

The monkey's paw by w. w. jacobs

Literature



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The Monkey's Paw Introduction "The Monkey's Paw" is a short story by W. W. Jacobs published in 1902. The story revolves around fate and the grave consequences suffered by those who try to obstruct it. In the story, three men make the wishes and all pay dearly for their wishes. The story is set in mystifying and deserted scenery within England in the 1900's. This paper focuses on the plot summary, description of the characters, the setting, Conflict description, point of view, theme, symbolism, and other literary techniques used in the short story.

Plot Summary The story is about a monkey paw with magical powers that could give three wishes to three men at a callous cost on whoever made the wishes. At the beginning of the story, Mr. White, his wife and their son, are in the house. Mr. White and his son Herbert are playing Chess while the wife is knitting while seated beside the fire. Mr White seems careless in his moves on the board such that he ends up losing the game to his son. Sergeant-Major Morris visits the family, narrates of war stories, and eventually reveals about the monkey paw. He says he had gotten the paw from a man who had already made the three wishes with his last wish being death. Morris consents that he had already made his three wishes, which had been granted. Morris decides to burn the paw in the fire but Mr White snatches it and inquires how to make the wishes but Morris repeatedly warns him against keeping the paw. Herbert seems thrilled by the power of the monkey's paw and even gives suggestion on wishes his father should make. Morris leaves and Mr White makes the first wish to be granted 200 pound. The cost turns out to be death of their son Herbert who is crushed by machinery in his work place and the White's are compensated with 200 pounds. One week after Herbert's burial, Mrs White is overcome by grief and provokes her husband to wish for their son's

revivification. Mr. White reluctantly makes the wish but when he hears a knock on the door, he realizes it was a grief mistake and when her wife insists on opening the door for Herbert, Mr. White makes his last unmentioned wish and when the wife opens, the door there is no one (Jacobs, 2012). Description of the Characters There are four major characters in the story and they include Mr. White, Mrs. White, Herbert, and Morris.

Other minor Characters featured include the old fakir, the mail carrier and the stranger who brings the news of Herbert's death (Jacobs, 2012).

Sergeant-Major Morris is very instrumental in story since he is the one who introduces the monkey's paw into Mr. White's family. Although Morris persuades Mr. White to dump the monkey's paw, his intentions of bringing the paw to the family are unclear. Mr White is depicted as a greedy old man who easily inclines to his wife's yearnings and makes judgments that affects his family depressingly. Mrs White is depicted as intelligent from the way she discerns his husband's moves when he is playing chess with Hebert. She is also influential particularly in her husband's decisions. Herbert is less talked about but he pays the cost of his father's greed when he dies for the wish to be fulfilled. The man from Maw and Meggins remains unidentified but is described as wearing fancy clothes and conveys the news or Herbert's death and the compensation the company would offer the Whites. Fakir is describe as a holy entity who cast a spell on the monkey's paw (Jacobs, 2012).

Conflict description Several conflicts are portrayed in the story. The first conflict arises when Morris introduces the monkey's paw which he advises Mr White not to use. The conflict runs throughout the story particularly when Mr. White tries to figure out the wishes to make. He seriously disagrees with the wife on whether to wish for his son resurgence. Another conflict was on

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whether to keep the paw or burn it (Jacobs, 2012). Point of view This refers to the point from which a story is narrated. “ The Monkey’s Paw is told from a third person point of view where the narrator can only tell the thoughts of Herbert particularly when he was left alone by the fire. The point of view is thus third person limited (Jacobs, 2012; Garrity, 2000). Themes A number of themes are portrayed in “ The Monkey’s Paw”. The themes include the theme of fate where characters are warned against trying to alter fate. The theme of superstition and supernaturalism is evident in the ability of the talisman to grant wishes. Another theme is the theme of greed, which forces Mr White to make wishes at a dire cost. An additional theme is the theme of danger of desire portrayed by the dire consequences suffered by the characters that make wishes. The theme of horror is depicted by the stormy ambience, banging of doors, the dreaded reappearance of Herbert, and the awkward silence in the house (Jacobs, 2012; Garrity, 2000). Symbolism Certain objects and events are used symbolically. The monkey's paw is used to symbolise desire and ravenousness. The characters crave to make perplexing wishes even at a grave cost. It is used in the story to demonstrate the greed in the character such as Mr. White and Morris who go ahead to make insatiable wishes while knowing the nasty cost associated with granting of the wishes. Chess is also used symbolically to symbolise the future and fate of Mr. White’s family. It also depicts the life within the monkey’s paw. The lackadaisical moves that Mr. White makes in the chess game depict the obtuse wishes he would request from the monkey’s paw (Jacobs, 2012). Other Literary Techniques Other literary techniques used include foreshadowing for example when Morris talks of the third wish made by the previous owner of the monkey’s paw, which is death. This signifies

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Herbert's death. Suspense is another device used by the author when he does not mention the wishes made by previous possessors of the paw. Suspense is also evident at the end of the story where we are left guessing who knocked the door and Mr. White's last wish. Allusion is represented by the title " the Monkey's Paw" for familiarity. Personification is another device used when Mr. White was about to speak and " the words died away on his lips" (Jacobs, 2012). References Garrity, N. (2000). Classic Middle School Literature: Mystery. New York: Good Year Books. P. 68-74. Jacobs, W. (2012). The Monkey's Paw. Retrieved June 22, 2012, from [http://www. online-literature. com/ww-jacobs/1743/](http://www.online-literature.com/ww-jacobs/1743/)