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"The Lottery": A short story and film comparison

For centuries, literature was the main form of education and entertainment and expanded as humans developed. With the ever-advancing technology newer forms of entertainment, such as film, were introduced to society. A common feature of many of these films are their origin, which happen to be based on popular and influential pieces of literature. "The Lottery", published in 1948, is a short story written by Shirley Jackson which explores the idea of human tendency to acquiesce in tradition. In 1969, "The Lottery" was adapted into a short film, and compared to its short story counterpart, the film portrayed visual important details, which contributed to the overall suspense and enhanced the tone of the film.

"The Lottery" is a well-known short story due to its unexpected, shocking ending, which left many readers questioning tradition and society. The short story manages to convey an idea, however the lack of visual detail diminishes the overall payload of what is a very brilliant central theme. On the other hand, the film successfully portrays important details such as the characteristics of the involved crowd. The film focuses on the faces of the citizens of a participating town, and through their faces, emotions of worrisome and anxiety are emitted towards to the viewer, which ultimately adds suspense, and creates a dark and mysterious tone. Throughout the film, viewers also witness these faces change as the film progresses, adding more to the suspense. Towards the end of the film, when a character is chosen for execution, a 3rd person shot depicts a motionless and senseless crowd, which strongly contributes to the theme of the dangers of blindly submitting to tradition. The short story fails to create this powerful ongoing suspense, hinting to the truth only in small details such as "There was a hesitation before two men"(Jackson P4) when Mr. Summers, the organizer of the lottery requested help during the process of the fictional system. The short story, with lacking visual details, does include the element of surprise in its piece, however the film with its visually portrayed emotions not only consists of surprises, but also of a strong suspense which makes the film more thrilling and the idea more powerful.

The short story thoroughly surprises readers, and this is due to its format. Unlike the film, the short story contains context of the lottery, which as explained, is a tradition followed by many towns. By presenting basic background details of this fictional tradition, readers are misled with a false sense of security. Readers for the most part do not expect to read about an inhumane tradition, especially when the tradition is briefly described with no sign of actual danger. Quotes such as "There was a great dealing of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open."(Jackson P7) along with other quotes paint a picture of the tradition, however they fail to include the horrors of it. The film provides no such context, which still adds to the sense of surprise and through the physical appearance of the crowd, suspense is built. The film also contains elements of sound, which greatly adds to its power. For example, the sounds of bashing rocks and Ms. Hutchinson's painful screams, the one chosen for death, are audible in the film, and this detail greatly elevates the horror of the lottery, exposing the dark

truth of this tradition through the misery of a person. By making "The Lottery" a film, the visual and audible qualities exponentially increased the power of the central theme.

"The Lottery"s main and most powerful theme is the dangers that come with obliviously conforming with tradition and/or society. In the short story and film, the participating crowd in the lottery blindly accept the rules of their tradition, which always terminates with someone being killed inhumanely. The film, by making this idea visual, had more profound impacts on viewers, and this idea of having visual evidence to motivate is seen globally. The modern world is filled with devices that capture moments, and through recordings and films, human acts and other explicit images are exposed which deeply impact society. It is foolish to think the world is perfect and safe, millions of videos portray this. Through these recordings, visual and audible qualities depict exactly how cruel humans can be with each other and nature. The power of film is immense, and through their exposures, caused social movements and other organizations that are seen today, such as the "Black Lives Matter" movement, which fights racism after viral videos in the internet show how much racism affects the Black community. The differences of film and literature are immense, mainly because film graphically portrays an idea, which turn affects an individual in a deeper manner that letters can.