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The monkey's paw literary analysis answers

Don't underestimate the power of magic! The Monkey's Paw (1902) by W.W. Jacobs is a cautionary tale about the evil that can result from tempting fate. We hope it is particularly useful for teachers and students studying the story. Read the story: The Monkey's Paw, Character Analysis & Plot Summary, Genre & Themes, Symbolism & Allusions, Epigraph & Vocabulary, Quotes, Discussion Questions, Paired Reading, Useful Links, and Notes/Teacher CommentsCharactersWhite family - Mr. and Mrs. White and their son Herbert are the main characters in the story. They retrieve a magical talisman from their visiting friend, Sergeant-Major Morris. Despite his warnings, they use it. Sergeant-Major Morris - A family friend who served in India in the British Army, he attempts to put an end to the horrifying experiences using the paw by throwing it in the White's fireplace. Monkey's Paw - The true protagonist of the story, a magical talisman is in the form of a mummified monkey's paw that has the power to grant its host three wishes. Plot SummaryThe story is set in England at the home of the White family, during a dark and stormy night (of course!). Their guest, Sergeant-Major Morris who returned from his post in India, tells them about the power of a mummified monkey's paw he brought back with him that a Fakir put a spell on, granting its guardian three wishes. He warns the family that while the wishes are always granted, "I warn you of the consequences." He implies that the wishes are always accompanied by a punishment for tampering with fate. Morris throws the paw into the fire, trying to destroy its evil forces once and for all, but Mr. White retrieves it, and the Whites decide to use the paw. The family's first wish is Herbert's: he asks for enough money to make the final mortgage payment (200 pounds). The next day, Herbert goes to work and is killed at the local factory in a horrible accident. His employer refuses to claim responsibility, but makes a goodwill settlement of exactly... (you guessed it) 200 pounds. Though horrified by the mutilated outcome of their first wish being granted, Mrs. White talks her reluctant husband into a second wish: asking for Herbert to come back to life. There are three dramatic knocks on the door, Mrs. White fumbles down the stairs and with the door chain; meanwhile Mr. White is able to grasp the talisman just in time for one final wish, which is... [Read the story, we're not going to tell you!] Lemur handGenreW.W. Jacobs' story is in the genre of Gothic Literature, sub-genre of supernatural horror. ThemesLeave fate alone: Things happen for a reason, to wish them to occur otherwise will result in punishment far greater than the pain any "natural" losses may cause. Magic does harm: Mystic or spiritual beings can "charge" a talisman to do harm upon those greedy enough to interfere with fate. Magical forces rarely work the way people want them to. Arabian Nights: Aladdin and the Wonderful LampSymbolismMonkey's Paw: The talisman symbolizes desire and greed, the evil that comes from tempting fate. Three's: Repetition of three wishes, three separate owners, the White family is three people, three knocks, represent the "magic number" of superstitious or supernatural events. The Rat: Associated with decay and death, and Herbert's fate. Mr. White claims a rat passes by him on the stairs, while the couple fumbles to respond to the three knocks at the front door, a fearful premonition of their dead son returning in a decaying, rotting state, having been buried ten days earlier. Literary AllusionsFamiliar and unsettling: Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp is an important literary reference by Mrs. White early in the story, foreshadowing the destruction that is to come. "Hold it up in your right hand, and wish aloud," said the Sergeant-Major. "But I warn you of the consequences." "Sounds like the 'Arabian Nights,'" said Mrs. White, as she rose and began to set the supper. "Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me." "As you probably know, The Arabian Nights is a collection of folk tales from the Middle East and South Asia, created out of desperation for survival. Shahryār (Persian king) executes his unfaithful wife and believes all women are traitorous, he marries a succession of virgins, only to execute each the next morning until there are none left except Scheherazade. She is so clever that to remain alive, she decides to tell the king a tale so captivating and suspenseful, he continues to postpone putting her to death night after night in order to hear the story's conclusion (after One Thousand and One Nights). Why does W.W. Jacobs throw this literary allusion into his story? First, we think of having wishes granted as wonderful, like Aladdin's magic lamp in the Disney movie. But most versions of this story suggest that "happy" wishes are impossible because people can't control magic. We learn early on in The Monkey's Paw that any wishes asked of the monkey's paw will cause destruction, rather than good. The reference to Arabian Nights foreshadows desperation and greed by the White family. Mrs. White's off-handed suggestion (sorry, that's a pun) to wish for "four pairs of hands" may reference the Hindu goddess, Durga, the protective warrior who combats evil and demonic forces. Ironically, the family would have been better off had that been one of their actual wishes! These