Adversity in Society: “The Lottery” and “Dead Poet’s Society” Notebook Check

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Notebook Check #1: “The Lottery” Anticipation Guide

Read each statement in the middle column. Then decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Circle the appropriate response. Think about and be able to explain your opinion.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | Crimes are more likely to happen in a big city than a small town. | Disagree |
| Agree | I would go along with “tradition” even though it goes against what I believe personally. | Disagree |
| Agree | When someone in authority tells me to do something, I obey without question. | Disagree |
| Agree | Given no other option, I would sacrifice one human life if it meant saving many others. | Disagree |
| Agree | When I hear of something bad happening to someone else, I’m secretly relieved that it’s not happening to me. | Disagree |
| Agree | I sometimes allow others to take the blame for something I’ve done wrong. | Disagree |

Choose two statements from above and explain why you either agreed or disagreed. Responses should be in complete sentences.

In partners or small groups, discuss the following questions about "The Lottery." Try to get beyond just talking about the plot; use your critical thinking skills to deeply examine this story.

**BEFORE YOU READ:**

What are three things you know about life in small towns?



What are three things you know about a lottery?



Notebook Check #2: Vocabulary

*Directions: After completing the Tea Party activity, work with a partner to write down a short definition for each vocabulary word. Consult the context clues if needed.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Word in Context** | **Definition** |
| The morning of July 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. | Freely or in large amounts |
| The children assembled first, of course. School was over for the summer. | To bring together or gather in one place |
| The children tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play. | Rough and noisy; rowdy and unrestrained |
| The children came reluctantly, having to be called four to five times. | Unwillingly, disinclined |
| 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. | Directed in action or course; lead; managed; carried on |
| He was a round-faced, jovial man and he ran the coal business, and people were sorry for him. | Hearty, joyous humor, good spirit |
| The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born. | Equipment used in or necessary for a particular activity |
| The black box grew shabbier each year: by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained. | Showing signs of use, wear, or neglect |
| 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 dutifully each year. | Simple melody, usually single notes |
| There had also been a ritual salute, which the official lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this had been changed with time, until now it was necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. | An established procedure for a ceremony |
| “There has always been a lottery,” Old Man Warner added petulantly, “Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody.” | Showing impatient irritation at trifling annoyance |
| “Nothing but trouble in that,” Old Man Warner said stoutly. “Pack of young fools.” | Intense, form, stubborn, resolute, forceful |

After completing the Tea Party, write your prediction of what the story will be about. Include most elements of the plot you think will happen (ex. The conflict, climax, resolution, etc.)

Notebook Check #3 Reading Guide Questions

Try to get beyond just talking about the plot; use your critical thinking skills to deeply examine this story.

**WHILE YOU READ:**

**Directions: Answer the following questions using the RACE method.**

**R – Restate the question.**

**A – Answer the question.**

**C – Cite (quote information from the story)**

**E – Explain/Expand (So what? What does the mean?)**

1. What does the story reveal about the place of men and women in this small town? Give specific examples from the story.

Men are the heads of households or families and women are in line behind the men in this small town. Men take charge and are responsible for the entire family’s fate. Women are only in charge if their husbands are not present.

1. Why do you think so much time is spent describing the black box?

So much time is spent describing the black box because it represents tradition. It is an actual, tangible connection to the villager’s adherence to tradition despite their lack of knowledge about how the tradition originated in the first place.

1. What do you think the purpose of the lottery is in the village? Why do you think people continue to participate in it?

The purpose of the lottery is to continue the tradition of sacrificing one person in the village for better crops, according to Old Man Warner. The people continue participating because it is a ritual—a mindless ceremony that has always happened and possibly, they fear change. Perhaps, they also have a morbid sense of entertainment.

1. What seems to have been the original purpose of the lottery? What do people believe about it?

The original purpose was to sacrifice on of their own to secure rain and good crops. There is an “underground” rejection of the lottery, so even though deep inside they are scared and against the practice—they follow the status quo without question.

1. Is it important that the original paraphernalia for the lottery has been lost? What do you suppose the original ceremony was like?

