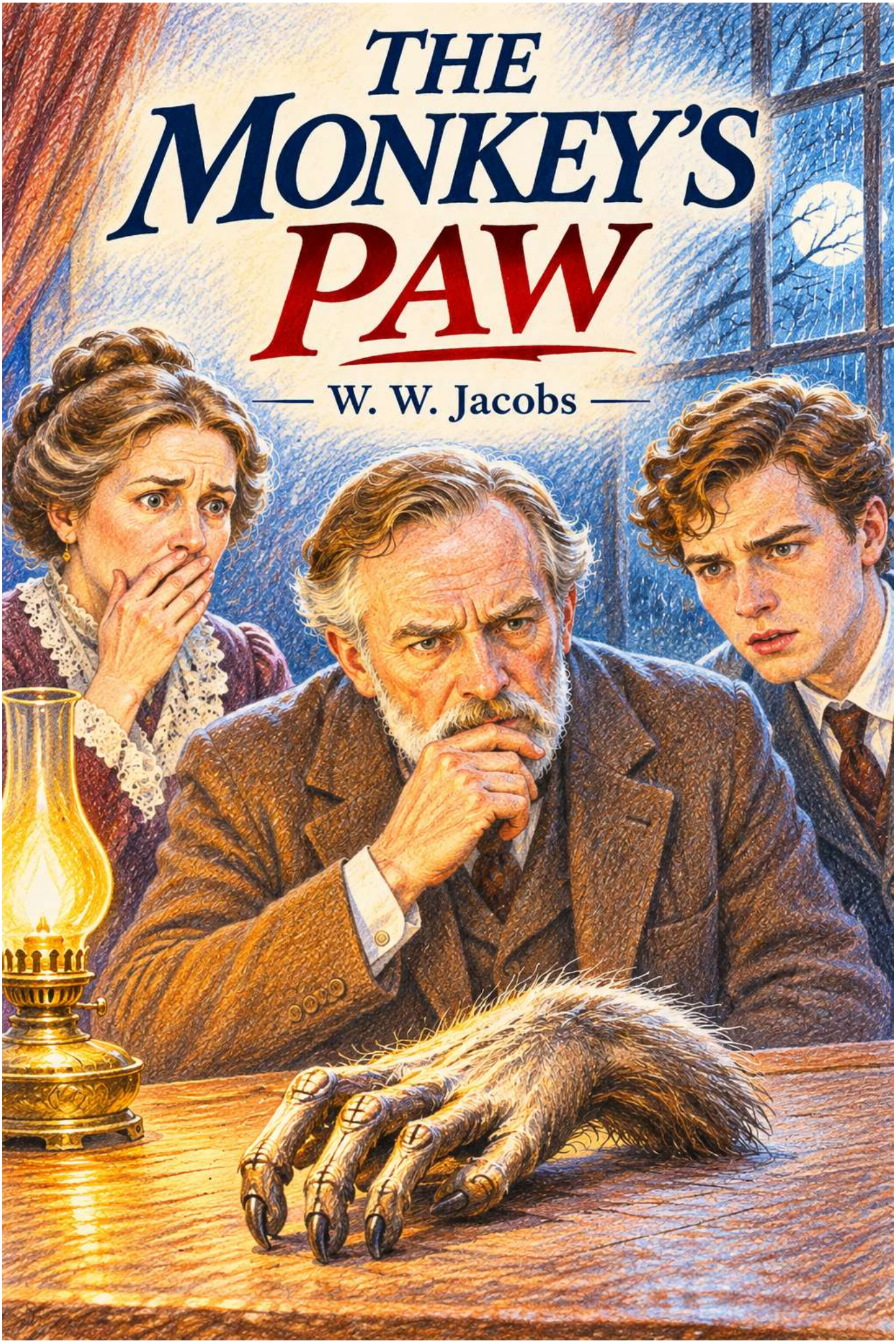

THE MONKEY'S PAW
W. W. Jacobs

The Monkey's Paw

By W. W. Jacobs

CLASSIC SHORT STORY
ENGLISH READING PRACTICE

ENGLISH SHORT STORIES FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS

LEVEL C1

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About the Author

W. W. Jacobs (1863–1943)

W. W. Jacobs (1863–1943) was an English writer best known for his short stories, particularly those combining humour, suspense, and elements of supernatural horror. His full name was William Wymark Jacobs. He was born on September 8, 1863, in Wapping, an area of East London closely connected with the city's docks and maritime trade. His father worked as a wharf manager, and the atmosphere of London's riverside communities later influenced much of his writing.

