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### **Critical Thinking and Analysis of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery."**

The short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson is about a small town of 300 people gathering to do their town lottery. The lottery is run on July 27th by a man named Mr. Summers. The day begins by the children gathering stones and putting them in a pile in the town's square. Mr. Summers summons the family representatives, which is most likely a grown man, to draw a piece of paper from a wooden box. The man selected was Bill Hutchinson. After the Hutchinson family has been selected, Mr. Summers puts 5 slips of paper in the box, one for each member of the family. Each person in the family draws a piece of paper and the person who receives the paper with the black dot on it wins the lottery. The unlucky person to win was Tess; Bill Hutchinson's wife. Once it is announced that Tess has won the villagers begin to approach her, picking up rocks and throwing them at her. It becomes clear that the prize of the lottery is being stoned to death. The theme of capitalism pretending to be egalitarianism is very apparent throughout the short story. The two paragraphs analyzed will be paragraphs four and ten.

Capitalism is a type of political ideology in which the economics of a system are based off of private owners, for production and distribution for profit. In this short story capitalism is disguised as egalitarianism which is a principle where everyone is equal, and have equal opportunities. Paragraph four begins with the listing off of all the programs that Mr. Summers runs for the small town. He runs the lottery, the Halloween program, the teenage club, and the square dances. This is done to give Mr. Summers a charitable, and community loving persona.

It's also mentioned that the coal business is privately owned by Mr. Summers. He walks into the square, followed by someone carrying a stool for him to sit on. When he enters he says, "Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?" (Jackson 352), Mr. Martin and his son stepped forward to help him. Shirley Jackson's purpose in portraying Mr. Summers as a charitable and community oriented person by mentioning everything he does for the town is to convince the readers that he is a selfless person. Mr. Summers running the coal business privately is an example of communism as he is running it for self profit and using profit to provide its funding. The atmosphere in this paragraph is very tense. This is shown when Shirley Jackson says, "The villagers kept their distance" (Jackson 352). The villagers know that he has the power to harm or even sabotage the lottery if they leave a negative impression on him. As well as the villagers seeing him as more important and intimidating; he sees himself the same way. This is portrayed when Mr. Summers has one of the villagers carry up a stool for him to sit on, and then he has other villagers to carry the box for him as if he is too good to do it for himself. This paragraph is significant in demonstrating the theme of communism disguising as egalitarianism. This theme is also prevalent in paragraph ten. This paragraph begins with Mr. Summers starting the lottery. He says, "...get this over with, so's we can go back to work" (Jackson 354). Mr. Summers says this very nonchalantly as if the lottery was an inconvenience for his schedule and that it meant nothing. The villagers say that Clyde Dunbar is not present to draw because he broke his leg. When his wife says that she will draw for him, Mr. Summers is surprised and immediately asks if there is a boy in the family able to draw in the lottery. Mr. Summers appears to be almost reluctant to allow Janey to draw for her husband in the lottery; as if she is incapable of doing it because she is a woman. This short story was published in 1948, and it seems to take place in

this time frame. The story is written with the views of that time; that women are less than men and should be guided by them. In the lottery men and women have an equal chance to be drawn if their family is chosen. This is perceived as egalitarian but throughout the story it becomes more clear that Mr. Summers believes women to be incapable of doing things on their own. Another example of this is when Jack Watson says that he will be drawing for his family this year. Mr. Summers replies with, "Good fellow, Jack, glad to see your mother's got a man to do it" (Jackson 355). In these two paragraphs, Shirley Jackson toys with using objective and subtle narrative voice to portray the theme of communism and also sexist economics masquerading as egalitarianism.

Throughout the short story, the theme of capitalism disguised as egalitarianism is very prominent. Shirley Jackson does this in subtle ways; such as portraying characters different than who they are and using subtle narrative voice to suggest their true character. The theme of capitalism in paragraphs four and ten suggest insight to a larger theme; corruption and proof of the village's hierarchical system. The whole concept of the lottery is extremely corrupt. It is believed throughout the novel that if the lottery were to stop happening, the village would become corrupt. This is due to the hierarchical system. If the lottery were to stop being conducted they think that the villagers would stop listening to and being afraid of the authoritative figures. The lottery is made to conduct fear and show dominance over the villagers, and to lead the villagers to believe that they are all treated equally.