

CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH LITERATURE

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present how literature can be a powerful tool for teaching critical thinking as it offers the potential for higher level thinking. Benjamin S. Bloom's critical thinking questioning strategies are applied into the reading of a short story, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson. Pre-, while-, and post-reading activities which are designed according to Bloom's taxonomy are presented to show how the students learn to read personally, actively, and deeply - questioning, understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating.

Key words: *critical thinking, literature, short stories, Bloom's Taxonomy, teaching reading, teaching literature, The Lottery, Shirley Jackson.*

Özet

Eleştirel Düşüncenin Edebiyat ile Öğretimi

Bu çalışmanın amacı yazın yapıtlarının, öğrencileri eleştirel düşünmeye yönlendirmek amacıyla kullanılabilir yararlı bir araç olabileceğini göstermektir. Bu özelliğini örneklemek amacıyla Benjamin S. Bloom'un eleştirel düşünme ve sorgulama stratejileri Shirley Jackson'ın "The Lottery" adlı kısa hikayesinin okunmasında uygulanacak ve bu taxonomiye göre hazırlanmış okuma sırasında, ön ve son okumada yapılacak olan çalışmalar ve sorulacak sorularla öğrencinin nasıl sorgulayarak, anlayarak, analiz ederek, sentezleyerek ve değerlendirme yaparak bireysel, aktif ve ayrıntılı okumaya yönlendirilebileceği gösterilecektir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *eleştirel düşünme, yazın, kısa hikayeler, Bloom'un Taxonomisi, okuma öğretimi, yazın öğretimi, The Lottery, Shirley Jackson.*

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1. Introduction

Critical thinking, according to Nickerson et al. (1985:2), is the “ability to judge the plausibility of specific assertions, to weigh the evidence, to assess the logical soundness of inference, to construct arguments and alternate hypotheses”. Critical thinking implies that a reader is actively and constructively engaged in the process of reading. A more comprehensive definition is made by Yeşil (2004:1) as “critical thinking is the use of thinking skills beyond information recall including questioning, recognising, inducing, deducing, and inferring to make students’ academic lives more successful and personal lives more meaningful”.

Literature can be a powerful tool for teaching critical thinking and reading as it offers students the opportunity to actively engage in texts. Through literature, students can learn to read personally, actively, and deeply - questioning, understanding, enjoying, and learning. Reading literature offers the potential for higher level thinking. Essential to the success of higher level reading is the reader's ability to relate new information to what is known in order to find answers to cognitive questions. In order to become critical thinkers, it is important that students learn to value their own thinking, to compare their thinking and their interpretations with others, and to revise or reject parts of that process when it is appropriate.

According to Collins (1993) critical readers are active readers. They question, confirm, analyze, synthesize, relate, and judge what they read throughout the reading process. Students engaged in such activities are likely to become critical thinkers and learners. Therefore, critical thinking is a skill that can be developed.

The aim of this paper is to present the application of Benjamin S. Bloom’s (1956) critical thinking questioning strategies into the reading of a short story, *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. Pre-, while-, and post-reading activities which are designed according to Bloom’s categories in the cognitive domain (knowledge – comprehension – application – analysis – synthesis – evaluation) are presented to demonstrate how a student gets knowledge and analyze it for comprehension, and then, how he synthesizes what he has learned to apply in real life situations and at the final stage, how he evaluates his ideas.

2. Bloom's Critical Thinking Questioning Strategies

The reading activities in this study are designed according to Benjamin S. Bloom's Taxonomy. Taxonomy means 'a set of classification principles', or 'structure', and domain simply means 'category'. The cognitive domain in the taxonomy involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills.

It is a way to classify instructional activities or questions. There are six major categories, starting from the simplest behaviour to the most complex (see Table 1). As one moves down the hierarchy, the activities require higher level thinking skills. Among the six categories, the last three play a crucial role, in the development of higher level skills in the classroom. According to Bloom, students must master one level of thinking before they can move on to the next. We cannot expect our students to evaluate knowledge if we have not first required them to understand it, apply it, analyze it, and so on. Courses that employ critical thinking pedagogy take Bloom's theory into account, giving students practice in some of the lower critical thinking skills before moving them on to the more difficult tasks of the higher thinking processes.