Before becoming a successful author, Jacobs worked as a clerk at the Post Office Savings Bank. Although he initially followed an ordinary professional career, he gradually developed a reputation as a talented writer. His early literary success came with the publication of *Many Cargoes* in 1896, a collection of humorous stories about sailors, ships, and life at sea.

Jacobs became particularly popular for his ability to create memorable characters and entertaining situations through natural dialogue, vivid descriptions, and carefully constructed plots. Much of his early fiction focuses on sailors, coastal communities, and the humorous difficulties of everyday life. However, he also demonstrated considerable skill in writing suspenseful and frightening stories.

His most famous work, *The Monkey's Paw*, was first published in 1902 as part of his collection *The Lady of the Barge*. The story established his reputation beyond humorous maritime fiction and became one of the best-known supernatural horror stories in English literature. Its exploration of fate, human desires, and the unexpected consequences of interfering with destiny has continued to fascinate readers for generations.

Although *The Monkey's Paw* remains his most widely recognised work, Jacobs wrote numerous other short stories and collections, including *The Skipper's Wooing* (1897), *Sea Urchins* (1898), and *Light Freights* (1901). His writing is distinguished by its accessible narrative style, effective characterisation, and ability to create tension without relying on excessive description.

W. W. Jacobs died on September 1, 1943, in Hornsey, London, at the age of seventy-nine. Today, he is remembered primarily for *The Monkey's Paw*, a classic tale that demonstrates how a seemingly simple wish can lead to devastating consequences. His work continues to be read and studied by lovers of short fiction and supernatural literature around the world.

About the Story

" The Monkey’s Paw " By W. W. Jacobs

"The Monkey's Paw" is a famous supernatural horror story by the English writer W. W. Jacobs. First published in 1902 as part of his short-story collection *The Lady of the Barge*, it has become one of the most widely recognised tales of suspense and supernatural fiction. Through an apparently ordinary family and a mysterious object with extraordinary powers, Jacobs explores the dangers of interfering with fate and the potentially devastating consequences of human wishes.

The story takes place at Laburnam Villa, the home of the White family. Mr. White, his wife, Mrs. White, and their adult son, Herbert, are spending a quiet evening together when Sergeant-Major Morris, an old friend who has returned from India, visits them. During the evening, Morris tells the family about a strange object known as the monkey's paw. According to his account, an Indian fakir placed a spell on it to demonstrate that fate governs human lives and that attempts to interfere with it bring suffering. The paw is said to grant three wishes to each of three different men.

Although Morris strongly warns the family about its dangers, Mr. White keeps the paw and eventually makes a wish for two hundred pounds. At first, the family treats the incident as a joke. However, the following day, a representative from Maw and Meggins, the company where Herbert works, arrives with terrible news. Herbert has been killed in an accident involving machinery. The company offers the family two hundred pounds in compensation, exactly the amount Mr. White requested.

In the second part, the story takes a darker turn as the family struggles to accept Herbert's death. About a week later, Mrs. White remembers that two wishes remain. Overcome by grief, she persuades her husband to use the second wish to bring their son back to life. Mr. White reluctantly makes the wish, but he is terrified by the possibility that Herbert may return in a mutilated condition. After a period of silence, mysterious knocking begins at the front door.

The final part builds towards a terrifying climax. Mrs. White becomes convinced that her son has returned and desperately attempts to open the door. Mr. White, however, fears what may be standing outside. While his wife struggles with the door's bolts, he searches frantically for the monkey's paw and makes the third and final wish. The knocking stops immediately. When Mrs. White finally opens the door, the street outside is quiet and deserted. Jacobs never directly reveals what was behind the door, leaving readers to interpret the disturbing events for themselves.

Main Characters

Mr. White is an elderly man whose curiosity leads him to keep the monkey's paw despite Morris's warnings. His initial amusement gradually gives way to fear, grief, and desperation. His decisions demonstrate how ordinary people can become trapped by the consequences of their own desires.

Mrs. White is a devoted mother whose love for Herbert becomes overwhelming after his death. Her determination to bring him back reveals the destructive power of grief when it overcomes reason and caution.

Herbert White is the couple's lively and humorous son. His playful attitude towards the monkey's paw contrasts sharply with the tragedy that follows. His death becomes the turning point of the story.

Sergeant-Major Morris is the former soldier who introduces the family to the mysterious talisman. His experience and serious warnings suggest that he understands the danger far better than the Whites.