It is important that the original paraphernalia for the lottery was lost in that its absence helps the reader understand the mentality of the villagers blindly participating in a ritual they no longer understand. The ceremony originally probably had a lot more “ceremony” –care of the black box and drawn out all day affair with chants and gestures—now it’s less pomp and circumstance and more “let’s get it over with.”

1. Why have some of the villages given up this practice? Why hasn't this one?

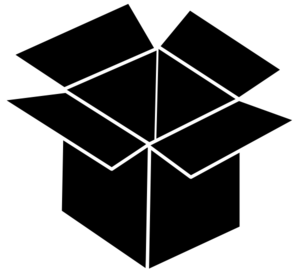
Some villages have probably seen that stoning people to death has no correlation to crops—also science has probably impacted crops and growth—moving their live into the future--- fear of change has probably prevented the stopping of the practice of the lottery.

1. What is the significance of Tessie's final scream, "It isn't fair, it isn't right"? What aspect of the lottery does she explicitly challenge; what aspect goes unquestioned?

Her scream is ironic because compared to other things in society, the lottery takes place under extremely fair conditions—it’s entirely random and by chance.

1. What would you have done in Tessie Hutchinson’s situation? Explain.

Answers will vary

Notebook Check # 4 Symbolism

The black box is a physical manifestation of the villagers' connection to tradition; Jackson is pretty explicit on this point, when the subject of replacing the box comes up: "No one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box" (5). They believe that this box may, in part, be made up of shards of the previous boxes, back to the original Black Box. We have to admit, this reminded us of the practice of collecting Christian relics, like hair or bone from the bodies of the saints or pieces of the Cross. We noted, in the Delacroix Family "Character Analysis," how much Jackson likes to upend Christian iconography in this story. Well, this seems like it may be another example: the villagers use this relic of an earlier time to perpetuate their violent, unmerciful traditions.  
Like the lottery as a whole, the black box has no functionality except during this two hours every June: "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" (6). The purpose of the box, like the lottery itself, has become obscure with the passage of time. It is well worn, but the villagers are reluctant to let it go, again, like the lottery itself. In fact, we don't think it's too far-fetched to say that the villagers' treatment of the box represents their thinking on the subject of the lottery as a whole: they're a bit terrified by both the box and the lottery, but they're also too frightened (and, perhaps, fascinated), to drop either one.

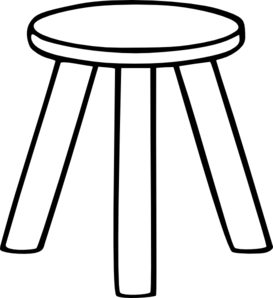
The black box

Well, as the narrator observes, "[the villagers] still [remember] to use the stones" (76). Not only is stoning a particularly horrifying way to imagine dying, it's also, always, a crowd-generated death. In other words, stones allow everyone in the village to participate freely in the ritual, from the youngest children to Old Man Warner. Stones are also significant as murder weapons because the first human tools were made of stone; this lottery really does seem to have its ancestors in the earliest type of violent human ritual. What's more, stoning comes up specifically in the religious texts of all three of the Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. So it's not just an early form of murder; stoning has a strong religious association with community punishment of abomination; in other words, stoning is the classic means for expelling an outsider to reinforce group beliefs.

Stones

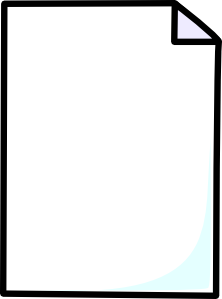
Critic Helen Nebeker argues that the three legs of the stool are like the three aspects of the Christian Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit); the use of the stool to support the black box thus represents the manipulation of religion to support collective violence (source). It is true that this story is so short that everything in it seems like it must be symbolic of something. Another possibility is that this doesn't have to be the Christian Trinity at all; there are trinities all of the place in various religious traditions, like the three Norse Fates, or the Three Graces in Greek myth. The use of this three-legged stool may serve to underline more generally the ritualistic significance of the lottery as a holdover from generic Ye Olden Days.