2.1. Lower Levels

Knowledge: is defined as recognizing and remembering (recalling) of appropriate, previously learned information. Knowledge of terminology; specific facts; ways and means of dealing with specifics (conventions, trends and sequences, classifications and categories, criteria, methodology); universals and abstractions in a field (principles and generalizations, theories and structures). Knowledge represents the lowest level of learning outcomes in the cognitive domain. Questions such as “What is the capital of France?” or “Who wrote *Hamlet*?” are examples of knowledge questions.

Comprehension: is defined as the ability to grasp the meaning of material. This may be shown by translating material from one form to another (e.g. words to numbers), by interpreting material (e.g. explaining or summarizing), by estimating future trends (e.g. predicting consequences or effects), by demonstrating understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas. These learning outcomes go one step beyond simple remembering of material and represent the lowest level of understanding. Question like “what do you think Hamlet meant when he said, “to be or not to be, that is the question?” is an example.

Application: refers to the ability to use learned material in new and concrete situations. This may include the application of such things as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws, and theories. Learning outcomes in this area require a high level of understanding than those under comprehension. Solving math problems is an example.

2.2. Higher Levels

Analysis: refers to the ability to break down material into its component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. This may include the identification of the parts, analysis of the relationships between parts, and recognition of organizational principles involved. Learning outcomes here represent a higher intellectual level than comprehension and

application because they require an understanding of both content and the structural form of the material (e.g. After studying the French, American, and Russian revolutions, what can you conclude about the causes of a revolution?).

Synthesis: asks student to perform original and creative thinking: to produce original communications (e.g. Write a letter to the editor on a social issue of concern to you.); to make predictions (e.g. What would happen if school attendance was made optional?); to solve problems (e.g. How could we determine the number of pennies in a jar without counting them? How can we raise money for our school project?).

Evaluation: is concerned with the ability to judge the value of material (e.g. statement, novel, poem, research report) for a given purpose. The judgments are to be based on definite criteria. These may be internal criteria (e.g. organization) or external criteria (e.g. relevance to the purpose) and the student may determine the criteria or be given them. This type of question frequently is used to surface values or to cause students to realize that not everyone sees things the same way. It can be used to start a class discussion. It can also precede a follow-up analysis or synthesis question like, "Why?" Learning outcomes in this area are the highest in the cognitive hierarchy because they contain elements of all the other categories, and also conscious value judgments based on clearly defined criteria.

The following table displays Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and presents the verbs used for the objective which correspond to each type of question ranging from the lowest level to the highest. This table helps to recognize the categories easily.

Level	Type of Question	Verbs Used for Objectives
Lower levels	Knowledge	define, memorize, repeat, record, list, recall, name, relate, collect, label, specify, cite, enumerate, tell, recount
	Comprehension	restate, summarize, discuss, describe, recognize, explain, express, identify, locate, report, retell, review, translate
	Application	exhibit, solve, interview, simulate, apply, employ, use, demonstrate, dramatize, practice, illustrate, operate, calculate, show, experiment
Higher levels	Analysis	interpret, classify, analyze, arrange, differentiate, group, compare, organize, contrast, examine,

		scrutinize, survey, categorize, dissect, probe, inventory, investigate, question, discover, text, inquire, distinguish, detect, diagram, inspect
	Synthesis	compose, setup, plan, prepare, propose, imagine, produce, hypothesize, invent, incorporate, develop, generalize, design, originate, formulate, predict, arrange, contrive, assemble, concoct, construct, systematize, create
	Evaluation	judge, assess, decide, measure, appraise, estimate, evaluate, infer, rate, deduce, compare, score, value, predict, revise, choose, conclude, recommend, select, determine, criticize

Table -1. *Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*²

3. The Story: *The Lottery*

The activities in this study are prepared around, *The Lottery* which is a short story by Shirley Jackson with themes of scapegoating, man's inherent evil and the destructive nature of practising ancient and outdated rituals. It was first published in the June 26, 1948 issue of *The New Yorker*. Since then, it has been accepted as a classic American short story, subject to many critical interpretations and media adaptations

The purpose in teaching the story is not to have the students read for the sake of reading but to have them understand the message given in the text, and respond to it freely in order to explore their personal opinion and consider alternative viewpoints to approach the matter objectively. The aim is also to encourage the students to analyse new information to make inferences and synthesize what they learned for generating their own perspective and apply their knowledge in real life situations and finally evaluate what they think.