Main Themes

Fate and Human Interference

One of the central themes is the danger of attempting to control destiny. The monkey's paw represents the human desire to change circumstances without understanding the consequences. Morris's account of the fakir's warning establishes the idea that interfering with fate may bring suffering rather than happiness.

The Consequences of Desire

The story demonstrates that wishes do not necessarily produce the outcomes people expect. Mr. White's seemingly harmless request for money is fulfilled through a devastating tragedy. The contrast between the family's desired reward and the actual cost exposes the danger of pursuing personal desires without considering their possible consequences.

Love, Grief, and Desperation

The Whites' relationship with Herbert gives the supernatural events their emotional significance. Mrs. White's second wish is driven by a mother's inability to accept the loss of her child. Her desperation also reveals how grief can weaken a person's judgment.

Fear of the Unknown

Jacobs creates horror not only through supernatural events but also through what remains unexplained. The reader never receives a clear description of Herbert's return or of the presence outside the door. This uncertainty makes the final scene particularly disturbing.

Symbolism and Literary Techniques

The monkey's paw is the central symbol of the story. It represents the temptation to control fate, the unpredictability of desire, and the consequences of seeking power beyond human understanding.

The repeated knocking at the door creates suspense and represents the family's confrontation with the unknown. The door itself becomes a boundary between the familiar world inside the house and the terrifying possibility outside it.

Jacobs also uses foreshadowing, irony, vivid imagery, and dramatic contrast to develop the atmosphere. The cheerful domestic setting at the beginning becomes increasingly dark and oppressive as the family's circumstances change. The first wish produces an ironic result: the Whites receive exactly two hundred pounds, but only after losing their son.

The Significance of the Ending

The ending is one of the most memorable aspects of the story. After the third wish, the knocking suddenly stops, and Mrs. White opens the door to find only a quiet, deserted road. The author does not explain exactly what happened or what might have been waiting outside.

This deliberate ambiguity encourages readers to imagine the worst. It also leaves an important question unanswered: did the final wish prevent a horrifying return, or did it simply remove the last possibility of seeing Herbert again? The emotional force of the ending comes from what Jacobs chooses not to reveal.

Why Is This Story Important?

"The Monkey's Paw" remains a powerful example of supernatural horror because it combines an accessible plot with complex moral and psychological questions. Rather than relying entirely on frightening events, Jacobs builds tension through character reactions, carefully placed details, and the gradual transformation of an ordinary family into victims of an inexplicable situation.

For advanced English learners, the story offers valuable opportunities to explore sophisticated vocabulary, older expressions, descriptive language, irony, symbolism, and suspense. Its indirect storytelling and ambiguous conclusion also encourage readers to interpret events, recognise implied meanings, and examine the relationship between language and atmosphere.

Ultimately, **"The Monkey's Paw"** is more than a frightening tale about a supernatural object. It is a disturbing exploration of human desire, the limits of personal control, and the unforeseen price of trying to change what may be beyond our power.

The Monkey's Paw

By W. W. Jacobs

I.

Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

"Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

"I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."

"I should hardly think that he'd come to-night," said his father, with his hand poised over the board.

"Mate," replied the son.

"That's the worst of living so far out," bawled Mr. White, with sudden and unlooked-for violence; "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. I don't know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses in the road are let, they think it doesn't matter."

"Never mind, dear," said his wife, soothingly; "perhaps you'll win the next one."

Mr. White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son. The words died away on his lips, and he hid a guilty grin in his thin grey beard.

"There he is," said Herbert White, as the gate banged to loudly and heavy footsteps came toward the door.

The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opening the door, was heard condoling with the new arrival. The new arrival also condoled with himself, so that Mrs. White said, "Tut, tut!" and coughed gently as her husband entered the room, followed by a tall, burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage.

"Sergeant-Major Morris," he said, introducing him.

The sergeant-major shook hands, and taking the proffered seat by the fire, watched contentedly while his host got out whiskey and tumblers and stood a small copper kettle on the fire.

At the third glass his eyes got brighter, and he began to talk, the little family circle regarding with eager interest this visitor from distant parts, as he squared his broad shoulders in the chair and spoke of wild scenes and doughty deeds; of wars and plagues and strange peoples.

"Twenty-one years of it," said Mr. White, nodding at his wife and son. "When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him."

"He don't look to have taken much harm," said Mrs. White, politely.

"I'd like to go to India myself," said the old man, "just to look round a bit, you know."

“Better where you are,” said the sergeant-major, shaking his head. He put down the empty glass, and sighing softly, shook it again.

“I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers,” said the old man. “What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey’s paw or something, Morris?”