In addition to it’s ritualistic symbolism, the instability of the stool when holding the box symbolizes the instability of the ritual as a whole. The fact that the support system for the lottery box is unstable brings the entire ritual into question.

Three-legged stool

What change there is to the lottery seems to be minimal, and Jackson uses the slips of paper to symbolize that change itself without serious critical thinking is just as damaging as no change at all. The change from the chips of wood to paper seems to be a mere matter of convenience: “Chips of wood, Mr. Summers had argued, had been all very well when the village was tiny, but now that the population was more than three hundred and likely to keep on growing, it was necessary to use something that would fit more easily into the black box” (566). Nothing significant in the tradition itself has been changed, so when Mrs. Hutchinson “snatched a paper out and held it behind her,” (572), that paper with a “black spot on it” (572) seals her fate as much as a chip of wood would have done. The fact that she draws a slip of paper with a black spot out of the lottery box instead of a wood chip makes no material difference. Either way, the tradition dictates that she be stoned to death. In this way, Jackson implies that tradition itself must be questioned rather than the mere surface trappings of tradition.

Wood chips vs. paper slips



Symbolism of Names

**Delacroix**

* French word meaning "of the cross."
* True pronunciation: de-la-KWAH.
* Villagers' pronunciation: Dellacroy.
* Mispronunciation of the name symbolizes the corruption of religion/ritual in this village.

**Mrs. Delacroix**

* This is the most obvious change in character in the story. Mrs. Delacroix switches from being chatty friends with Tessie Hutchinson to grabbing the largest yet most manageable stone to throw in order to kill her "friend." This furthers the idea of the corruption of religion.

**Bobby Martin**

* Middle English origins meaning "ape" or "monkey."
* Also a very common name.
* The commonality of this name combined with its meaning is Shirley Jackson's way of saying that there is a primordial ape within us all.

**Old Man Warner**

* Symbol of the past, old age, and unexamined ideas.
* When one of Nancy Hutchinson's school mates says, "I hope it's not Nancy." after she selects a paper slip, Old Man Warner replies, " People ain't the way they used to be."
* He is implying that this ritual used to be more meaningful and that to be "chosen" was a source of pride and was to be envied.

**Tessie Hutchinson**

* This name is an allusion to Anne Hutchinson, a prominent woman in colonial America who has become a symbol for religious protesters.
* Anne challenged the religious interpretations of the established Puritan clergy in Massachusetts and was banished from the Massachusetts Bay colony.

D

1. **The lottery:**
   1. \_Town Square When we choose to participate in society, we leave ourselves open and vulnerable to failure and harm.
   2. Breakdown into households - If we are not the “leader,” it is more likely that our fate could be chosen for us.
   3. The lottery process Not even the rich, powerful, or leaders can escape fate.
2. **The black box:**
   1. Unknown origin of the box- Sometimes it is easier (and more common) to accept traditions without knowing their purpose or origin.
   2. Location of the box when not used\_- It is easier to forget about something (especially something bad) if we keep it out of sight.
3. Stones\_- Everyone is responsible for the outcome of a situation no matter how small their role.
4. Tessie’s reaction- It’s easy to accept something that our conscious tells us is wrong until we are put in that negative situation.

**Big idea: How do the characters in this story face adversity or potential adversity?**

**Some critics insist that the story has an added symbolic or allegorical dimension. *And we’ve completed notes with regard to those dimensions*. Do you agree? If so, what is Shirley Jackson trying to tell us about ourselves?**

Notebook Check #6 Reading Guide Questions

Try to get beyond just talking about the plot; use your critical thinking skills to deeply examine this story.

**AFTER YOU READ:**

**Directions: Answer the following questions using the RACE method.**

**R – Restate the question.**

**A – Answer the question.**

**C – Cite (quote information from the story)**

**E – Explain/Expand (So what? What does the mean?)**

1. How do the commonplace details of life and the small town language contribute to the impact of the story?

Answers will vary. Based on predisposed notions about smalltown life—everyone knows everyone else, they address one another by first name, and it seems like there are other “Civic” activities that they come together for, the ending is even more shocking as it involves a community killing one of their own for an unknown purpose.

