

What elements proceed in making the monkeys paw a successful horror story essay sa...

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There are in actual fact a various number of techniques and components, which constitute in creating dramatic tension and then sustaining it, thereby making *The Monkey's Paw* a successful horror story. *The Monkey's Paw* tells the story of a mystical talisman with supernatural capabilities. The story consists of two sets of characters, The White family, who personify the rational, and Sergeant Major Morris, representing the supernatural. The chemistry between these two sets of characters will become more apparent later on, as I will discuss it in more detail.

The monkey's paw grants any three wishes to whoever may hold it, although each individual wish possesses some kind of adverse side effect. The monkey's paw was given to the White family by a mysterious old man, Sergeant Major Morris. Despite Sergeant Major Morris's various indirect warnings as to what the monkey's paw was capable of, the White family purely dismissed them, 'better let it burn'. The father of the family then proceeded to wish for £200. (This could be an indication as to when the story was written, pre-twentieth century. £200 in this modern age would not be considered a vast sum of money.

The consequence of this wish was the resulting death of his son at work (Maw and Meggins), although the family received exactly £200 as compensation, 'they wish to present you with a certain sum of compensation'. Due to the mother's natural bereavement at the death of her son, she then found herself forcing her husband to wish to wish Herbert (her son) back despite his obvious disapproval, 'I wish my son alive again'. The story then ends in a similar fashion to the way it began, the father and

mother are waiting for somebody to arrive, this helps in giving the story an element of suspense.

The final twist in the tale occurs when somebody, in the end does arrive, ' A third knock sounded through the house'. The mother believes her son has come back but the father is far more cautious and refers to whoever is at the door as ' it'. The father realises the severity of the situation and frantically begins looking for the monkey's paw in order to wish the person away. The tension takes a dip between the father looking for the monkey's paw and when, whoever it was at the door disappears. This is intended to give the reader a chance to gather his emotions and leave them with a feeling of loss and loneliness.

We are then left with a sense of curiosity as to what exactly the third wish was and what effects it would have. The horror of the final wish is purely left up to the reader's imagination giving. This would help in giving the story a furthermore element of suspense. The Monkey's Paw was set in an isolated, secluded and to certain extent a confined area. The weather seemed to be overcast and murky, ' cold and wet', where the characters seemed to be far away from any help. The main action had a tendency to take place at night and the atmosphere throughout the story appeared to be very uncomfortable and strange.

Of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. ' All of these factors contribute in setting the mood of the story and convey a feeling of fate. This gives an indication that the story may hold a tragic

finale. The atmosphere was created very early in the story, ' the night was cold and wet' said Mr White. The concept of fate early on is further emphasised when the monkey's paw (a talisman) drops to the ground and the writer then says ' The talisman fell to the floor and he (Sergeant Major Morris) regarded it carefully'.

This adds suspense. From this we can assume that the talisman may be dangerous and has a significant part to play in the rest of the story. During the story two sets of characters were established, Sergeant Major Morris portraying the supernatural and the White family, depicting the rational. I have mentioned this earlier. To underline this theory, Sergeant Major Morris was described in a somewhat strange manner in order to produce an element of mystery around him, ' a tall, burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage'.

Every time the supernatural is mentioned Sergeant Major Morris responds with some odd, physical reaction, for example, ' his blotchy face whitened'. This reaction helps build up tension but does not always necessarily sustain it. This tension is then broken down by the White family, who laugh of any suggestions of supernatural powers. They break down this tension with their reasoning, but the same process then builds up the tension again. This technique is repeated and raises the tension each time it occurs.

Due to the lack of knowledge when the story was written, people generally would not have been able to come up with reasonable explanations and therefore the society back then would have been more superstitious, this

story would have proved to be very effective. Repetition of certain words was also a key factor into making *The Monkey's Paw* a successful horror story.

The repetition of shades helped in creating a certain mood for the atmosphere, ' brightly, darkness, fire'. Not only were shades repeated but also sounds ' heavy, coughed, banged'. The language all throughout the story tended to be very formal due to its pre 20th century background.