“Nothing,” said the soldier, hastily. “Leastways nothing worth hearing.”

“Monkey’s paw?” said Mrs. White, curiously.

“Well, it’s just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps,” said the sergeant-major, offhandedly.

His three listeners leaned forward eagerly. The visitor absent-mindedly put his empty glass to his lips and then set it down again. His host filled it for him.

“To look at,” said the sergeant-major, fumbling in his pocket, “it’s just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy.”

He took something out of his pocket and proffered it. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace, but her son, taking it, examined it curiously.

“And what is there special about it?” inquired Mr. White as he took it from his son, and having examined it, placed it upon the table.

“It had a spell put on it by an old fakir,” said the sergeant-major, “a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people’s lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it.”

His manner was so impressive that his hearers were conscious that their light laughter jarred somewhat.

“Well, why don’t you have three, sir?” said Herbert White, cleverly.

The soldier regarded him in the way that middle age is wont to regard presumptuous youth. “I have,” he said, quietly, and his blotchy face whitened.

“And did you really have the three wishes granted?” asked Mrs. White.

“I did,” said the sergeant-major, and his glass tapped against his strong teeth.

“And has anybody else wished?” persisted the old lady.

“The first man had his three wishes. Yes,” was the reply; “I don’t know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That’s how I got the paw.”

His tones were so grave that a hush fell upon the group.

“If you’ve had your three wishes, it’s no good to you now, then, Morris,” said the old man at last. “What do you keep it for?”

The soldier shook his head. “Fancy, I suppose,” he said, slowly. “I did have some idea of selling it, but I don’t think I will. It has caused enough mischief already. Besides, people won’t buy. They think it’s a fairy tale; some of them, and those who do think anything of it want to try it first and pay me afterward.”

“If you could have another three wishes,” said the old man, eyeing him keenly, “would you have them?”

“I don’t know,” said the other. “I don’t know.”

He took the paw, and dangling it between his forefinger and thumb, suddenly threw it upon the fire. White, with a slight cry, stooped down and snatched it off.

“Better let it burn,” said the soldier, solemnly.

"If you don't want it, Morris," said the other, "give it to me."

"I won't," said his friend, doggedly. "I threw it on the fire. If you keep it, don't blame me for what happens. Pitch it on the fire again like a sensible man."

The other shook his head and examined his new possession closely. "How do you do it?" he inquired.

"Hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud," said the sergeant-major, "but I warn you of the consequences."

"Sounds like the *Arabian Nights*," said Mrs. White, as she rose and began to set the supper. "Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me?"

Her husband drew the talisman from pocket, and then all three burst into laughter as the sergeant-major, with a look of alarm on his face, caught him by the arm.

"If you must wish," he said, gruffly, "wish for something sensible."

Mr. White dropped it back in his pocket, and placing chairs, motioned his friend to the table. In the business of supper the talisman was partly forgotten, and afterward the three sat listening in an enthralled fashion to a second instalment of the soldier's adventures in India.

"If the tale about the monkey's paw is not more truthful than those he has been telling us," said Herbert, as the door closed behind their guest, just in time for him to catch the last train, "we sha'nt make much out of it."

"Did you give him anything for it, father?" inquired Mrs. White, regarding her husband closely.

"A trifle," said he, colouring slightly. "He didn't want it, but I made him take it. And he pressed me again to throw it away."

"Likely," said Herbert, with pretended horror. "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."

He darted round the table, pursued by the maligned Mrs. White armed with an antimacassar.

Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it dubiously. "I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact," he said, slowly. "It seems to me I've got all I want."

"If you only cleared the house, you'd be quite happy, wouldn't you?" said Herbert, with his hand on his shoulder. "Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that 'll just do it."

His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face, somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.

"I wish for two hundred pounds," said the old man distinctly.

A fine crash from the piano greeted the words, interrupted by a shuddering cry from the old man. His wife and son ran toward him.

"It moved," he cried, with a glance of disgust at the object as it lay on the floor.

"As I wished, it twisted in my hand like a snake."

"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."

"It must have been your fancy, father," said his wife, regarding him anxiously.

He shook his head. "Never mind, though; there's no harm done, but it gave me a shock all the same."

They sat down by the fire again while the two men finished their pipes. Outside, the wind was higher than ever, and the old man started nervously at the sound of a door banging upstairs. A silence unusual and depressing settled upon all three, which lasted until the old couple rose to retire for the night.

"I expect you'll find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed," said Herbert, as he bade them good-night, "and something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains."

