

Most people are influenced to follow popular beliefs and traditions. In "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, the townspeople all support the common tradition of the lottery. In "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, most people do not believe in competition and support handicaps. Both authors use mood and dialogue to suggest that just because the masses follow a common belief or tradition does not mean it is right.

Shirley Jackson uses mood throughout "The Lottery" to show that just because the masses follow a common belief or tradition does not mean it is right. The mood undergoes a great shift at the very end of the story when the author reveals the purpose of the lottery. With just a few lines, the author is able to manipulate the text to feel morbid and haunting. The narrator writes, "'It isn't fair, it isn't right,' Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her" (5). The mood, which is light and airy for the majority of the text, becomes innmediately twisted, deranged, and contorted. When the author shifts the mood, the readers can finally see how wrong the lottery is and the negative effects of blindly following others. In modern-day society, stoning people to deatq is considered to be wrong and illegal. In the community of the story, however, it is a popular action because it is an old tradition and no one questions it. This shows that a belief or tradition can be innnoral even if it is popular.

The mood undergoes a similar shift in "Harrison Bergeron" when the glimmering fantasy of Harrison's empire is shot down, which further develops the theme. The formerly triumphant, celebratory mood becomes sorrowful and melancholy at the end of the story when Harrison is shot after giving the performance of a lifetime. The narrator states that, "It was then that Diana

Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barrelled ten-gauge shotgun. She fired twice, and the Emperor and Empress were dead before they hit the floor" (351). The above change in mood is the turning point in the story where the author most strongly conveys that the laws of equality can result in the occurrence of brutal, wrong events. By using words such as, "double-barrelled ten-gauge shotgun," and "dead before they hit the floor," the author was able to create a dramatic and grotesque mood. This displays the theme that just because the masses follow a common belief or tradition does not mean it is right. When Harrison, who represents sheer genius, marvel, and wonder, is shot, it brings the reader to the conclusion that competition is beneficial because it allows people like Harrison to succeed.

In "The Lottery" the author develops theme by using dialogue that shows the townspeople's attitudes towards the lottery. While the townspeople wait for the lottery to begin, one person mentions that some other towns had gotten rid of their lotteries. This, however, is not a popular idea in the village the story takes place in. Old Man Warner responds by saying, "Pack of crazy fools... there's always been a lottery" (3). From this, the reader can infer that the townspeople continue the tradition of the lottery only because it has been going on for as long as they could remember. The villagers blindly follow custom, although it is inhumane and they have forgotten the reason it started in the first place. By including the dialogue between townspeople, the author was able to show the common attitude towards the lottery, which makes the theme apparent in the story.

Dialogue is also used by Kurt Vonnegut in "Harrison Bergeron" to develop the theme that just because the masses follow a common belief or tradition does not mean it is right. In the beginning, George Bergeron's wife, Hazel, proposes that he take off his handicap, but George

thinks this is not a good idea. George explains, "If I tried to get away with it... then other people'd get away with it- and then pretty soon we'd be right back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else" (3). When George says these words, his belief in handicaps becomes clear. By including everyday dialogue in the Bergeron household, the author is able to replicate a scene that seems typical between husband and wife during that time period.

Knowing what the common belief is in "Harrison Bergeron" helps develop the theme of the story.

Throughout each of their short stories, the authors of "The Lottery" and "Harrison Bergeron" use literary devices such as mood and dialogue to show the theme. Both Shirley Jackson and Kurt Vonnegut suggest that popular beliefs and customs are not always morally correct. In both stories, the masses believe in something that would be considered wrong and unpopular today. Shirley Jackson writes of a flawed town that blindly follows old tradition, while Kurt Vonnegut writes of a dystopian society that bans competition. Each story implies that if people are brave enough to think independently and stray from popular beliefs, then civilization can thrive.\