1. Why had Jackson chosen common people for her characters? Could she have chosen characters from other levels of sophistication with the same effect?

Readers typically sympathize with characters they can identify with. Common people without affluent connections or money allow the reader to see the “winner” as a victim rather than someone who got what he or she deserves.

1. What is the irony of the short dialogue and casual tone of this story?

Throughout the story there is talk of everyday life—men were talking about “planting and rain, tracters, and taxes” while the women “exchanged bits of gossip.” The conversation with Tessie as she arrives late and walks through the crowd makes us think that the village meeting is an innocent one.

1. How did you feel about the lottery at the end of the story? What was your reaction?

Answers/ opinions will vary

1. How many hints of the seriousness of the occasion can you find in the early parts of the story? (**for this question, go back and underline in your story places where foreshadowing occurs**). From which characters do you get the best indication of what is to follow? Foreshadowing underlined in text.

Bobby Martin stuffs his pockets full of stones and creates a stack of stones to prepare for the outcome of the lottery.

1. What does the story’s title reveal about our everyday lives? What does the story reveal about human nature?

The title reveals our lot in life- the unknown, uncontrollable risks we face daily.

The story reveals that humans are willing to sacrifice another’s happiness in order to ensure their own.

1. 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?

Answers/ opinions will vary: Reexamine your before reading activity. What did you think about the lottery beforehand?

1. What makes the ending of the story so shocking? Explain.

The townspeople murder their friend in a very violent fashion. At the beginning of the story, the casual and friendly joking creates an air of easiness that is in direct contrast with the stark violence of the stoning.

1. Is the lottery a collective act of murder? Is it morally justified? Is tradition sufficient justification for such actions? How would you respond to cultures that are different from ours that perform "strange" rituals? Answers will vary.

Notebook Check #7 *Dead Poet’s Society* Anticipation Guide

Identify the above words. Use a dictionary to find the actual definition, but write the definition in your own words around the above chart.

**The above diagram mirrors many of the characteristics the teacher in *Dead Poet’s Society* embodies or tries to get his students to embody. Think of a time when a teacher made an impression on you. It could be a positive or a negative impression. Describe the incident in detail, but leave the teacher’s name blank or call them “Mr. M” or “Mrs. M.”**

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Notebook Check #8 Close *Reading of the Poetry*

**O Captain My Captain**  a poem by Walt Whitman

O Captain my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
But O heart! heart! heart!  
O the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.  
  
O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up--for you the flag is flung for you the bugle trills,  
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths for you the shores a-crowding,  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;  
Here Captain! dear father!  
This arm beneath your head!  
It is some dream that on the deck,  
You've fallen cold and dead.  
  
My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;  
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!  
But I, with mournful tread,  
Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.

**Circle all the “Captain”s. Now, write above each one of the “Abraham Lincoln” and read the poem again.**

* Does the poem have a positive or negative tone toward Lincoln? List some words that reveal the tone.

* What event about Lincoln does this poem relate? What line tells you this?
* Identify one line that is repeated other than “my captain”
* What is the extended metaphor in this poem? (hint: Abe Lincoln is a Captain is part of the metaphor)

Film Study: *Dead Poets Society*

*Dead Poets Society*, directed by Peter Weir, was released in 1989. The action of the film takes place in the late 1950s, at a boarding school called Welton Academy that was founded in 1859, the era of Emerson, Whitman, and the buildup to the American Civil War.

***Characters***

Below is a list of major characters; as you watch, note any observations—about behavior, perspectives, values, etc. It is very important to become familiar with the characters in the movie as soon as possible. This is somewhat difficult, however, because some characters look similar and the boys are usually dressed similar. Study this list of characters before the movie.

