

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

The Monkey's Paw

BY W. W. JACOBS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, 2, 3, 4, 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1, 2, 4, 5



Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1),
- determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze how it emerges (RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2),
- analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text (RL.9-10.3),
- determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4),
- analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4), and
- analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5).

Time:

1-2 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (11 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (8 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Jacobs (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Jacobs's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read...** activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).

W. W. Jacobs

The Monkey's Paw

Arguably W. W. Jacobs's most famous story, "The Monkey's Paw" was first published in *Harper's Magazine* in September 1902. The story was well received, and Jacobs included it in his collection *The Lady of the Barge*.

"The Monkey's Paw" has been adapted dozens of times into plays, movies, television episodes, radio shows, and even an opera. The story illustrates the maxim "Be careful what you wish for" and has further inspired numerous works that are not direct adaptations. This story of the wish-granting talisman and the wishes that go horribly wrong has become well integrated in American culture, but remember that Jacobs is British, and the story is set in a community in Britain.

In crafting his story, Jacobs uses a common convention in fairy tales and folklore—the pattern of three. Mrs. White recognizes the pattern as soon as she hears that the mummified paw will grant its owner three wishes. "Sounds like the 'Arabian Nights,'" she says.

By using this familiar pattern of threes, Jacobs places his readers safely in a familiar story structure—and then surprises them with the twist ending.

Jacobs also draws on a number of other conventions common to horror stories, but it is important to remember that some of these conventions were used much less frequently before the popularity of "The Monkey's Paw." The story opens on the clichéd "dark and stormy night." The Whites live in an appropriately remote location. Their villa is named for a popular garden plant—that just happens to produce a poisonous fruit. At the story's most tense moment, the silence is intensified by the ticking of a clock, and the stairs creak mysteriously.

"The Monkey's Paw" is more than just a horror story, though. It is a parable that teaches an important lesson about being satisfied with what one has and tempting fate by wishing for things one doesn't necessarily need or want. Jacobs often used his tales to comment on human nature or social customs.

Still, "The Monkey's Paw" did not become Jacobs's most famous story because of its moral. It is a fun and spooky tale. By all means, read the story and examine it closely for the benefit of literary study. But *enjoy* it, also.

W. W. Jacobs

The Monkey's Paw

Lexile Measure: 960L

I

WITHOUT, THE NIGHT was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

“Hark at the wind,” said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

“I’m listening,” said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. “Check.”

“I should hardly think that he’d come to-night,” said his father, with his hand poised over the board.

“Mate,” replied the son.

“That’s the worst of living so far out,” bawled Mr. White, with sudden and unlooked-for violence; “of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway’s a bog, and the road’s a torrent. I don’t know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses on the road are let, they think it doesn’t matter.”

“Never mind, dear,” said his wife soothingly; “perhaps you’ll win the next one.”

Mr. White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son. The words died away on his lips, and he hid a guilty grin in his thin grey beard.

“There he is,” said Herbert White, as the gate banged to loudly and heavy footsteps came toward the door.

W. W. Jacobs

The Monkey's Paw

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) Explain how Jacobs introduces the primary point of this story in the first sentence: “Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly.”
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) Briefly describe the family dynamic of the White family. How does Jacobs establish the characters’ relationships?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; 11-12.4) How do implication and ambiguity contribute to the overall suspense and sense of horror in this story?
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2; 11-12.2) Sergeant-Major Morris describes the monkey’s paw as having had “a spell put on it by an old fakir...to show that fate ruled people’s lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow.” Do the events in this story prove the fakir’s claim? Why or why not?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) Jacobs divides this story into three sections. What is the rationale behind each division? How does each division contribute to the suspense and ultimate horror of the story?
6. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3) Describe the ways Mr. White and Mrs. White develop over the course of the story. Does this development show a basic change in the character or the strengthening of an already-present trait?

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

W. W. Jacobs, *The Monkey's Paw*

Question 1: Explain how Jacobs introduces the primary point of this story in the first sentence: "Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly."

STEP 1: The point of the first sentence is clearly the contrast Jacobs makes between outside and inside. Consider Jacobs's intent in establishing this contrast and using it as the absolute beginning of his story. The following chart identifies the key words and phrases in Jacobs's descriptions and might help you determine the main point(s) of contrast.

Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly.													
Text to be examined:	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Without</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Significance, implication: • outside • •</td> </tr> <tr> <td>the night</td> <td>Significance, implication: • dark • frightening or mysterious •</td> </tr> <tr> <td>cold and wet</td> <td>Significance, implication: • • •</td> </tr> <tr> <td>but in the small parlour</td> <td>Significance, implication: • • •</td> </tr> <tr> <td>the blinds were drawn</td> <td>Significance, implication: • • •</td> </tr> <tr> <td>the fire burned brightly</td> <td>Significance, implication: • • •</td> </tr> </table>	Without	Significance, implication: • outside • •	the night	Significance, implication: • dark • frightening or mysterious •	cold and wet	Significance, implication: • • •	but in the small parlour	Significance, implication: • • •	the blinds were drawn	Significance, implication: • • •	the fire burned brightly	Significance, implication: • • •
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