He sat alone in the darkness, gazing at the dying fire, and seeing faces in it. The last face was so horrible and so simian that he gazed at it in amazement. It got so vivid that, with a little uneasy laugh, he felt on the table for a glass containing a little water to throw over it. His hand grasped the monkey's paw, and with a little shiver he wiped his hand on his coat and went up to bed.

II.

In the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table he laughed at his fears. There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night, and the dirty, shrivelled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.

"I suppose all old soldiers are the same," said Mrs. White. "The idea of our listening to such nonsense! How could wishes be granted in these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you, father?"

"Might drop on his head from the sky," said the frivolous Herbert.

"Morris said the things happened so naturally," said his father, "that you might if you so wished attribute it to coincidence."

"Well, don't break into the money before I come back," said Herbert as he rose from the table. "I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you."

His mother laughed, and following him to the door, watched him down the road; and returning to the breakfast table, was very happy at the expense of her husband's credulity. All of which did not prevent her from scurrying to the door at the postman's knock, nor prevent her from referring somewhat shortly to retired sergeant-majors of bibulous habits when she found that the post brought a tailor's bill.

"Herbert will have some more of his funny remarks, I expect, when he comes home," she said, as they sat at dinner.

"I dare say," said Mr. White, pouring himself out some beer; "but for all that, the thing moved in my hand; that I'll swear to."

"You thought it did," said the old lady soothingly.

"I say it did," replied the other. "There was no thought about it; I had just—What's the matter?"

His wife made no reply. She was watching the mysterious movements of a man outside, who, peering in an undecided fashion at the house, appeared to be trying to make up his mind to enter. In mental connection with the two hundred pounds, she noticed that the stranger was well dressed, and wore a silk hat of glossy newness. Three times he paused at the gate, and then walked on again. The fourth time he stood with his hand upon it, and then with sudden resolution flung it open and walked up the path. Mrs. White at the same moment placed her

hands behind her, and hurriedly unfastening the strings of her apron, put that useful article of apparel beneath the cushion of her chair.

She brought the stranger, who seemed ill at ease, into the room. He gazed at her furtively, and listened in a preoccupied fashion as the old lady apologized for the appearance of the room, and her husband's coat, a garment which he usually reserved for the garden. She then waited as patiently as her sex would permit, for him to broach his business, but he was at first strangely silent.

"I—was asked to call," he said at last, and stooped and picked a piece of cotton from his trousers. "I come from 'Maw and Meggins.'"

The old lady started. "Is anything the matter?" she asked, breathlessly. "Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?"

Her husband interposed. "There, there, mother," he said, hastily. "Sit down, and don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir;" and he eyed the other wistfully.

"I'm sorry—" began the visitor.

"Is he hurt?" demanded the mother, wildly.

The visitor bowed in assent. "Badly hurt," he said, quietly, "but he is not in any pain."

"Oh, thank God!" said the old woman, clasping her hands. "Thank God for that! Thank—"

She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her and she saw the awful confirmation of her fears in the other's averted face. She caught her breath, and turning to her slower-witted husband, laid her trembling old hand upon his. There was a long silence.

"He was caught in the machinery," said the visitor at length in a low voice.

"Caught in the machinery," repeated Mr. White, in a dazed fashion, "yes."

He sat staring blankly out at the window, and taking his wife's hand between his own, pressed it as he had been wont to do in their old courting-days nearly forty years before.

"He was the only one left to us," he said, turning gently to the visitor. "It is hard."

The other coughed, and rising, walked slowly to the window. "The firm wished me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss," he said, without looking round. "I beg that you will understand I am only their servant and merely obeying orders."

There was no reply; the old woman's face was white, her eyes staring, and her breath inaudible; on the husband's face was a look such as his friend the sergeant might have carried into his first action.

"I was to say that 'Maw and Meggins' disclaim all responsibility," continued the other. "They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son's services, they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation."

Mr. White dropped his wife's hand, and rising to his feet, gazed with a look of horror at his visitor. His dry lips shaped the words, "How much?"

"Two hundred pounds," was the answer.

Unconscious of his wife's shriek, the old man smiled faintly, put out his hands like a sightless man, and dropped, a senseless heap, to the floor.

III.

In the huge new cemetery, some two miles distant, the old people buried their dead, and came back to a house steeped in shadow and silence. It was all over so quickly that at first they could hardly realize it, and remained in a state of expectation as though of something else to happen —something else which was to lighten this load, too heavy for old hearts to bear.