* **Neil Perry (Robert Sean Leonard)**-Todd’s roommate; Neil’s father is very controlling; Neil did summer school
* **Todd *Anderson* (Ethan Hawke)-** Neil’s roommate transferred to Welton; Todd’s brother was “one of school’s finest”; does not like to speak in front of people
* **Knox Overstreet (Josh Charles)**- brown hair; looks like Charlie; his father is a friend of the Danbury’s; he meets Kris and falls in love
* **Charlie Dalton (Gale Hansen)**- brown hair; looks like Knox; very outgoing; sometimes says things without thinking
* **Richard Cameron (Dylan Kussman)** - short red hair; brown noser; very anal—uses ruler when writing notes
* **Gerard Pitts (James Waterston)**--brown hair and crew cut; reads the poem “To the Virgins, Make Much of Time”
* **Steven Meeks (Allelon Ruggiero)-** glasses and longer red hair than Cameron; considered to be a genius
* **Mr. Perry (Kurtwood Smith)**- Neil’s father; tries to control Neil
* **Mr. John Keating (Robin Williams)--**English teacher; “seize the day”
* **Kris-** blond hair; Knox calls her “Mrs. Danbury?”; is dating Chet
* **Chet-** very spoiled; jerk; is dating Kris
* **Dean Nolan (Norman Lloyd)**
* **Mr. McAllister (Leon Pownall)**

***Perception in Dead Poets’ Society***

The creators of commercials, books and films often use single aspects of a group to influence the audience’s reactions and perceptions. Think back to a recent TV ad, for example: who is the target audience? What is being sold? How is it packaged? Will you remember it, when it comes time to make your purchase? Think about how consumers are influenced. Could the same be said for movies or TV shows?

As we view *Dead Poets Society,* we’ll be stopping the film to discuss both plot developments as well as audience perceptions (ie. Why did the director have a certain character out of the shot, as we heard his voice? Why are the colors so dark, before the play? How does the lighting change when they’re in the courtyard? etc.) so that we can be made more aware of devices similar to those used in advertising that are designed to influence our perceptions.

Consider that the literary aspects of books—characterization, conflict, climax, theme, etc.—are often the same features that make films come to life. **Make a list of significant topics or themes as you watch.**

**Notebook Check #9 While Viewing Questions**

**Questions to Guide Your Viewing:**

1. What are the “four pillars” of the school? How do the boys “revise” these pillars? Discipline, tradition, honor, excellence

Travesty, horror, decadence, excrement

1. Explain Todd’s reluctance to join the Dead Poets Society. How does Neil help?

He doesn’t want to read aloud. Neil asks that he come and not read aloud. He checks with the others to make sure it is okay.

1. How does each meeting of the society begin?

They read a quote from Thoreau- “suck the marrow out of life”

1. Do the boys hold true to the original society from Keating’s day? Explain your response. They do, somewhat. They embrace life and enjoy it. They are passionate, but silly.
2. How does Mr. Keating respond to one “slack” student’s poem?

He gives him a negative score on the Pritchard scale and tells him, “Don’t let your poems be ordinary.”

1. What effect does Keating’s teaching have on Knox?

Knox has become a romantic- hopeful and in love. He becomes brave and impetuous.

1. How does Charlie illustrate the “point” of the courtyard activity?

He finds his own walk by not walking. He says that he is “exercising his right not to walk. He is, in Keating’s words, swimming against the stream.

1. How does the presence of girls affect the society?

Charlie changes his name. The other boys seem tense, surprised, and awkward. They are flirty and showing off, but don’t want them to join.

1. How do the boys react to Charlie’s newspaper stunt? What is the result? Respond to Charlie’s attitude.

The boys feel that he has no right to expose the Dead Poet’s Society because Charlie doesn’t speak for the club. Charlie is brought in to Mr. Nolan’s office and paddled in an attempt to get him to out the other members of the club.

1. What is the dean’s teaching advice for Mr. Keating?

Boys are impressionable, so be careful. He tells Keating that the curriculum is set and proven to prepare them for college.

1. How does Keating respond to Charlie’s stunt?

He tells Charlie to tone it down. There is a difference between daring and stupidity. He tells him that it would be a shame if he would miss out on his class.

1. Describe the interaction between Neil and his father. Compare to that between Neil and Keating.

Neil’s interaction with his father is cold because Mr. Perry is stern and demanding, while Mr. Keating is kind, compassionate, and understanding.