According to Wilson (1988), critical thinking advocates the use of strategies and techniques like formulating questions prior to, during, and after reading; responding to the text in terms of the student's own values; anticipating texts, and responding to texts through a variety of writing activities which ask readers to go beyond what they have read to experience the text in personal ways.

² From Benjamin S. Bloom, (1984). *Taxonomy of educational objectives*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

3.1. Pre-Reading Discussion

Teachers who encourage pre-reading discussions to help readers activate prior knowledge or fill in gaps in background knowledge, set the stage for critical reading. The reader is continually negotiating what s/he knows with what s/he is trying to make sense of. Background knowledge and the student's ability to draw upon it are essential to critical thinking/learning. Teachers help students identify purposes for reading, formulate hypotheses, and test the accuracy of their hypotheses throughout the reading process. Asking students to examine their own reading and learning processes creates the awareness necessary for critical reading.

The Lottery is about a town that has a lottery once a year to choose who should be sacrificed, so that the town will have a plentiful year for growing crops. Shirley Jackson has many messages about human nature in this short story. The most important message she conveys is how cruel and violent people can be to one another. Another very significant message she conveys is how custom and tradition can hold great power over people. The story takes place in a nameless village at a time that could be “long ago” or the “present”. The story opens with the townspeople assembling on the town square for the annual lottery held on the same date each summer. We do not learn what this lottery is actually for until the last page of the story. However, we do learn that it involves everyone in the village, from infants to old persons, and that some people seem to be uneasy, while others, especially the boys, are in good humour. Nearby is a pile of rocks. The boys play around the pile, filling their pockets with stones. The adults seem to avoid the pile. This ambiguity around the setting of the story and the nature of the lottery itself creates a tension in the reader. We wonder what is going on. After everyone has been accounted for, the lottery begins. The head of each household must pick a folded piece of paper from a black box placed in the centre of the square. When everyone has picked one, the pieces of paper are opened. The person with a black dot on his paper must draw again, along with the rest of his family. The person within the family who gets the paper with the black dot wins the lottery.

First of all, the ironic title of the story, *The Lottery*, attracts attention. Therefore, it is a good idea to start the lesson with a discussion about lotteries. By reading the title of the story, the reader may think that someone is going to win something. Questions such as “Do your parents play lottery?”, “Do you know anyone who won a lottery?”, “What are some good and bad points about lotteries?” can be used for breaking the ice because almost everyone knows a winner and/or a devoted player. The students can talk about stories of how devotedly people play the lottery, or which stores sell the most winning tickets. The themes of luck and routine also lead nicely into a discussion of rituals. Further discussion can be initiated by

means of questions such as “When does a routine or habit become a ritual?” or “What are some common rituals?”.

In almost every population, family rituals can be found: New Year dinner, religious feasts, and birthday celebrations. At this point, the students can be asked to describe a ritual unique to their family or group of friends. Five to seven minutes can be given for this writing activity; then they may tell each other what they wrote about. The goal here is to elicit some themes common to rituals and the reasons behind them. Prediction questions such as “What could this story be about?” can also be asked at this stage.

3.2. Reading of the Story

The story can now be introduced by explaining that the lottery in the story is a kind of ritual for the townspeople and that the students should look for examples of ritualistic behaviour as they read. Reading the story aloud encourages participation and attention.