But the days passed, and expectation gave place to resignation—the hopeless resignation of the old, sometimes miscalled, apathy. Sometimes they hardly exchanged a word, for now they had nothing to talk about, and their days were long to weariness.

It was about a week after that the old man, waking suddenly in the night, stretched out his hand and found himself alone. The room was in darkness, and the sound of subdued weeping came from the window. He raised himself in bed and listened.

"Come back," he said, tenderly. "You will be cold."

"It is colder for my son," said the old woman, and wept afresh.

The sound of her sobs died away on his ears. The bed was warm, and his eyes heavy with sleep. He dozed fitfully, and then slept until a sudden wild cry from his wife awoke him with a start.

"*The paw!*" she cried wildly. "The monkey's paw!"

He started up in alarm. "Where? Where is it? What's the matter?"

She came stumbling across the room toward him. "I want it," she said, quietly. "You've not destroyed it?"

"It's in the parlour, on the bracket," he replied, marvelling. "Why?"

She cried and laughed together, and bending over, kissed his cheek.

"I only just thought of it," she said, hysterically. "Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't *you* think of it?"

"Think of what?" he questioned.

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

"Was not that enough?" he demanded, fiercely.

"No," she cried, triumphantly; "we'll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again."

The man sat up in bed and flung the bedclothes from his quaking limbs. "Good God, you are mad!" he cried, aghast.

"Get it," she panted; "get it quickly, and wish—Oh, my boy, my boy!"

Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. "Get back to bed," he said, unsteadily. "You don't know what you are saying."

"We had the first wish granted," said the old woman, feverishly; "why not the second?"

"A coincidence," stammered the old man.

"Go and get it and wish," cried his wife, quivering with excitement.

The old man turned and regarded her, and his voice shook. "He has been dead ten days, and besides he—I would not tell you else, but—I could only recognize him by his clothing. If he was too terrible for you to see then, how now?"

"Bring him back," cried the old woman, and dragged him toward the door. "Do you think I fear the child I have nursed?"

He went down in the darkness, and felt his way to the parlour, and then to the mantelpiece. The talisman was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his

mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized upon him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand.

Even his wife's face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was white and expectant, and to his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. He was afraid of her.

"*Wish!*" she cried, in a strong voice.

"It is foolish and wicked," he faltered.

"*Wish!*" repeated his wife.

He raised his hand. "I wish my son alive again."

The talisman fell to the floor, and he regarded it fearfully. Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind.

He sat until he was chilled with the cold, glancing occasionally at the figure of the old woman peering through the window. 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 old man, with an unspeakable sense of relief at the failure of the talisman, crept back to his bed, and a minute or two afterward the old woman came silently and apathetically beside him.

Neither spoke, but lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and a squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive, and after lying for some time screwing up his courage, he took the box of matches, and striking one, went downstairs for a candle.

At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another; and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.

The matches fell from his hand and spilled in the passage. He stood motionless, his breath suspended until the knock was repeated. Then he turned and fled swiftly back to his room, and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.

"*What's that?*" cried the old woman, starting up.

"A rat," said the old man in shaking tones—"a rat. It passed me on the stairs."

His wife sat up in bed listening. A loud knock resounded through the house.

"It's Herbert!" she screamed. "It's Herbert!"

She ran to the door, but her husband was before her, and catching her by the arm, held her tightly.

"What are you going to do?" he whispered hoarsely.

"It's my boy; it's Herbert!" she cried, struggling mechanically. "I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door."

"For God's sake don't let it in," cried the old man, trembling.

"You're afraid of your own son," she cried, struggling. "Let me go. I'm coming, Herbert; I'm coming."

There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing, and called after her appealingly as she hurried downstairs. He heard the chain rattle back and the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman's voice, strained and panting.

“The bolt,” she cried, loudly. “Come down. I can’t reach it.”

But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If he could only find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey’s paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish.

The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it were still in the house. He heard the chair drawn back, and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road.

THE END

VOCABULARY LIST

1. **Perils** /ˈperəlz/ — Serious dangers or risks that may cause harm or loss.
   Example: “Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.”

2. **Placidly** /ˈplæsɪdli/ — In a calm, peaceful, and undisturbed manner.
   Example: “Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.”

3. **Condoling** /kənˈdəʊlɪŋ/ — Expressing sympathy to someone who is suffering or has experienced a loss.
   Example: “The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opening the door, was heard condoling with the new arrival.”

4. **Rubicund** /ˈruːbɪkənd/ — Having a healthy-looking, reddish complexion, especially in the face.
   Example: “The new arrival also condoled with himself, so that Mrs. White said, ‘Tut, tut!’ and coughed gently as her husband entered the room, followed by a tall, burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage.”

