

# Literary analysis of the monkey's paw essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The story begins on a rainy evening with Mrs. White, Mr. White, and their son Herbert gathered in the parlor. Mrs. White is sitting in her chair knitting as she looks on as her husband is losing to Herbert in a game of chess. From the inside, Mr. White can hear the footsteps of someone walking along their walkway and onto their porch. Mr. White immediately gets up to answer the door and is happy to see his longtime friend Sergeant-major Morris.

Mr. White introduces Sergeant-major Morris to his wife and son and invites him into the parlor where they could have drinks. After a couple of drinks, Sergeant-major Morris begins entertaining the family about his adventures in India, when Mr. White interrupts him about a story he was telling him about a monkey's paw. Sergeant-major Morris tried to avoid the conversation, but with intrigue from the others, against his better judgment Sergeant-major Morris begins to tell the family about the monkey's paw's origins and how it came into his possession.

After debating about whether the monkey paw has the ability to grant wishes, Sergeant-major Morris throws the monkey's paw into the fire. Mr. White quickly retrieves it from the fire and tells his friend since he has made his three wishes and doesn't want it anymore, it would better serve him instead. Sergeant-major Morris tries to reason with Mr. White and tells him to throw the monkey's paw back into the fire, but Mr. White doesn't listen and in the end Sergeant-major Morris tells him not to blame him for the consequences that will follow if he wishes on the monkey's paw.

W. W. Jacobs runs with two themes: be careful what you wish for and you can't get something for nothing. Jacobs illustrates both themes when Herbert

urges his father to wish for two hundred pounds. Everything seems to be going fine the next day until Herbert leaves for work. Not long after he is gone, a strange man comes to their house and informs Mr. and Mrs. White their son has been in an accident involving the machinery he was working with and he was instantly killed.

The company Herbert was working for offers to help pay for his funeral expenses by providing Mr. and Mrs. White a sum of two hundred pounds. Another example would be when Mrs. White was so grief stricken she encouraged and begged her husband to use his second wish to bring Herbert back from the grave. After the first wish, Mr. White knew something was wrong with the monkey's paw and tried to convince his wife it would be a bad idea because their son may not come back the same person.

The second wish alone puts the idea in the reader's mind it will be impossible for the son to come back the same, especially after being decapitated; therefore, the question of what will be the price for bring Herbert back from the dead. Jacobs also plays with the idea of irony because when you think of something having the ability to grant wishes, you automatically assume because you have good intentions your wishes will bring you nothing but happiness and enhance your life for the better.

But when Mr. White makes his wish for money, regardless of how innocent it was, it ends up costing him his son's life in the end-the give and take method. This bringing us back full circle that you can't get something for nothing. No matter how innocent Mr. White's wish was, it came with a price. Again, with the second wish, despite their good intentions, wishing Herbert

back from the dead would bring back the Herbert they knew before he died; it would be something “ evil” that would return to them and Mr. White knew it and he quickly acted on what he knew by wishing Herbert dead again.

The themes which occurred in W. W. Jacobs's story are nothing humanity has not been plagued with before. We all know if something is too good to be true it probably is and nothing in life is free, but regardless of the possible consequences, we as human beings still want the chance to get something for nothing. Everything comes with a price and in *The Monkey's Paw*, W. W. Jacobs makes the point to bring this message to readers; if there was something you could get for free, would you take it?