

SAMPLE CENTRAL IDEA ESSAY

Central idea (thesis) → Traditions are developed in societies and families over time. ← topic sentence

Some traditions, however, shouldn't continue to be followed because moral beliefs and needs change over time. The short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, for example, is about a town that still adheres to a barbaric tradition of human sacrifice in the name of benefitting better crops. They hold a lottery in which one member of the town is 'selected' to be the sacrifice. In the story, it says, "Over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery... Used to be a saying 'Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon' ... Pack of young fools." At this point, they're just doing the lottery for the sake of tradition. This shows the central idea because in the town, they have a lottery to ensure good crops, but the winner of the lottery gets stoned to death. This is a tradition, but not all the towns agree, and there are towns where they are thinking of stopping the lottery because they have realized it's morally wrong. ← brief summary w/ title + author

Specific example → One literary element evident in this story that shows this outdated dedication to tradition is conflict, or problem between two forces. A man v. society conflict is seen between Old Man Warner and the townsfolk. Right before the lottery takes place, he is heard saying, "It's not the way it used to be... People ain't the way they used to be." This example demonstrates the unrest among the various people and towns that either question or have abandoned the lottery. ← explanation of the example

identity type explain example 'clincher' transition Therefore, this relates to the central idea because he is acknowledging the change, but is still clearly sticking to the traditional lottery, despite the changing beliefs in neighboring towns. ← lit term + def specific example relates back to central idea

Another man v. man conflict can be seen between Mrs. Hutchinson and the town. After the lottery is conducted and Mrs. Hutchinson is declared the 'winner,' she says, "I tell you, it wasn't fair!" This is in response to her selection, as well as the gathering of people to throw the stones. Her belief in the system that has been in place for so long is now being thrown into question. Thus, this relates to the central idea because this is a tradition she no longer wants followed, as her need to survive has eclipsed her need for the tradition. Her needs changed, and in this instance, she doesn't want this tradition followed any longer, and wants it to be changed.