5. **Proffered** /ˈprɒfəd/ — Offered or presented something for someone to accept.
   Example: “The sergeant-major shook hands, and taking the proffered seat by the fire, watched contentedly while his host got out whiskey and tumblers and stood a small copper kettle on the fire.”

6. **Talisman** /ˈtælɪzmən/ — An object believed to possess magical powers or bring protection and good fortune.
   Example: “His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face, somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.”

7. **Credulity** /krɪˈdjuːləti/ — An excessive willingness to believe something without sufficient evidence.
   Example: “His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face, somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.”

8. **Dubiously** /ˈdjuːbiəsli/ — In a doubtful or uncertain manner; with suspicion.
   Example: “Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it dubiously.”

9. **Simian** /ˈsɪmiən/ — Resembling a monkey or ape, especially in appearance or behaviour.
   Example: “The last face was so horrible and so simian that he gazed at it in amazement.”

10. **Prosaic** /prəˈzeɪɪk/ — Ordinary, practical, and lacking imagination or excitement.
    Example: “There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night, and the dirty, shrivelled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.”

11. **Betokened** /bɪˈtəʊkənd/ — Indicated or served as a sign of something.
    Example: “There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night, and the dirty, shrivelled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.”

12. **Avaricious** /ˌævəˈrɪʃəs/ — Extremely greedy, especially for wealth or material possessions.
    Example: “I’m afraid it’ll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you.”

13. **Furtively** /ˈfɜːtɪvli/ — In a secretive manner, usually to avoid being noticed.
    Example: “He gazed at her furtively, and listened in a preoccupied fashion as the old lady apologized for the appearance of the room, and her husband’s coat, a garment which he usually reserved for the garden.”

14. **Assent** /əˈsent/ — Agreement or approval, often expressed formally or without words.
    Example: “The visitor bowed in assent.”

15. **Sinister** /ˈsɪnɪstə/ — Suggesting something evil, threatening, or likely to cause harm.
    Example: “She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her and she saw the awful confirmation of her fears in the other’s averted face.”

16. **Compensation** /ˌkɒmpənˈseɪʃən/ — Something, usually money, given to make up for loss, injury, or damage.
    Example: “They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son’s services, they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation.”

17. **Resignation** /ˌrezɪgˈneɪʃən/ — The acceptance of an unpleasant situation that cannot be changed.
    Example: “But the days passed, and expectation gave place to resignation—the hopeless resignation of the old, sometimes miscalled, apathy.”

18. **Hysterically** /hɪˈsterɪkli/ — In an extremely emotional or uncontrolled manner, often involving intense excitement or distress.
    Example: “I only just thought of it,” she said, hysterically.

19. **Stealthy** /ˈstelθi/ — Moving or acting quietly and secretly to avoid being noticed.
    Example: “At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another; and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.”

20. **Reverberated** /rɪˈvɜːbəreɪtɪd/ — Produced a series of echoes or continued to sound loudly through a space.
    Example: “A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door.”

READING COMPREHENSION

Instructions: Answer the following questions based on the story.

1. How does the opening description of the weather and the atmosphere inside Laburnam Villa establish the contrast between safety and danger?

2. What does Mr. White's behaviour during the chess game reveal about his personality, and how does Herbert's response highlight their relationship?

3. Why does Sergeant-Major Morris initially hesitate to discuss the monkey's paw, and what does his reaction suggest about his past experiences with it?

4. What explanation does Morris provide about the fakir's purpose in enchanting the paw, and what central belief about human life does this story introduce?

5. Why does Morris throw the monkey's paw into the fire, and what does Mr. White's decision to retrieve it reveal about his attitude towards danger and curiosity?

6. How do Herbert's jokes and Mrs. White's light-hearted remarks contribute to the family's initial dismissal of the paw's supernatural power?

7. Why does Mr. White choose to wish for two hundred pounds, and how does the paw's physical movement immediately after the wish foreshadow the events that follow?

8. How does the contrast between the family's scepticism and Mr. White's private uneasiness create suspense at the end of Section I?

9. In what ways does the ordinary atmosphere of the following morning encourage the Whites to dismiss their experience as imagination or coincidence?

10. How does the behaviour of the stranger from Maw and Meggins gradually reveal the seriousness of the news he has brought?

11. Why does the visitor initially describe Herbert as badly hurt but not in pain, and how does this statement create a moment of false hope for Mrs. White?

