

Figurative Language In The Lottery

"The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson
Literary Devices - Foreshadowing - ANSWERS

Instructions:
First, for each of the made up examples of foreshadowing given below, identify what you think might happen later in the story. An example has been provided for you. Next, identify three moments of foreshadowing in The Lottery. Write down a quote that foreshadows later events in the story and cite your evidence. Explain how this quote foreshadows later events.

Example: A man tells his wife that he forgot to renew the car insurance.
Example response: The man might get into a car accident since attention has been placed on his lack of insurance.
Example: There is a breaking news story about a strange new illness that is going around.
Answers will vary: We can assume that a massive outbreak will occur, threatening the lives of many.
Example: The main character leaves the window open in the kitchen.
Answers will vary: A burglar might break into the house. Something valuable may be stolen.

Example 1:
Quote: "I thought we were going to have to get on without you."
Citation: Jackson, p. 3
Explain: This line says exactly what will happen to Mrs. Hutchinson by the end of the story. Although Mr. Summers speaks in reference to the lottery itself, in the end the entire village will have to get on without Mrs. Hutchinson because she is killed.

Example 2:
Quote: "Tobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example."
Citation: Jackson, p. 1
Explain: The foreshadowing of the boys gathering stones is incredibly significant because these are the weapons used to kill Mrs. Hutchinson.

Example 3:
Quote: "They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet, and they smiled rather than laughed."
Citation: Jackson, p. 1
Explain: The description here is important because it lets readers know that the men do not want to associate with the stones that will later be used to kill Mrs. Hutchinson. It also lets readers know that this event is not a happy one: weapons used to kill Mrs. Hutchinson.

Foreshadowing is meant to spot once you have finished reading. Often in TL and novels it is so subtle that you notice it right away, but in fiction you might not catch it until you have finished.

Figurative language in the lottery plays an essential role in shaping the narrative and deepening the themes of Shirley Jackson's short story, "The Lottery." This story, first published in 1948, has sparked discussions and analyses around its seemingly innocuous setting juxtaposed with a shocking and violent conclusion. Through the use of various types of figurative language, Jackson crafts a chilling atmosphere and conveys complex ideas about tradition, conformity, and human nature. In this article, we will explore the different forms of figurative language employed in "The Lottery," their significance, and how they contribute to the overall impact of the story.

Understanding Figurative Language

Figurative language refers to the use of words or expressions that deviate from their literal interpretation to convey complex meanings, evoke emotions, or create vivid imagery. This can include various literary devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, symbolism, and hyperbole. In the context of "The Lottery," Jackson skillfully employs these devices to enhance the reader's understanding of the story's themes and the unsettling nature of the annual lottery.

Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors and similes are two common forms of figurative language that compare one thing to another, either directly or indirectly. In "The Lottery," Jackson uses these comparisons to paint a picture of the setting and the characters, creating a sense of normalcy that is ultimately shattered.

- Metaphor: The lottery itself serves as a metaphor for the blind adherence to tradition. The villagers

participate in the lottery without questioning its morality or purpose, representing how societies can perpetuate harmful practices simply because they have always done so. This metaphor highlights the dangers of conformity and the human tendency to follow tradition without critical thought.

- Simile: Jackson employs similes to describe the villagers and their actions, enhancing the reader's understanding of their complacency. For instance, the villagers are described as being "like a bunch of children," which implies a naive and unquestioning acceptance of their fate. Such comparisons emphasize the irony of their behavior, as they engage in a ritual that leads to violence.

Personification and Imagery

Personification is another powerful tool used by Jackson to bring inanimate objects to life and evoke emotional responses. Throughout "The Lottery," the setting is imbued with a sense of foreboding that contrasts sharply with the idyllic rural scene.

- Personification: The black box used in the lottery is personified, described as "worn and splintered," suggesting age and decay, which symbolizes the outdated and brutal tradition it represents. The box's poor condition implies a reluctance to change, reflecting the villagers' attachment to an unquestioned ritual that has lost its meaning.

- Imagery: Vivid imagery is employed to create a stark contrast between the beautiful summer day and the horrific act that occurs at the story's climax. For example, the description of blooming flowers and the sunny sky creates a peaceful and serene atmosphere, which enhances the shock when the lottery's true purpose is revealed. This juxtaposition serves to heighten the sense of horror and disillusionment felt by the reader.

Symbolism in "The Lottery"

Symbolism is a significant aspect of figurative language that adds depth to the narrative. In "The Lottery," many elements symbolize broader concepts, further enriching the themes of the story.

Key Symbols

1. The Lottery Itself: The lottery symbolizes the blind acceptance of tradition. It serves as a critique of societal norms that are followed without question, highlighting the potential for violence inherent in such adherence.

2. The Black Box: The black box symbolizes the villagers' reluctance to let go of tradition. Its shabby condition represents the decay of the moral values associated with the lottery. The villagers' attachment to this box indicates their unwillingness to challenge or change the ritual, despite its brutality.

