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Objects of Death

The macabre fact that man wallows in the final truth of death is perceptible at every level of society. Cultures throughout the world have initiated rituals and games which arise for the sole purpose of recognizing the verity of the human existence for millennia. Articles and symbols have been passed down through the ages in both formal and informal means. The symbols of death are everywhere around us, but not drawn attention to, until a time of socialistic acceptance, per se, is deemed, for whichever necessity, important in the daily, weekly or yearly cycles of our known universal systems; our known rites. From the game of soccer, which is derived from an ancient American Indian ritual of play with a freshly beheaded cranium, to the stoic anticipation of the grim reaper, passed down from Greek mythology to the Europeans, the many symbols of death do not evoke their true identity until it is so time.

In the short story *The Lottery*, written by Shirley Jackson, besides the literary symbolism evoked by the dialogue and the characters, there is a purely objective aspect to the piece, which can be read from the objects which become such an integral part of the actions which take place. The objects which man has both created, discovered as well as learned how to produce, from which humans derive usage as tools, weapons and toys, are as important in our present day and age, than at that of any era in mankind's history.

As the narrative began, the setting is described by the narrator, who also has commenced to include the objects which will invariably fill the reader with the images which

are to come. Such stark (Germanic in origin, meaning strong, and related to the German word *(die) Stärke*, from which the English word *starch* is derived) contrast to the ending and overall tone of the surrounding the actions of the peoples being written about cannot be deduced up to this point, rather, the author has nonetheless begun to twine the web of literary encaptivation which drives man to both read and author. Suddenly, upon the pages, the picture of a pile of stones is thrust into the imaginary view of the reader. Belonging to the earliest of weapons, the stone, which brings forth in the old-world-conscious of the world, an atavistic impending sense of danger, should be a sort of flag, which can only evoke a foreboding event. The Christian world has used the story of David and Goliath to teach the power of the small as well as bravery in the face of danger. This biblical reference to the single stone, whose power call be ascertained from this acknowledgment as nothing short of barbarically ancient and deadly, has remained ingrained for millennia.

Nature has power over man which he can, and neither will ever be able to fully comprehend. In the listing of the paraphernalia involved with the lottery of the village one item which cites to the role of nature in the world of man is the wooden chip. This simple object becomes akin to the thought of sacrifice among the beings of the natural world, in that the product of one ending of life, the felling of an arborous member of nature, is then used to harbor the end of another. In the sense of the modernization, the raw wooden chips have been conveniently replaced with paper chits, however this end-product remains the tree, sacrificing parts for the community of nature. A second facet reveals that nature, represented by the natural product, becomes the actual being and or power which chooses the sacrificial victim.

Of great importance to the author and the townsfolk involved in the lottery, the black box is dealt a great amount of detail and history. Several aspects of the box foretell a shadowy

death soon to be revealed. Black; the color of the unknown, and of death. The view of the box as a coffin or vessel of death is easily attainable through the importance and weight given to such an inanimate object. A unanimous sense of ominous doom, an unknown evil, hate, as well as all bad things associated with the dark, with the color black, with this long held relic from a forgotten time, becomes the reality of the death of a member of the community.

Perhaps then, being three legged, thus having a triad, similar to the view of old European life, those parts being the childhood, the adulthood, then old age, the stool can be said to represent the meager distance from which life stands separated from death, which, while supporting death, is merely a step into the future consciousness.

The symbol which announces the fate of the lottery, is the black spot, which has been drawn with a graphite pencil. The fact that such a substance has been implemented in turn shows the ephemerality of both the creations of man and life. The black spot, however, is not an invention of Jackson. This particular symbol, for which there is no real world equivalent in history, was created by the author Robert Louis Stevenson, and is an integral part of the story of *Treasure Island*. It has been used in approximately a dozen literary works since the publication of Stevenson's famous novel. The simplicity of this symbol emphasizes the ease of the transition to death for man, and has become a very powerful literary analogy for death.

Much cheery fellowship has been associated with death in this particular story. The contrast to the view of death which is prevalent in the society of the United States of America today is great. Each culture will develop the rites and beliefs that it perceives. *The Lottery* represents not only the natural sacrifice of nature, but also the brevity of life. The symbols of death must not however hang over each person, but only stand as a reminder, that much is to be done before the time comes, and that it is a privilege to be able to walk on the Earth as a sentient being.

Outline

I. Opening

II. Body

1. Stones barbarous.....

2. Wood chips to paper.....

Paper..... natural product, represents nature, wherefore nature chooses the victim, and or sacrifice.

4. The box is black, and well used, and represents a coffin and finality. Black, the color of death....

Use..... represents the longevity, and therefore the acceptance of the acts...

Is the unknown, the evil, the hate, the bad in all things, the lack of knowledge.

5. The stool, is the hangman's tool, and foreshadows the fall of the accused. Finality, ease of death, short step to the end.....

3. Pencil/ graphite... what does it represent? The fleetingness and ephemerality of life, and the rubbing out so easily of what nature has given man.

6. The black spot, created by Robert Louis Stevenson.

III. Closer