

MRS. GONYO – ROOM G3
AP LITERATURE – SOCRATIC SEMINAR FOR “THE LOTTERY”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COMMENTS TO MOVE THE CONVERSATION ALONG:

- a. What question are we trying to answer? Why?
- b. Could you give me an example or a metaphor to explain that?
- c. Can you find that in the text? Where does the reading support you?
- d. What are you assuming in that argument?
- e. But what about...? (That seems at odds with what we said before, what the author said here, etc.)
- f. How does this relate to... (what was said before, read last week, etc.)
- g. Do we need to modify or rephrase the question (or answer) we are working on?
- h. What do you mean by _____ (key words)?
- i. I think we are lost. Could someone tell me where we are, where we are going, help me find some "landmarks"?
- j. (To a quiet but clearly engaged member:) Bob, what do you think? (Or) Is there someone who hasn't yet spoken who might have something to say at this point?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. WERE YOU SURPRISED BY THE ENDING OF THE STORY? IF NOT, AT WHAT POINT DID YOU KNOW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN? HOW DOES JACKSON **FORESHADOW** THE ENDING? CONVERSELY, HOW DOES JACKSON LULL US INTO THINKING THAT THIS IS JUST AN ORDINARY STORY WITH AN ORDINARY TOWN?

2. IN WHAT WAY DOES THE **SETTING** AFFECT THE STORY? DOES IT MAKE YOU MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO ANTICIPATE THE ENDING?

3. IN WHAT WAYS ARE THE **CHARACTERS DIFFERENTIATED** FROM ONE ANOTHER? LOOKING BACK AT THE STORY, CAN YOU SEE WHY TESSIE HUTCHINSON IS SINGLED OUT AS A "WINNER"?

4. A SCAPEGOAT, IN THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION DESCRIBED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, WAS AN ACTUAL GOAT THAT WAS RELEASED INTO THE WILDERNESS AFTER HAVING BEEN CEREMONIOUSLY HEAPED WITH THE “INEQUITIES” OF THE PEOPLE (LEVITICUS 16:22). WHAT TRACES OF SUCH A RITUAL ARE SUGGESTED IN “THE LOTTERY? CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER KINDS OF RITUALS THAT ARE RETAINED TODAY EVEN THOUGH THEIR PURPOSE IS NOW REMOTE OR NONEXISTENT?

5. JACKSON GIVES INTERESTING NAMES TO A NUMBER OF HER CHARACTERS. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE POSSIBLE **ALLUSIONS OR SYMBOLISM** OF SOME OF THESE?

DELACROIX

GRAVES

SUMMERS

BENTHAM

HUTCHINSON

WARNER

MARTIN

6. THIS IS A DIFFERENT SORT OF STORY WHEN YOU READ IT FOR THE SECOND TIME. WHAT ELEMENTS (SUCH AS MRS. HUTCHINSON'S ATTEMPT TO HAVE HER DAUGHTER, EVA, DRAW WITH THE FAMILY) TAKE ON A DIFFERENT MEANING THE SECOND TIME THROUGH?

7. ARE THERE OTHER **SYMBOLS**? WHY IS THE "BLACK BOX" BATTERED, FOR EXAMPLE?

8. DESCRIBE THE **POINT OF VIEW** OF THE STORY. HOW DOES THE POINT OF VIEW AFFECT WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE SITUATION? HOW DOES IT PRESERVE THE STORY'S SUSPENSE? HOW WOULD THE STORY BE AFFECTED IF TOLD FROM FIRST PERSON **POINT OF VIEW**?

9. THIS STORY WAS PUBLISHED IN 1948. ARE THERE ANY **CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL EVENTS** THAT JACKSON MIGHT BE COMMENTING ON HERE? IS THIS JUST A STORY ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR TIME AND PLACE, OR IS SHE TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING IMPORTANT ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?

10. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FINAL FIVE PARAGRAPHS, ARE THERE ANY INDICATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN THE LIFE OF THE VILLAGE? WHAT MIGHT THE ABSENCE OR PRESENCE OF VIOLENCE IN OTHER ASPECTS OF VILLAGE LIFE INDICATE, IN LIGHT OF THE STORY'S **CONCLUSION**?

11. DO YOU AGREE WITH MRS. HUTCHINSON — IS THE LOTTERY UNFAIR? HOW OR HOW NOT? HER FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS POINT OUT THAT THEY ALL TAKE THE SAME RISKS IN PARTICIPATING.

12. ARE THERE ANY CLUES IN THE STORY THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN HOW THE LOTTERY FIRST STARTED? WHAT MIGHT ITS PURPOSE BE? WHAT PASSAGES GIVE THE READER CLUES ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THIS RITUAL?