1. What does the society inspire Knox to do?

Knox goes to Chris, brings her flowers, and reads her poetry he wrote.

1. How does Neil embody the transition from Romanticism to Realism?

He realizes that what he hopes for, the things he wants, will never happen. His father wants him to go to military school and is not concerned with what he “feels.”

1. Is Todd’s reaction to Neil’s act out of character? Explain. Compare to Keating’s and Dean Nolan’s.

Todd is quiet, reserved, and calm, but he is visibly disturbed following Neil’s death.

Keating cries quietly (an emotional reaction when compared to Nolan’s concern about protecting the school).

1. Do you agree with Cameron about the responsibility? Explain your answer.

Yes- Mr. Keating inspires passion and zeal for life, telling them to seize the day.

No- Neil’s conflict with his father is not Mr. Keating’s fault, and you cannot be responsible for another’s happiness.

1. Do you find the final scene heroic, disappointing, Romantic, Realistic, or something else? Explain.

Answers will vary. Teacher opinion: Romantic

**Notebook Check #10 After Viewing Questions**

**After Viewing Questions—Answer each of the following sentences in complete sentences.**

1. What are some conflicts (internal and external) throughout the movie?

Neil vs. his father

1. What is the adversity that the characters face? Be specific.

Neil

1. What are the attributes of Mr. Keating?
2. Which character is the most undaunted by the school?

Charlie Dalton

1. Which character has the most charisma?

Mr. Keating, (Neil, Charlie Dalton?)

1. How is Mr. Keating’s teaching style unorthodox?
2. Describe one character’s zeal for something.

Answers will vary.

1. Explain how the students conform and don’t conform to the standards at the school.
2. Which characters would you consider realists?

Mr. Nolan, Cameron, Todd (at the beginning of the film), Neil (at the end of the film)

**Big idea: How do the characters in this movie face adversity or potential adversity?**

The Hunger Games Viewing Guide

1. If you were Katniss or Peeta, what in your story would you be outraged by? Have you ever been outraged by anything in our world?  How does entertainment block you from being outraged like it blocked Panem?
2. What created the dystopia you see before you? Why is District 12 so terribly poor compared to the Capitol? Is that true in our world too? In what ways has The Capitol kept the people from uprising for 74 long years?
3. Before they went into the arena, Peeta said he didn’t want to allow anyone to change who he was. Do you think that Katniss and Peeta were able to do that? Did they remain true to themselves?
4. How did it feel to watch teens killing teens? Did anyone cheer in the theatre? Why do you think so? Did you feel the same way *reading* about the tributes deaths as you did *watching* them die? How was it different?
5. Why is it so wrong to have a room full of men sitting in safety deciding the fate of young people who are killing each other? Is that how our wars are fought?
6. Is it any different today to watch young people fighting our wars for us than it is for Panem to cheer death in the Games? Is it ever ok for teenagers to fight, or kill in real life? Why?
7. Did you notice how powerfully the [symbols](http://bit.ly/GB7QHL) energized the oppressed people and subverted the empire? What do you think Katniss meant by covering Rue with flowers? How did the District hand signal function (Katniss’ flashes it twice, in The Reaping and at Rue’s death)? Do we have any symbols that are that strong?
8. How was Katniss’ trick with the berries the greatest example of subverting empire? What are other acts of civil disobedience that you can think of in our world?
9. On the train ride home Peeta asks, “What do we do now?” Katniss responds, “We try to forget.” Do you think people who have killed and been targeted by other people can ever forget?

**“The Lottery”**

**Tea Party Vocabulary**

The morning of July 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 children assembled first, of course. School was over for the summer.

The children tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play.

The children came reluctantly, having to be called four to five times.

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.

The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born.

The black box grew shabbier each year: by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained.

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 dutifully each year.

There had also been a ritual salute, which the official lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this had been changed with time, until now it was necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching.

“There has always been a lottery,” Old Man Warner added petulantly, “Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody.”

“Nothing but trouble in that,” Old Man Warner said stoutly. “Pack of young fools.”