3.3. While-Reading Questions

The story begins with the establishment of the setting. The day is "clear and sunny". The lottery is an annual event which takes place in the village on the day of June 27. Everybody gathers on this date in the middle of the square for the drawing of the lottery. Jackson's use of words keeps the reader thinking that there is nothing wrong and that everyone is fine, the people of the town are happy. Jackson presents the day as if it is any other ordinary summer day. She foreshadows the events to come by writing:

The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 27th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took less than two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands. Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Delacroix-- the villagers pronounced this name "Dellacroy"--eventually made a great pile of stones in one

corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.

To begin, Shirley Jackson tells the reader what time of day and what time of year the story takes place. This is important to get the reader to focus on what a typical day it is in this small town. The time of day is set in the morning and the time of year is early summer. She also describes that school has just recently let out for summer break, letting the reader infer that the time of year is early summer. Shirley Jackson also seems to stress on the beauty of the day and the brilliance of nature. This provides the positive outlook and lets the reader relax into what seems to be a comfortable setting for the story. In addition, the description of people and their actions are very typical and not abnormal. Children play happily, women gossip, and men casually talk about farming. Everyone is coming together for what seems to be enjoyable, festive, even celebratory occasion.

Lower-level questions are usually asked while reading to check the students' comprehension and knowledge: "When and where does the story take place?", "What are the general characteristics of the people in the village?", "What kind of jobs do they have?", "What do they look like?", "What is the relationship between men and women?". The teacher can often stop during the story to discuss a word or a paragraph that seemed difficult to understand. Comments or laughter can also be encouraged at funny parts.

We understand from the following extracts that to the townspeople this event is like any other event happening in their town, such as a dance, club, or even a holiday program. Mr. Summers, the head of the lottery, has to gather the information of all the households the night before to make the list for the following day. He has to mix the papers up with the one with the black dot on it in the box. The head of the household picks the paper from the box to see if their family drew the dot or not. This event takes just a few

hours to accomplish. The losing family then has to draw to decide who will lose in the household

The lottery was conducted--as were the square dances, the teen club, the Halloween program--by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic activities. He was a round-faced, jovial man and he ran the coal business, and people were sorry for him, because he had no children and his wife was a scold. When he arrived in the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a murmur of conversation among the villagers, and he waved and called. "Little late today, folks." The postmaster, Mr. Graves, followed him, carrying a three-legged stool, and the stool was put in the centre of the square and Mr. Summers set the black box down on it. The villagers kept their distance, leaving a space between themselves and the stool, and when Mr. Summers said, "Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?" there was a hesitation before two men, Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, came forward to hold the box steady on the stool while Mr. Summers stirred up the papers inside it.

...

The night before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slips of paper and put them in the box, and it was then taken to the safe of Mr. Summers' coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers was ready to take it to the square next morning. The rest of the year, the box was put away, sometimes one place, sometimes another; it had spent one year in Mr. Graves's barn and another year underfoot in the post office, and sometimes it was set on a shelf in the Martin grocery and left there.

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up--of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse. There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this also had changed with time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching.

The teacher can ask students to answer the following comprehension questions after reading the extracts above: “Who administers the lottery?”, “What is the ‘procedure’ of the lottery?”, “What signs are there of the people’s nervousness during the drawing?”. Since it is not clear what this lottery is about until the very end of the story, the teacher can read half of the story and stop the reading to ask if anyone had a guess as to what would happen next and who would win the lottery, encouraging them to look for clues that would help them predict the outcome.

Towards the end we learn that Hutchinsons win the lottery therefore, they have to draw again as the person within the family who gets the paper with the black dot wins the lottery. Mrs. Hutchinson is the main female character of the story and is probably the strongest example of a weak, powerless, scared woman. When faced with the possibility of winning, she panics and tries everything to decrease her chance of winning:

People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers. "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn't fair!"

"Be a good sport, Tessie." Mrs. Delacroix called, and Mrs. Graves said, "All of us took the same chance."

"Shut up, Tessie," Bill Hutchinson said.

...

"I think we ought to start over," Mrs. Hutchinson said, as quietly as she could. "I tell you it wasn't fair. You didn't give him time enough to choose. Everybody saw that."

...

