The Lottery Essay, Research Paper

The Lottery Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” portrays a small town in which the citizens gather for a yearly lottery. Unlike the “typical” lottery, this is not one you would want to win. Throughout “The Lottery,” Jackson focuses on families from the village in order to demonstrate the role of separation of genders. Gender is defined as the sexual identity of a person, especially in relation to society or culture. Gender divisions exist within the community in “The Lottery” and issues of gender help to explain the characters action and thoughts. During the lottery, everyone is equal and the society is genderless. Although the men draw as the head of the household, the women partake in the final rounds and the stoning of the victim. This is evident when “Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands”(200). This shows that even though women did not normally participate in town events, the lottery was an exception to the rule. Young girls were also equal to young boys during this event. Both the girls and the boys stoned the victim along with the rest of the community, regardless of gender. This suggests that the lottery serves as a great equalizer abolishing all forms of separation of gender. Despite this equality during the lottery, gender does drive this story. Division of labor is evidence that a separation of gender exists. Due to the fact that Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves are men in the village, they are given the opportunity to administer the lotter. By having this chance, they gain the ability to prove to the people in the community that men are the holders of the highest positions. In his making of the list, Mr. Summers imposes his power upon the community, by determining who will draw from the box first. Gender plays a role in the purpose of the lottery. The lottery is set up to show women that by producing more children, they will lessen their chances of being chosen. This is due to the fact that in larger families, the chance of one person being chosen is reduced significantly with each additional member of teh family. The opposite is true for small families. Because women are the producers of children, they are the main target of the lottery. They are encouraged to produce more children, thereby taking upon even more responsibilities as a housewife. The social status of women in this society shows that division of gender exists. Contrary to the superiority of men, women were disenfranchised in this village. The role of women in this society is that they are to be at home with their children while their husbands work. Jackson portrays women as “wearing faded house dresses and sweaters…standing by their husbands”(195). This shows their lack of power and low placement in society. Bill Hutchinson proves his authority over his wife when he “forced the slip of paper out of his wife’s hand” in order to determine who in his family would be the victim(200). They were thought of as housewives and were not given the privilege of representing their family under most circumstances. This, of course, puts women at a disadvantage. Another disadvantage for the women is that when they marry, they must draw with their husband’s famliy in the lottery. Since the men are to chose the slip, the women have no say in their own fate and must accept the responsibility if their family is chosen. Only if her family is chosen, is she allowed to pick a slip, determining if she will be stoned to death. This is evident when Mr. Summers asks Mrs. Dunbar who will be drawing for her husband due to his absence in the lottery. She replies “Me, I guess”. Mr. Summers answers with astonishment, “wife draws for husband, don’t you have a grown boy to do it for you”(196-7). The same is true of Mrs. Hutchinson who leaves her housework in order to attend the lottery. Mrs. Hutchinson, forgetting what day it was, “dried her hands on her apron” and hurried to be with the rest of the people from the village(196). Before attending the lottery, she is required to finish the housework. She says to her husband, “wouldn’t have me leave m’dishes in the sink, now would you Joe?”(196). This shows that although the even of the lottery is classless, it is evident that women were inferior to men. It is evident that gender division exists due to the difference in expectations of young grils as opposed to boys. There is also a gender separation among the young girls and boys. This separation of the sexes is evident among the children when Jackson writes “The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys”(195). This is what is expected of the girls when they grow up, to remain at home like their mothers while they rely on their husbands to make the money. These village children have been brainwashed into the beliefs of the lottery which victimizes Tessie Hutchinson. In conclusion, Jackson’s “The Lottery” which depicts a small town, focuses on families from the village in order to demonstrate the role of gender divisions. Gender is sexual identity of a person, specifically in relation to society or culture. This is evident in division of labor, the role of women versus the role of men, and the purpose of the lottery. ALtough a lottery like this is unheard of in today’s society, senseless violence like this still exists. Bibliography none