The surroundings, location, characters, and the gloomy weather conditions were described in considerable detail. This formal style of writing is very effective in creating tension. The vocabulary is complicated and difficult to grasp. This can be expected as it was written pre 20th century. There is notable evidence of this as objects and words such as ' hark' were used. And the kettle was also made of ' copper'. The language also uses a lot of variation in the sentences. The sentences are structured with formal, prolonged, hard hitting sentences accompanied by spasms of quicker, shorter ones.

This tends to occur more during the speeches. ' Wish' ' It is foolish and wicked' ' Wish'. Followed up by, ' Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind' I have now talked about the different elements that all add up and thereby make *The Monkey's Paw* a successful horror story. The main techniques, which were evident during the story, were, the fact that it was set in an isolated area where the atmospheric conditions were below par, and the description of the region and some characters (Sergeant Major Morris), was somewhat mystical.

This gave the atmosphere another dimension. Repeated words also seemed to be engraved into our minds and again this created the right kind of atmosphere, to set our moods for what was about to take place. The sentences varied from long to short and vice versa. The complicated pre 20th century language, the structure of the characters and the idea of superstition v rational were also parts of the jigsaw. All of these techniques helped to create tension and suspense throughout the story and hence made *The Monkey's Paw* a successful horror story. Charles Dickens, W.

W Jacobs, and H. G Wells employ numerous techniques to create tension in their stories. Each story contains certain elements, which help create dramatic tension. One of the main ideas in common with all three stories is that they are all based around the idea of the supernatural and use similar methods in which to create tension. The three stories are set in an isolated area, which gives us an idea of tragedy later on and therefore helps create tension. The weather is overcast and gloomy, which helps give the atmosphere an uncomfortable and strange feeling.

Each story is set in windy, dark, rainy conditions in very mysterious, old areas which are described very strangely and in great detail. This helps set the stories genre as horror and adds to the tension. Each story follows similar fundamentals and materials, " *The Monkey's Paw*" is regarding a talisman in the shape of a monkey's paw which grants three wishes to who ever may hold it, who in this case is the White family, but the wishes don't come true exactly as they expected but instead brings great misfortune upon the

family. The location was solitary and confined to one house. The setting was described “ cold and wet”.

The Red Room tells the story of a Room in an old broken down house which had been said to be haunted, the narrator had been sent to investigate the theory, after spending one night there he found out through experience that the only supernatural activities in that room was from the fear in his own imagination. Again the location was isolated and restricted to one house or more so to one room. In this story the setting was set inside the house, “ The long draughty subterranean passage was chilly and draughty” Where as the Signalman is about a lonely man who is being tormented by his own fate.

He is being haunted by a spectre signalling him of his own death, but his ignorance clouds him from understanding this and so the story ends in tragedy. The location, once more was strange and dismal, “ The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually precipitous. It was made through a clammy stone, that became oozy and wetter as I went down. ” In all three of the stories the centre is always a limited space either a room, house or a small area, and the story seems to revolve around this, not exceeding these boundaries, this helps to centre the main structure and give an idea that help is far away and so help us predict tragedy.

In all three stories the action seems mostly to occur during the night. This would have been far more than effective setting it during the daytime in terms of creating tension. Nighttime relates to darkness, which creates fear and excitement to add to the atmosphere and therefore creating tension.

The atmosphere is set very early in the “ Monkey’s Paw”, “ The Signalman”, and “ The Red Room”. In the “ Monkey’s Paw” the atmosphere is set as early as the first line, “ the night was cold and wet”. Likewise in “ The signalman”, during the first paragraph it reads, “ He turned himself about and looked down the line.

There was something remarkable in his manner of doing so, though I could not have said for my life what. ” Even though this quotation does not relate with the setting, it still helps to create tension, because of the oddness of this line. And finally in the “ Red Room”, early as the first line when the narrator says, “ it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten. The man with the withered arm replies, “ it is your own choosing”. This immediately sets the mood of the story. Setting the atmosphere early allows room for the tension to build up later in the respective stories.

