

# Is the monkey's paw an effective horror story? essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

To create a successful horror story, the author needs to create a sense of tension and suspense. This is done through using emotive language and creating a series of horrific events. Most importantly, the story needs to have atmosphere.

There are a number of elements the author uses to try and create this. However, the author also makes poor decisions, which (in my opinion) spoil the atmosphere of the story.

Firstly, the author spends very little time on describing the setting and the characters, and chooses to spend more time on describing the Monkey's Paw. I believe this is a good idea, because it not only makes the situation seem more mystical, through lack of information for the reader to make a mental picture, But also creates a sense of mystery and not knowing where or to whom this is happening, makes the reader seem frightened. Also, the lack of information makes the White family seem more like everyday people, and therefore realistic, which creates the thought that this could happen to anyone. It also gives the author the ability to describe the paw in enough detail, so that it becomes as horrific as possible. The setting is described as being cold, wet, and windy, this being a very common setting for a horror story. Though a little unoriginal, these conditions are a good method of creating fear.

There are a number of methods the author uses to make the paw seem as mystical, and therefore more horrific, as possible; firstly, the paw is introduced under unusual circumstances: The owner of the paw, Sergeant-Major Morris is introduced as being ' beady of eye and rubicund of visage'.

This suggests that the new character is dangerous and sly, and possibly threat to the White family. The next paragraph shows that Sergeant-Major Morris is not a threat, as previously thought, ' At the third glass his eyes got brighter, and he began to talk.' I believe that by rapidly changing characterisation, the author is playing with the reader's emotions.

When the paw is first introduced to the story, it is Mr White that asks Sergeant-Major Morris about it. Sergeant-Major Morris does not answer the question, ' Nothing, leastways nothing worth hearing.' This adds to the reader's curiosity. ' Monkey's paw?' Mrs White then asks. Mrs White's curiosity is symbolic of the reader's curiosity, her part is important in the story, as she asks the questions that reader is thinking. Sergeant-Major Morris replies by saying ' Well it's just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps'. This casual response makes the reader even more curious than before. I believe the author was successful in creating suspense when the Monkey's Paw is introduced.

Another way the author tries to make the paw seem as scary as possible is by showing Sergeant-Major Morris' fear of it. " I have,' he said quietly, and his blotchy face whitened'. This is a good form of horror, because it gives a hint about the power of the paw. If someone who has been in the army for a long time, and probably been to war, is so afraid of this seemingly innocent paw, there must be something that both the reader and the White family does not know.

Another way the author makes the monkey's paw seem more evil is by referring to it as ' the talisman'. A talisman is a charm that usually brings

luck, however the monkey's paw actually brings the opposite of luck. This is a good technique because it makes the twist in the plot more unexpected.

I believe that the best technique the author uses to create suspense is the use of irony. Irony is a very useful form of tension, because it gives the reader the ability to not only predict of the future of the plot, but it highlights the vulnerability and innocence of the White family. I believe the main reason the author uses irony is to make the twist in the plot as unexpected as possible. Some examples of the use of irony used in the story are Mr White saying ' Never mind, though; there's no harm done,' when he has made his first wish. Another example of irony used in the story is Mrs White saying ' How could two hundred pounds hurt you, father?'

The vulnerability of the White family is highlighted even further by their mocking of the monkey's paw and its powers, which they are yet to have experienced. Some examples of their un-serious attitude towards the paw are Herbert White saying ' Why, we're going to be rich, and famous and happy. Wish to be an Emperor, father. To begin with; then you can't be henpecked' and when discussing Mr White's wish for money, Herbert White again mocks the Monkey's Paw by saying ' Might drop on his head from the sky.' The author makes Mrs White and her son seem as close as possible, so the pain of losing him is bitterer and the awful situation that has occurred is even more realistic. ' Mr White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son'. The author has been very successful in creating an innocent image of the White family. This is effective because it gives the reader the ability to relate to the family better, and

consequently, the future situations of the White family are more horrific and shocking, due to the fact that the reader feels closer to them.

Another method the author uses to give the reader a slight idea of what may happen later on in the story, are comments made by Sergeant-Major Morris. Firstly, he says ' It had a spell put on it by an old fakir, he wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives'. This is true to what happens to the White family. ' The first man had his three wishes. Yes, I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death.' This is, again, true to what happens to the White family; it also this gives a clue towards the unclear ending of the story.

Nothing happens overnight, this is an example of the originality of the story, as one would expect the horrific events to happen immediately, as this is the common scenario for horror stories. Originality is an essential aspect of a good horror story. I believe the most original aspect of the story is the ending. The story is left with an uncertain ending and the monkey's paw is still alive. This is original because most famous horror stories end with the monster being vanquished, for example Frankenstein and Dracula. The ending is also effective because it leaves the horrific thought that the Monkey's Paw is still able to go and destroy the lives of another family.

The author was successful in building up tension towards the death of Herbert White. It was essential for the author to create suspense before it is official about Herbert White's death, because this is the first statement of the powers from the Monkey's Paw. Firstly, the tension is built up through pauses in speech, ' I- was asked to call'. Next, Mrs White gives a clue towards the

plot; this is a good technique, because it gives the reader a prediction of the future. 'Is anything the matter? Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it?' The author uses again uses irony to build up the tension. 'Sit down and don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir'.

Another good way of creating tension is when the author describes Mrs White's reaction when she finds out that her son is dead. 'She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her.'

Another technique the author uses to describe Mr White's reaction when he finds out he is going to receive compensation is saying he 'gazed with a look of horror at the visitor'. I believe the best technique the author uses to create horror about the death of Herbert White, is in not describing any detail Herbert's death. 'He was caught in the machinery'. I believe this is a good technique because, it leaves the reader's imagination to picture the blood and gore, and a person can imagine the image better than the author can describe in it. Also, Mr White repeats 'Caught in the machinery' for emphasis.

Another good technique the author uses is in not using any adjectives when the visitor tells the White family the amount of compensation they will receive, this makes the statement more horrific. "Two hundred pounds,' was the answer'.

The change of character in Mrs White is very noticeable; she becomes hysterical: 'I only just thought of it, why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?' This madness is a sign of how the White family's lives have been destroyed, through the evilness of the Monkey's Paw. Mrs White

was once a happy mother, she is now an insane woman who has lost her son.

The change of character in Mr White shows his emotions very well. At first he believes that his son's death has no connection with the monkey's paw, 'A coincidence.' Mr White also becomes afraid of his wife, 'He was afraid of her'. Mr White is also afraid of his son, at first not even believing the Monkey's Paw has the ability to defy nature and bring him back, saying 'Good God, you are mad' when his wife suggested trying to resurrect him. He then decides that the corpse is real, but not human, he refers to his son as 'it'. 'For God's sake don't let it in'. With his final wish, the knocking on the door stops, leaving the implication that he wished his son dead again, just like the first person who possessed the paw.

The change in terminology also changes, referring to the Monkey's Paw as 'The unwholesome thing.' The atmosphere is built up very well while this happens, using classic horror imageries. 'The candle-end, which had burned below the rim of the china candlestick, was throwing pulsating shadows on the ceiling and walls, until, with a flicker larger than the rest, it expired.'

The Monkey's paw is a very good horror story. It uses original horror elements, to create horror. The author is very good in creating tension and atmosphere.

The only bad point I can make about the story is I believe the use of comic relief has no place in a story that relies mainly on suspense. By comic relief, I mean the mocking of the classic horror story. 'A fine crash from the piano

greeted the words.' Apart from this though, I believe The Monkey's Paw is a successful horror story.