

Unfair Ending Answer Key

1. Literal Ending

Mrs. Hutchinson is stoned to death by the townspeople after “winning” the lottery.

2. Abrupt Ending

The abruptness shocks readers, emphasizing the horror of ordinary people committing violence as part of tradition.

3. Blind Tradition Interpretation

The lottery has continued for years without questioning its purpose. Phrases like “there’s always been a lottery” show people follow it simply because it is tradition.

4. Human Nature Interpretation

The townspeople, including children, participate willingly in the killing. This suggests an underlying truth about humanity’s capacity for cruelty when normalized by community.

5. Convincing Interpretation (Sample)

Many students may argue that the critique of blind tradition is stronger, since the story highlights ritual and unquestioned practices. Others may prefer the human nature argument.

Teacher Note: Accept either, as long as students justify their response with textual evidence.

Teacher Notes

- This activity emphasizes that **ambiguity allows multiple valid interpretations**, a hallmark of literary analysis at the upper high school level.
- Encourage students to notice how Jackson deliberately provides **no explanation** for the lottery, making the story’s meaning open to debate.
- Extension: Have students write a short paragraph connecting the story’s ambiguous ending to a modern example where people follow tradition or authority without questioning.