allusions illustrate that the Whites clearly have no respect for the magical forces at work in the talisman, as we (and they) quickly discover in the story. Fakir presenting gift to Emperor JahangirThe Epigraph Sets the ToneWhat's the opening quote called? First, let's rule-out an "epigram" which is a concise, short, clever saying, which this is not; neither witty nor concise. The difference between an "epitaph" and "epigraph": Both are profound quotes, poems or statements, the difference relates to where they appear. An "epitaph" is inscribed on a tombstone or plaque; an "epigraph" appears at the opening of a literary composition. In this case, the phrase at the beginning of the story is an epigraph: "Be careful what you wish for, you may receive it." -AnonymousJacobs' epigraph serves as a cautionary foreshadowing of the story's theme, almost a morality tale to leave things you don't understand well enough alone, or suffer the consequences. Interesting VocabularyFakir or Faqir: Arabic term for a Muslim ascetic (someone who abstains from earthly pleasures) to focus on purely spiritual matters, often mystical. Having taken a vow of poverty, renouncing all possessions, many resided in Sufi shrines in North India. In the story, the monkey's paw is endowed with magical powers by a Fakir. Talisman: An object charged with magical powers by a creator. It can have a specific purpose (like punishing the wishmaker). Amulet: Though not in the story, good to know for comparison. An object that has natural magical properties, and can be used for general purposes like protection, attracting good luck. (The White family needed an amulet to protect them from the evil talisman!) W.W. JacobsExplain what the following quotes mean and how they relate to the story: "To look at," said the Sergeant-Major, fumbling in his pocket, 'it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy.' ""The first man had his three wishes. Yes," was the reply, 'I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That's how I got the paw.' "" "Bring him back," cried the old woman, and dragged him towards the door. 'Do you think I fear the child I have nursed?' ""The talisman was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized up on him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand." ""But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If only he could find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey's paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish. "Christian Talisman, Brever11. What is the meaning of the epigraph and how does it relate to the themes of the story? Discuss "tempting fate." 2. Why did the Sergeant-Major bother holding on to the monkey's paw after the terror it caused him? Why doesn't Jacobs reveal the details of his wish to the reader? 3. Describe the superstitious symbolism of three's: three people being granted three wishes, three people in the White family, three knocks at the door. 4. Explain why the couple reluctantly decides to use the second wish to bring back their son, given their experience with the first wish. 5. What does the wife's fumbling at the door and trouble reaching the bolt symbolize? 6. What was Mr. White's third wish, and why does Jacobs leave it to the reader to figure it out? 7. The Story of Aladdin features a magical talisman in the form of a lamp. Compare and contrasts its role in Aladdin's fate, compared to the Whites' in this story. 8. Identify Jacobs' use of literary allusions to heighten suspense and fear in the reader. 9. Why does Jacobs suppress information about the third and final wish? What is the affect of this omission on the reader? 10. Discuss what story elements are particularly conducive to a supernatural movie adaptation, particularly the evil that comes from tempting fate. What music would you use? 11. If you were given the monkey's paw, would you ask for three wishes? If so, what would they be (to avoid tempting fate). If not, are you sure you wouldn't be tempted? Essay prompt: Take it from here... if you were to continue writing the story, what would happen to the talisman? Who might stumble upon it and to what end? What becomes of Mr. and Mrs. White? Would you revisit the Fakir in India who set the curse on the paw? The HandCompare and contrast the themes and supernatural elements in The Monkey's Paw with: 2013 movie adaptationA Teacher's Work Is Never DoneWe need to hear from you! Please share your lesson plans, discussion questions, or pitfalls to avoid while teaching this work, in pursuing our common interests of helping more students enjoy reading classic literature! Contact us via Facebook or TwitterVisit our Teacher Resources for recommended works, supporting literacy instruction across all grade levelsAmerican Literature's Study GuidesReturn to American Literature Home PageAm Lit - Pinterest #1 Print off "The Monkey's Paw" packet. Inside you will find the Literary Devices sheet, the story "The Monkey's Paw," and the steps to walk you through writing a literary analysis essay. "The Monkey's Paw" Packet #2 Let's begin with a brief overview of the terms we will be learning and using in this lesson. As you watch the video, write the definitions to the Literary Devices listed on your sheet. #3 Once you have defined the literary devices from the video, check out the preliminary vocabulary you will need to know. It is a little tricky since W.W. Jacobs lived in England in a previous century. #4 Next, we will read the story. It's