"It's Tessie," Mr. Summers said, and his voice was hushed. "Show us her paper. Bill."

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal company office. Bill Hutchinson held it up and there was a stir in the crowd.

A lottery winner is generally very pleased with his/her luck. Therefore, the students will wonder why Tessie Hutchinson is not pleased at all. Possible questions at this point may be: “How does Bill Hutchinson react when he wins the lottery?”, “What is Tessie’s reaction?”.

When we read the final paragraph, we learn that the winner will be stoned to death by the rest of the villagers. The story closes with Mrs.

Hutchinson, the one with the black dot, screaming, "It isn't fair, it isn't right", as the villagers move in on her, throwing rocks and stones:

"All right, folks." Mr. Summers said. "Let's finish quickly."

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made earlier was ready; there were stones on the ground with the blowing scraps of paper that had come out of the box. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands and turned to Mrs. Dunbar. "Come on," she said. "Hurry up."

Mr. Dunbar had small stones in both hands, and she said, gasping for breath. "I can't run at all. You'll have to go ahead and I'll catch up with you."

The children had stones already. And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson few pebbles.

Tessie Hutchinson was in the centre of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head. Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.

Tessie assents to the idea of the lottery until she is selected as the person to be killed, screaming, "It isn't fair." Tessie's sudden change of heart upon having her own name chosen serves to highlight the hypocrisy of a society in which violence is accepted until it becomes personal.

Many of the townspeople do not even remember the reasons behind the ritual; they only continue the process for "tradition's sake". It indicates that humans are creatures of habit and that sometimes they continue to participate in (or tolerate) harmful practices. This is simply because as individuals we feel powerless and unable to stand up against behaviours that have always been accepted. The setting has set us up for a shocking and deadly end. What seemed like a wonderful and a joyful day ended with an unfortunate, tragic death. Jackson uses irony and comedy to suggest an underlying evil, hypocrisy, and weakness of human kind. This is what makes this story so disturbing and horrifying but a wonderful work of literature.

3.4. Post-Reading Discussions

Generally, the initial reaction to this story is one of horror and surprise. Students usually find it quite disturbing to read. They find it a very unusual

story which has a puzzling end. The discussion can focus on the text with the following analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions:

- How do you think the author foreshadows what is to come?
- Usually a lottery is something good. When do you begin to suspect that, in this case, no one wants to “win” the lottery?
- Would you predict that Mrs. Hutchinson will die by being stoned?
- Is Mrs. Hutchinson’s accusation fair?
- How would you react if you lived in that town?
- Can you compare the traditions and ceremonies in the story with those of today?
- What does the story imply about religion and human nature?
- Do you think the people in the village are guilty of murder? Why or why not?
- What are our responsibilities as individuals towards ourselves?
- When is it right to go against the majority? How do we know?

Naturally a lot of critical and creative thinking activities can be done in the post-reading stage. Teachers can design numerous analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions, activities, and discussions. Post-reading activities that extend texts provide an opportunity for teachers to check for learning. Transforming ideas from reading into artwork, poetry, drama is an evaluative, interpretive act that reveals the student's level of understanding.

At this stage, the class can have their own lottery. The person with the black dot, as in the story, has to summarize the story. To the students, summarizing a story is always worse than being stoned to death. A box can be filled with folded-up bits of paper, one having a black dot. As in the story, the students can draw their bits of paper, one by one. In the end the teacher can ask the students what they felt when they were doing the lottery, especially the student who draw the black dot.

After such critical discussions, the students can be encouraged to do some critical writing activities such as “Write a letter as if you were Bill Hutchinson to Mr. Summers, telling him that a change in the tradition is needed” or “Write a letter to the author of the story, Shirley Jackson, asking her why she wrote a story like this”. They can also be asked to recreate a certain scene as a mini-dialog (e.g. between two of the boys picking stones focusing on what they talk about, what they think about, what are they look forward to and so on).

Keeping a journal is another useful way to encourage critical thinking and writing. The students can be asked to write their initial responses first and later to write about their reaction to the questions posed during the post-reading class discussions.

