

# The monkey's paw: a true example of horror genre

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## **Tension in “ The Monkey’s Paw”**

The horror and gothic genre one could say has been done to death with the plethora of movies hitting the box office each year. However, W. W Jacobs “ The Monkey’s Paw” showcases the true genius of the horror genre putting on a clinic for modern works to take influence from. The story still terrifies to readers till this day which then begs the question on to how W. W Jacobs accomplished should a difficult feat. A modern-day classic, as the suspense used throughout the story, slowly developing the readers changing perception on the characters. The gothic themes present in the story cannot help to display a sense of apprehension overall. Jacobs brilliant use of pathetic fallacy, imagery and foreshowing to display said themes show the stories true horror. Thus, it is evident that the literary devices present and cultural factors in “ the Monkey’s Paw” help contribute to the creation of anxiety for not only the reader but to the story as a whole.

Pathetic fallacy when done correctly has the effect to change a story entirely. Authors like Shakespeare and Shelly have all used this literary device in their novel which remain classics till today. Jacobs does just that as well in “ The Monkey’s Paw” as he uses this literary device to not only express the stories gothic theme but to show how tension and anxiety is displayed for the characters and the readers. “ It moved,” he cried, with a look of horror at the object as it lay on the floor. “ As I wished, it twisted in my hand like a snake.” (Jacobs, 4). This quote is a prime example of pathetic fallacy in the story. Here the author gives a life like description of the way the paw moves on Mr. White. Not only does this frighten Mr. white more it

also puts him on edge. This then contributes to the theme of gothic horror as here the it is shown that the paw has come alive and acts in its own way moving freely in Mr. Whites hand. This then builds tension as Mr. White could not believe that the paw would move in such manner making him only to then then of the horrors to come with the wish he just made. This also leads to anxiety for the readers as, they would to be wiry of what would come next. As it is not apparent that the paw is capable of the misfortune Sergeant-Major Morris has warned the characters about. The characters try to then pass this off as nothing not seeing the money but deep down it builds suspension within in them about the paw thus showing tension. Not only does the author use pathetic fallacy to express a sense of tension or anxiety but a great deal of imagery is used to present the gothic theme will making the reader/characters feel the tension that the story expresses.

The author accurately displays the sense of the story's gothic theme through his use of imagery, building suspense but more importantly tension. One way the author showcased this is through his description of the dead version of Herbert. It is apparent that the author does not greatly depict Herbert after he dies. " He was caught in the machinery," (Jacobs, 6) is the only real description given on how Herbert dies. However, the true imagery lies on the terrifying idea that is planted into the readers heads after this event. Jacobs, eves the description all to the reader and their imagination. This then heightens the stories tension as the readers would not know what to expected of Herbert and what he would look like as he approaches his home. This creates the atmosphere to further enrich in its gothic nature as the reader awaits the freighting events to come. Another example of the

imagery used the slow burring out of the candle. Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. " Get back to bed he said," his voice shaking. " You don't know what you are saying." (Jacobs, 7) effectively shows tension for the characters. Here the imagery of the candle represents the slow demise of the characters sanity. This is because while the candle is lit, the couple is fighting on the aftermath of the first wish which indirectly killed their son. This thus shows tension between them as they are arguing to where or not make another wish. Both characters enter a state of anger with each other, acting irrationally through the tension. This heightens the gothic theme both lay waiting in the bed with distressed sleep. This event has left both in a state of tension with each other as they feel they will be interrupted soon negative truly feeling the repercussions of their actions but lay fearful and almost defenseless as they do not know what to expect. The author lastly effectively uses foreshadowing as a prime way to display the tension in the story.