a tricky one because of the old English from England. It might be tough, but you can do it. Just take your time and think through what it all means. #5 Next, analyze the plot of the story using the chart. Write down all of the Elements of Fiction that you can find in "The Monkey's Paw." #6 Take a look at the Selected Response Questions and Textual Evidence Questions. (Be careful to answer the first part correctly so that you will be able to answer the second part correctly in the Selected Response Questions.) Textual Evidence Questions #7 Take a look at the Text Dependent Analysis Question. What is that question asking? #8 Decide upon your claim. Then rewrite the TDA Question as your thesis statement. Then reread the story, annotating the text to support your thesis statement. #9 Make a list of all the text support you find and explain the significance of each piece to prove your thesis point. #10 Outline your essay using the graphic organizer / outline provided. #11 Write your rough draft on separate paper. #12 Revise using the guidelines. #13 Type up your essay in MLA format. #14 Edit using the Editing Checklist on the back of the Revision Guidelines above. #15 Print and turn in your final, perfected copy. About 30 minutes About 15 minutes We are going to follow the process that we just completed with another literary text - "The King of Mazy May." In this text, we will focus on how the author uses the setting. Click the link below to move forward. Welcome to the LitCharts study guide on W. W. Jacobs's The Monkey's Paw. Created by the original team behind SparkNotes, LitCharts are the world's best literature guides. W. W. Jacobs grew up in a working-class family in London, where his father worked as a manager of the South Devon Wharf. His father's profession would greatly impact Jacobs' later work, as he earned fame for his sea stories and humor writing. As a young man, Jacobs worked as a clerk for the Savings Bank Department of the General Post Office. During this time, he began writing as a hobby and a way to earn extra money. After being published in several magazines, Jacobs recognized his passion for writing and felt successful enough to quit his job in civil service. Politically conservative, he had a rocky marriage to Agnes Eleanor Williams, with whom he had five children. Throughout his writing career, Jacobs published several short story collections, including Snug Harbor, a massive collection of his work, in 1931, but today he is most well-known for his horror story, The Monkey's Paw. By the mid-1800s, Britain had taken control, directly or indirectly, of most of India. While the colonization of India brought Britain access to unprecedented amounts of natural resources, land, and labor, many Britons at the time feared that the otherness and foreignness of the colony would negatively impact British culture. This is reflected in the supposed evil of the monkey's paw, which Morris brings from India. Jacobs grew up in Victorian England, an era characterized by the rule of Queen Victoria and an emphasis on morals and manners. Part of these morals celebrated the sacredness of family and the home, shown by the happy home life of the Whites at the beginning of the story. The Victorian era also saw rapid industrialization in England, shown by Herbert working and then dying in a factory. Just as the monkey's paw comes from India to bring tragedy into the Whites' lives, The Adventure of the Speckled Band by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle also conflates objects from India with evil. Both stories reflect a common fear among Britons during the late 1800s and early 1900s of the otherness and foreignness of the countries Britain colonized. The Monkey's Paw also deals with the macabre, a term for works dealing with gruesome and ghastly subjects associated with death. This relates to other gothic stories such as The Rats in the Walls by H.P. Lovecraft, which like The Monkey's Paw also deals with subjects of grief and supernatural horror. The story also borrows directly from The Thousand and One Nights, a collection of Middle Eastern folktales also known as the Arabian Nights, which Mrs. White references in the narrative. In the most popular of the tales, a boy named Aladdin receives a magic lamp that grants him wishes, just as the monkey's paw grants wishes. Key Facts about The Monkey's Paw Full Title: The Monkey's Paw Where Written: England When Published: 1902 Literary Period: Realism, Existentialism Genre: Horror, Short Story Setting: Laburnam Villa, the White's home in England Climax: A knocking at the door could be the mangled corpse of Herbert, while Mr. White desperately uses the third wish to make Herbert disappear. Antagonist: The monkey's paw, the unchangeability of fate Point of View: Third person Adaptations, Adaptations. The Monkey's Paw has been adapted hundreds of times for stage, radio, and film, including a play produced in 1903, a year after the story was originally published, and a 2013 movie by the same name. Popular TV shows such as The Simpsons, The X-Files, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer have aired episodes based on the story. Isn't It Ironic? Jacobs experienced popular success and acclaim in his lifetime for his humor writing, but today his funny stories and essays are all but forgotten. Ironically, modern readers remember Jacobs only for The Monkey's Paw, a gruesome horror story.

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