A key element in common with all three stories is the methods in which the writers have used to structure their characters. In each story there are certain characters representing the supernatural and certain characters representing the rational. The characters representing the supernatural are described in a strange manner. In the “ Monkey’s Paw” there is Sergeant Major Morris, “ a tall, burly man beady of eye and rubicund of visage”. There is the signalman in the “ The Signalman”, “ he was a dark sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows”

Finally in “ The Red Room” there were the three old people, “ yellow teeth” and “ the man with the withered arm”; these descriptions are very vague

and uncompleted way as if to create a feeling of mystery around this character to keep the readers interested. Each character has a dark aspect to them. Each time the threat of the supernatural is mentioned, the characters representing the supernatural give a distinct physical reaction and this helps in building up the tension. In the Monkeys Paw, Sergeant Major Morris warns the family of the dangers the talisman holds though the advice goes upon deaf ears.

The warning of danger is common in all three stories and is a key element in building up tension. The narrators, who represent the rational, have a very different purpose. They help reveal the story, give us information, build up tension and make the story clearer by describing the surroundings, the atmosphere and the other characters. For example, in "The Signalman", if the narrator was not involved in the story, we would not have known of the signalman's troubles and adulation's or of where he worked or of him.

The similarity between the narrators is that they represent the 'reason' in the stories; they are set to prove that the supernatural really does not exist. The tension is greatly built up through this. The other characters, (representing the supernatural) contrast with their great belief of the supernatural. For instance, in the Red Room the old woman tells the narrator "eight and twenty years you have lived and never seen the likes of this house" these words send a shiver down the reader's spine.

This greatly builds up the tension through anticipating what's going to happen next. But the tension is sustained through the narrator's supposed

rational thinking; this method which the writers use to build up tension occurs repeatedly, and builds up tension each time it occurs, so becomes very effective. It is the narrator's disbelief, which helps lead to tragedy, they fail to believe in the supernatural and so ridicule it or fail to take action to prevent it. This may be because the narrators see themselves as better educated, in a higher class to the working man.

This is seen in the signalman where he calls the narrator "sir". This is an element of why the story ends in tragedy, if he believed in the signalman and helped him to find the solution to the spectre's signals the story may not have ended in tragedy, or in the Monkeys Paw, if the Family were not to ridicule the magic behind the talisman, they would not have made such a decision without assessing it. The difference between "The Signalman" and the other two stories is that it ends suddenly; where as the other two end in a long conclusion.

The ending of "The Signalmen" was very effective; the message of the spectre was finally realised, causing the narrator to change his attitude bleak feeling towards the supernatural. It concluded without great detail as if to say the narrator was too distressed to talk about it, leaving us with a very bleak feeling. In the "Monkey's Paw" the characters turn about their attitude towards the supernatural but it is always too late. In the Red Room the narrator justified his accusations towards the supernatural, that it was only a figment in the imagination.

In "The Signalman" the narrator realises his mistake and goes into a state of shock, causing the end of the story to be short. If the story ended with an explanation we would not understand the narrator's reaction to the recent events. This helps to maintain the tension, as if to end the story with a question mark. The language is very effective in creating tension; all three stories are written in a very formal style. The vocabulary is very complicated and hard to understand.

This is expected due to the stories pre 20th century background, this helps makes the story more effective. The structure of the language is represented through long sentences followed by shorter ones or quotes this technique is used through out all three stories to build up tension and is very successful in doing so. Repetition is used very frequently to highlight noises, colours and settings such as "candlelight, footsteps, inflamed, fire, shadow". This is a literacy technique, which the writers use to create tension.

The stories are described in great detail as to create a better understanding and picture of the stories. By doing so they add to the tension. Evidence that the stories are pre 20th century are common in all three stories. The fact that they use candlelight or the telegraphic instruments in the Signalman, though the main evidence of this is the different views of the supernatural. During this time the supernatural was far more believable where as now we would need scientific proof to say if something was real or not.

This pre 20th setting is more effective in creating the setting for a horror genre and to create tension. In conclusion many aspects add to creating

tension in all three stories, such as the isolated settings and atmosphere, the complicated pre 20th century language, the structure of the characters and there purposes in the story but mainly the idea of superstition V rational
Each individual story uses both common and individual characteristics to create tension which are very successful in there own way.