning. Why would the town have a lottery during the day? Further, she fails to describe a church or courthouses which are common buildings to all communities. Is there no protection for the citizens? She points out the fact that the children are building “a great pile of stones in one corner of the square.? These points should lead the reader to consider that this town is far from normal. Still, most readers believe this town is peaceful. The introduction of the black box is a key turning point for the mood. The black box symbolizes an immoral act to the villagers. This is evident in the fact that “the villagers kept their distance” from the black box. After the introduction of the black box the villagers become uneasy. The black box is the key that changes the mood from serene and peaceful to ominous.

Further foreshadowing by the author leads the reader to consider the town to be odd and peculiar. For instance, the names of the residents foreshadow unfavorable events about to occur. The lottery is conducted by Mr. Summers, the time of year the lottery takes place. Mr. Summers is helped by Mr. Graves, who has often stored the black box for the lottery. Graves is a name commonly associated with death. Hutchison is used because Shirley Jackson wants her reader to relate themselves to this common name. These names foreshadow what is about to occur. The death of an innocent woman, in the name of tradition.

Shirley Jackson creates the mood of a typical town on a normal summer morning. This setting creates an atmosphere of tranquillity and peacefulness. Through the description of the physical setting and residents, the use of subtle details and the main characters names, Shirley Jackson is able to foreshadow a cruel, wicked ending.