

The presentation of
human nature in the
monkey's paw, a
short story by w.w.
jacob...



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Numerous authors around the world have depicted human nature as ways in which people think, feel and act. W. W. Jacobs, in his short story, "The Monkey's Paw" paints a rather negative picture about human nature. He portrays a family which falls under a spell cast by an old fakir, causing the members to be succumbed to temptations caused by the monkey's paw. The monkey's paw is supposedly known to provide three wishes for three individuals, granting wishes that would soon turn into tragic sorrows and also helping people to realize that fate often determines human life. Throughout this short story, W. W. Jacobs defines human nature as one that is filled with greed, selfish thoughts and ungrateful attitudes.

W. W. Jacobs suggests that humans are naturally filled with greed. In this story, he describes Mr. White as someone who desperately desired to pile up his possessions. As a result, Mr. White's greed coveted Sergeant-Major Morris' talisman, the monkey's paw. For example, "' If you don't want it, Morris," said the other, " give it to me.'" Mr. White had revealed his overly excessive greed when saying this even after the paw was thrown upon fire. In addition, the author also portrays how Mr. White was not content with all the money and belongings that he already had in his possession. "' I wish for two hundred pounds," said the old man distinctly." This was the wish that he made when he was already well off. Finally, the author also displays the White family's intense craving for power. In the story, Herbert encourages his father to wish to bring kingly power upon themselves by saying, " Why, we're going to be rich, and famous, and happy. Wish to be an emperor, Father,"

The author also claims that human beings are filled with selfish thoughts. He reveals the White family as people who were not patient when it came to increasing their wealth. He makes this point when he writes, “ Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that’ll just do it.” W. W. Jacobs points out that the White family was obsessed about elaborating on their personal riches. Therefore, the family could have owned everything in the world yet they would not have enough to be satisfied with what they had. Also, the author shows how the White family was not at all bothered by the fact that the talisman might be cursed and how they might suffer from the deadly consequences when they first received the monkey’s paw from Sergeant-Major Morris. Their overall one and only concern was if the monkey’s paw was actually able to grant their wishes.

W. W. Jacobs also believes that people are excellent examples of ungrateful attitudes. The author expresses this human nature through Mr. White who was in general, a well-off man. Although he was particularly fortunate compared to most people, Mr. White was ungrateful about his living conditions saying, “ 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.” The author also demonstrates the ungrateful mindset of the son, Herbert White. The son had a pleasant life and even a job, however he still managed to display an ungrateful attitude in, “ Well, I don’t see the money,” said his son, as he picked it up and placed it on the table, “ and I bet I never shall.” Lastly, the author displays the ungrateful attitudes of the couple. Instead of being grateful of their present fate and all that still remained, they still considered their other two wishes which is illustrated in, “ Think of what?’ he

questioned. 'The other two wishes,' she replied rapidly. 'We've only had one.'"

Overall, W. W. Jacobs illustrates human nature as one that is filled with greed, selfish thoughts and ungrateful attitudes. The author successfully exhibits these human natures using the White family. These natures can be seen in their greed for more money and power, their selfish thoughts that only cared for living a prosperous life and ungrateful attitudes for the things that they already had. Nevertheless, W. W. Jacobs' negative notion on human nature can be seen not only in these characters, but also in the reality as well.