John Miles

The main point of interest in *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson is group behaviors. In this story, people are required to draw in a lottery every year. The story doesn’t explain why they need to draw, but some characters argue that this is what they have always done. The outcome of the lottery is that the person who “won,” so to speak gets pelted by stones from everyone in the village. Some characters brought up the point that other villages are starting to abandon the lottery. The oldest character, Mr. Warner, argues that the lottery has always been done, and that anyone who says otherwise is just a fool.

The way the author wrote the story shows that all the characters in the large group of people all seem uneasy at the idea of the lottery. Many have brought up the idea of just getting rid of it, while others have opted to keep it are saying it’s always been like this. It could be through conformity of the group that no one else has decided to put a stop to the lottery. Obedience also comes into play here in the form of everyone obeying the general rule of the village; participating in the lottery.

All of the villagers go along with the ridiculous lottery; being pelted by stones for no explained reason. An explanation for this could be that other members of the village would look down on the person and their family who didn’t participate. The members of the village who did participate would start to ostracize the members who didn’t participate and nobody wants that. Every human, no matter who they are all want to belong to a group. This sort of has the same basic idea of a cult; go along with some ridiculous orders and traditions in the hopes of being accepted in the group. A lot of times people will do anything to be accepted. In the example of this lottery, only one person out of three hundred villagers will be chosen. Those are some pretty high odds of avoiding being hit by stones. People can go into that situation with the idea that they won’t be chosen, someone else will. With all of those fears in front of them, people will still go through with it if it means being accepted into the group and not looked down on by the others. Another concept of group behaviors in this kind of setting is thinking someone else will speak up so no one else will have to. This can be a form of the Bystander effect. If each villager thinks that someone else will speak up against the lottery and doesn’t speak up themselves based on that idea, then nothing will happen. Everything will stay the same and people will continue to be pelted by rocks.