

Activity Sheet:

“The Lottery” Discussion Guide

Directions: Use this discussion guide to facilitate thoughtful responses to the story “The Lottery.” Before students read the story, utilize the “accessing the story” questions to assist students with recalling their prior knowledge. Invite multiple interpretations throughout all discussions, giving the students opportunities to explore a variety of perspectives and pose an array of questions.

Accessing the Story

This story by Shirley Jackson takes place in a small rural village. The people are gathered for the drawing of a lottery. Consider what you know about small towns. What are some characteristics of a small town or community? Have you ever been to a small town? What was it like? When you think of a lottery, what do you expect to take place? How would you define a lottery? Have you or do you know someone who has participated in a lottery? What was the outcome?

Making Meaning

Use the following questions to guide students through a post-reading literature discussion. Focus on inviting all students to participate, welcoming a variety of interpretations and perspectives. Utilize student comments to probe at the meaning of the story and to move the conversation along. Encourage students’ questions and celebrate them. Use students’ questions to lead to others, helping students to develop their own unique visions of the text.

1. Why do you think so much time is spent describing the black box?
2. What do you think the purpose of the lottery is in the village? Why do you think people continue to participate in it?
3. Why do you think the lottery is such a long-standing tradition in the village?
4. Does this compare to anything you know in real life? Explain.
5. How do you think the village people feel about the lottery? Explain.
6. What would you have done in Tessie Hutchinson’s situation? Explain.
7. How did you feel about the lottery at the end of the story? What was your reaction?
8. Do you think this sort of lottery could take place in your own community? Why or why not? Are there any events that have occurred in your community that remind you of the events in “The Lottery?”
9. How did your initial understanding of the term “lottery” compare to the lottery in the story? How did your initial understandings help or confuse your interpretation of the story?
10. Do you think this story has a message for readers? Explain your view.
11. How have other classmates’ interpretations of the story impacted your own understanding of it?

Creative Response

Consider how this story would change if it was told from a different point of view. How would Bill Hutchinson or Tessie Hutchinson tell the story? What if the reader knew all of their thoughts? Write a news story about the event of the lottery, focusing on an interview with one of the townspeople. What would they say about the event? An alternative to this activity is to conduct a dramatic interview of some of the townspeople, as in a talk show format.

“The Lottery” Discussion Guide Activity Sheet, cont’d.

Across Texts

Consider using other texts to inform the students’ understanding of this one. Students may point out texts on their own, or the teacher may point out texts students have read or ones they are going to read in the future. You might consider the following:

Novel: *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

Novel: *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Novel: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell

Novel: *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

Novel: *1984* by George Orwell

Novel: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

Short Story: “Charles” by Shirley Jackson

Short Story: “A Jury of Her Peers” by Susan Glaspell

Short Story: “All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury

Short Story: “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

Old Testament: Leviticus 16:22, ritual of purification

Current events identified by students and teacher

* Note: Online resources related to the above texts can be accessed at the *Conversations in Literature* Web site. Go to www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/ and click on “Workshop 4. Moving Through,” “Extension: Classroom Connection,” and “The Lottery’ Discussion Guide Activity Sheet.”