4. Students' Responses

I applied these activities in my classroom with third year students majoring in Literature. The following responses taken from their journal entries show how they engage in divergent thinking, look for relationships among ideas, and grapple with real life issues:

When you hear the word lottery, you will probably think of winning a large sum of money, not being stoned to death but this story brings this horrible idea to life. The overall mood of the story depicts a typical day in a small rural town at the beginning, but we have an unusual ending. Shirley Jackson uses the element of surprise. The way the story ends could not be predicted. (Student-1)

The story shows how unquestioning we are. We keep on routinely doing things which we know are wrong (fighting, smoking, lying...). (St-2)

The story reminds us how egoistic humans can be, even toward their family. When something horrible happens, our first emotion is relief that it hasn't happened to us. (St-3)

I realised how really brutal human beings are. We are shocked at the brutal killing of one person in the story. But we kill millions of people for unclear reasons and justifications. (St-4)

I think the evil in the souls of the townspeople is brought out during the lottery. This evil comes out once a year for the lottery and takes over the mind and body of all, which makes them see this ritual as a normal tradition for many years. Everyone has some evil in them, but the lottery gives people a chance to bring out this evil. (St-5)

Some people have a soul in which the good side is more dominant, and others have a more dominant bad side. The lottery is a way for the characters in the story to reveal the hidden evil of their souls. One example of this is portrayed through the eagerness and the willingness of the people to participate in the lottery. One of the characters says that they feel like it's only been a few weeks since the last lottery, which gives the impression that the lottery is something to look forward to. This shows that the evil side of these people enjoys imposing pain on others.

(St-6)

The author beautifully tells us how everyone can follow traditions blindly. It is dangerous not to have a mind of your own and to just follow the crowd even if you don't understand or agree on why something is happening. This is very similar to our "Töre Cinayetleri" in the eastern part of Turkey. It has to be stopped. (St-7)

The first thing that catches my attention after reading is when the little boys start stuffing their pockets with stones when they arrive there. "Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones". This is a great example of the mere blindness in following ridiculous traditions. The young boys started getting stones ready as soon as they got there. This means they don't fully understand the tradition. They don't understand the complete purpose of the stones. They have seen the adults pick stones in years before and have followed in their footsteps without questioning. (St-8)

Tessie was right; the lottery wasn't fair. Death wasn't fair, especially if you were the sacrificial lamb for the sake of tradition. I don't even approve sacrificing lamb in Kurban Bayramı. (St-9)

All people in today's society fear change and fear the rejection of society. Shirley Jackson does a wonderful job of illustrating that we have no problem worrying about other people's problems but when people have problems of their own there is no one that has courage to say what they believe and what they think is right. They know that what is going on is wrong and sickening but they don't do a thing about it. (St-10)

During our post-reading discussions, the students remain confused and could not understand why the townspeople continue with the ritual. They believed that for what seem to be fairly modern people, this is a very barbaric practice. They all agreed that it was an extremely well written story as it keeps the curiosity alive until the end. The lottery is conducted in a particular manner, and with so much anticipation by the villagers, that the reader expects the winner to receive a prize or something of that manner. A student for example said that "I kept hoping that Mrs. Hutchinson was going to win a dishwasher or something like that since she was late for the lottery in order to finish washing the dishes, as in the following extract" and she quotes the following scene:

She dried her hands on her apron, and Mrs. Delacroix said, "You're in time, though. They're still talking away up there." ... Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers, who had been waiting, said cheerfully. "Thought we were going to have to get on without you, Tessie." Mrs. Hutchinson said, grinning, "Wouldn't have

me leave m'dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?" and soft laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back into position after Mrs. Hutchinson's arrival.

As can be seen from the students' responses, reading a piece of literature can encourage higher level thinking skills and students can respond to literature by making connections with the situation in the story and everyday life. Through literature they can be encouraged to read deeply, question, engage in divergent thinking, look for relationships among ideas, and tackle with real life issues. A course that emphasizes critical thinking can give opportunities to students to organize their ideas and support value judgements.

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