12. What is the significance of the exact amount of compensation offered by Maw and Meggins, and how does it transform the meaning of Mr. White's first wish?

13. How does the atmosphere inside Laburnam Villa change after Herbert's burial, and what does the narrator suggest about the psychological effects of grief?

14. What motivates Mrs. White to demand that her husband use the second wish, and how does her response to Herbert's death differ from Mr. White's?

15. Why is Mr. White terrified of bringing Herbert back to life, and what does his fear reveal about the possible consequences of interfering with death?

16. How does the description of Mr. White searching for the monkey's paw in the darkness reflect his emotional and psychological condition?

17. How does Jacobs use sound, particularly the ticking clock, creaking stairs, and repeated knocking, to build suspense in the final section?

18. Why does Mrs. White interpret the knocking as evidence that Herbert has returned, while Mr. White desperately tries to prevent the door from being opened?

19. What is the significance of Mr. White making his third and final wish just before Mrs. White opens the door, and what does this action suggest about his priorities?

20. How does the ambiguous ending contribute to the story's overall horror, and what different interpretations might readers consider about what was waiting outside the door?

GRAMMAR EXERCISES

Instructions: Choose the one correct answer (A, B, C, or D)

GRAMMAR EXERCISES

Choose the correct answer (A, B, C, or D).

1. No sooner _____ the monkey's paw into the fire than Mr. White rushed forward to retrieve it.

A) Morris had thrown
B) had Morris thrown
C) Morris threw
D) did Morris thrown

2. Had Mr. White followed Morris's warning, he _____ the tragic consequences of his first wish.

A) might avoid
B) would have avoided
C) will have avoided
D) had avoided

3. The stranger spoke so hesitantly that Mrs. White suspected something terrible _____ to her son.

A) has happened
B) would happen
C) had happened
D) is happening

4. Mr. White regretted _____ the monkey's paw after Morris had warned him about its dangers.

A) to keep
B) keeping
C) keep
D) to have keeping

5. Not until the visitor mentioned the compensation _____ the full horror of the first wish become clear.

A) Mr. White realised
B) did Mr. White realise
C) had Mr. White realised
D) Mr. White had realised

6. The paw, _____ by an old fakir, was believed to grant three wishes to each of three separate men.

A) enchanting
B) having enchanted
C) having been enchanted
D) to have enchanted

7. Morris warned the Whites against _____ with fate, insisting that such interference would bring sorrow.

A) interfere
B) interfering
C) to interfere
D) interfered

8. Morris spoke as though he _____ personally witnessed the terrible consequences of the paw's power.

A) has
B) had
C) would
D) will have

9. The amount of compensation was exactly _____ Mr. White had wished for the previous evening.

A) that
B) which
C) what
D) whose

10. So devastating _____ the news of Herbert's death that Mr. White collapsed without saying another word.

A) was
B) it was
C) had been
D) did it

11. Mrs. White insisted that her husband _____ the second wish immediately.

A) makes
B) made
C) make
D) making

12. _____ the knocking grew louder, Mrs. White became increasingly convinced that her son had returned.

A) As
B) Despite
C) Unless
D) Whereas

13. Mr. White feared that Herbert might return in a condition _____ would be too horrifying for his mother to witness.

A) who
B) whose
C) where
D) which

14. The old couple had barely begun to accept their loss _____ Mrs. White remembered the remaining wishes.

A) than
B) when
C) while
D) until

15. The more desperately Mrs. White struggled to reach the door, _____ Mr. White became.

A) the more frightened
B) more frightened
C) the most frightened
D) most frightened

16. _____ by grief, Mrs. White desperately demanded that her husband bring Herbert back to life.

A) Overwhelming
B) Having overwhelmed
C) Overwhelmed
D) To overwhelm

17. Mr. White searched for the paw, _____ that the mysterious visitor outside might enter the house.

A) fear
B) fearing
C) feared
D) to fearing

18. Little _____ Mr. White realise that his final wish would determine the outcome of that terrifying night.

A) did
B) had
C) was
D) would

19. The final scene leaves readers uncertain as to _____ was standing outside the door.

A) whoever
B) whatever
C) what
D) whom

20. If the Whites _____ the consequences of their wishes, they would never have kept the monkey's paw.

A) understood
B) would understand
C) had understood
D) would have understood

ANSWER KEY

1-B, 2-B, 3-C, 4-B, 5-B, 6-C, 7-B, 8-B, 9-C, 10-A, 11-C, 12-A, 13-D, 14-B, 15-A, 16-C, 17-B, 18-A, 19-C, 20-C