3. The Stones: The stones used in the stoning are a potent symbol of communal violence. They represent the capacity for cruelty that exists within the community, as well as the complicity of all villagers in the act of violence. The act of gathering stones signifies the readiness of the townspeople

to participate in the ritualistic violence, reflecting a darker aspect of human nature.

Thematic Implications of Figurative Language

The figurative language in "The Lottery" serves to reinforce its central themes, including the dangers of conformity, the role of tradition, and the capacity for violence within ordinary individuals.

Dangers of Conformity

Through the use of metaphors and imagery, Jackson emphasizes that conformity can lead to moral blindness. The villagers' unthinking participation in the lottery illustrates how social pressures can override individual moral judgment. The figurative language creates a chilling depiction of a society that prioritizes tradition over humanity, ultimately leading to tragic consequences.

The Role of Tradition

The symbols and personification in the story highlight the complexities of tradition. While traditions can provide a sense of identity and community, they can also perpetuate harm. The black box and the lottery itself serve as reminders of how rituals can become divorced from their original meanings, morphing into oppressive practices that communities may cling to out of fear or habit.

Human Nature and Violence

The brutality of the lottery, juxtaposed with the serene setting, asks readers to confront the darker aspects of human nature. The figurative language effectively conveys the idea that violence can emerge from the most ordinary circumstances. By illustrating the villagers as ordinary people capable of horrific actions, Jackson forces the audience to reflect on their own potential for cruelty, especially when influenced by societal norms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of figurative language in "The Lottery" is integral to the story's impact. Through metaphors, similes, personification, and symbolism, Shirley Jackson crafts a narrative that explores the complexities of tradition, conformity, and human nature. The chilling atmosphere and profound themes resonate with readers, prompting them to question their own beliefs and the traditions they uphold. The figurative language not only enriches the storytelling but also serves as a powerful vehicle for social commentary, making "The Lottery" a timeless piece of literature that continues to provoke thought and discussion.

Frequently Asked Questions

What role does symbolism play in Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery'?

Symbolism in 'The Lottery' is crucial as it represents the dark side of human nature and the dangers of blindly following tradition. For example, the black box symbolizes the tradition of the lottery itself, while the stones represent the violence that can arise from conformity.

How does foreshadowing enhance the story in 'The Lottery'?

Foreshadowing in 'The Lottery' builds suspense and prepares the reader for the shocking conclusion. Subtle hints, such as the villagers' uneasy behavior and the children's gathering of stones, suggest that the lottery will not be a positive event.

Can you identify an example of irony in 'The Lottery'?

One striking example of irony in 'The Lottery' is that the lottery, which is typically associated with positive outcomes, leads to a brutal and shocking event. This twist highlights the disconnect between the villagers' perception of the lottery and its real, violent consequences.

What metaphors can be found in 'The Lottery' and what do they signify?

Metaphors in 'The Lottery' include the lottery itself, which can be seen as a metaphor for the arbitrary nature of violence and scapegoating in society. It signifies how communities can turn on individuals without questioning the morality of their actions.

How is imagery used in 'The Lottery' to convey themes?

Imagery in 'The Lottery' vividly depicts the village setting, the participants, and the lottery process, which contrasts the idyllic scene with the horrific outcome. This juxtaposition emphasizes themes of normalcy versus brutality and the dangers of conformity.

What is the significance of the title 'The Lottery' in the context of figurative language?

The title 'The Lottery' is significant because it evokes the idea of luck and chance, yet the story reveals a sinister twist where winning the lottery means facing death. This juxtaposition highlights the irony and the dark critique of societal norms.

How does personification appear in 'The Lottery' and what does it illustrate?

Personification appears in 'The Lottery' when the villagers treat the lottery box with reverence, as if it holds power or wisdom. This illustrates how traditions can take on a life of their own, becoming entities that dictate behavior and suppress individual thought.

What is the impact of the tone in 'The Lottery' on its figurative language?

The tone in 'The Lottery' starts off light and casual but becomes increasingly ominous. This shift enhances the impact of the figurative language, as the reader feels the growing tension and realizes the horrific nature of the lottery as the story progresses.

How does Shirley Jackson use hyperbole in 'The Lottery'?

Jackson employs hyperbole in descriptions of the villagers' excitement and traditions surrounding the lottery, amplifying the absurdity of their actions and the chilling normalcy with which they accept violence, thus critiquing blind adherence to tradition.

What themes are conveyed through the use of figurative language in 'The Lottery'?

Themes such as the dangers of conformity, the nature of violence, and the critique of tradition are conveyed through figurative language. The use of symbols, irony, and imagery work together to challenge readers to question societal norms and moral choices.

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Explore the use of figurative language in "The Lottery" to uncover deeper meanings and themes. Learn more about the symbolism and imagery that enhance this classic tale.

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