The Monkey’s Paw
Based on the classic horror story by W.W. Jacobs

About the Story

Lexile: 940L (info text)
For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:
to draw on ideas in a drama and an informational text to form and support an opinion

Key Skills:
author’s craft, mood, character, inference, text structure, theme, close reading, critical thinking

Essential Questions:
• Do we have control over our destiny?
• Is it wrong to get something for nothing?
• How can we achieve our goals?

Standards:
This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.3, R.5, R.6, W.3, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6
For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

Your Teaching Support Package
Find your full suite of materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Video:
• What’s the Mood?

Audio:
• The informational text
• Vocabulary

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:
• Close Reading and Critical Thinking
• Theme: Making Wishes Come True
• Core Skills Workout: Inference, Mood*
• Quiz*
• Vocabulary
• Literary Elements: Theme
Anticipation Guide, Genre, Character Tool
• Contest Entry Form
*Available on two levels
Preparing to Read

Complete the Theme Anticipation Guide. (5 minutes)

Have students complete the Anticipation Guide to activate prior knowledge and build curiosity. Then ask students to justify their responses.

Preview text features. (3 minutes)

Examine the images and captions as a class. Ask, “What do the illustrations and captions tell you about the setting of the play?”

Preview vocabulary. (5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the Vocabulary Words and Definitions. Review the words as a class. Highlighted words: convey, expertise, fate, ill-gotten gains, inherently, liability, productive, strive, tedious

Reading and Discussing (30 minutes, activity sheets online)

• Read the “As You Read” box on page 20.
• Assign parts and read the play as a class.
• Break students into groups to discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

In Scene 1, how does the author create contrasting atmospheres inside and outside the Whites’ home? (author’s craft, mood) The author uses sensory language (“howling wind,” “claps of thunder”) to describe a frightening and violent storm outside. By contrast, she describes the living room as warm and safe; she calls it “cozy” and notes that the characters are “gathered before a crackling fire.”

In Scenes 1 and 2, do the Whites believe that the monkey’s paw really has the power to grant wishes? How can you tell? (character, inference) Mr. White is at least somewhat convinced of the paw’s power; he rescues it from the fire and asks how to use it. Mrs. White does not believe that the paw grants wishes; she calls it “nonsense” and tells Mr. White that he must have imagined it moving in his hand. Herbert also does not believe that the paw has power; he jokes about it and says, “If his story about the monkey’s paw is not more truthful than the rest of what [Morris] told us tonight, I’m afraid the paw will be of little use.”

Scene 3 ends with Messenger 1 saying, “Two hundred pounds.” Why do you think the author chose to end the scene with this line? (author’s craft, text structure) The line is powerful and shocking; it shows that Mr. White’s wish for 200 pounds has been granted in a horrific way. By ending the scene here, the author indicates that the line is significant and gives readers a chance to pause and think about why.

In Scene 1, Morris says a holy man put a spell on the monkey’s paw “to show that fate rules our lives, and that those who interfere with fate do so to their sorrow.” How is this idea supported by what happens later? (theme) The idea that interfering with fate brings sorrow is supported by what happens when Mr. White attempts, by wishing on the paw, to use magic to alter the course of his life. His wishes bring nothing but suffering and horror to himself and Mrs. White.

There is a saying “Be careful what you wish for; you may just get it.” What do you think this
Differentiate and Customize

**For Struggling Readers**
If someone gave you the monkey's paw, would you use it to make a wish? Why or why not? Support your answer with details from the play.

**For Advanced Readers**
Compare the points of view expressed about wishes in *The Monkey's Paw* and in “What Do You Wish For?” Support your ideas with evidence from both texts.

**For Creative Writers**
Write your own short story or create your own short film with the same theme as *The Monkey's Paw*: Be careful what you wish for.

**For Go-Getters**
Set one goal that you want to achieve in the next year. Write out a plan for how you will achieve it, based on the advice given in the article “What Do You Wish For?”

---

**3 Reading the Informational Text**

*(15 minutes)*

- Have students read “What Do You Wish For?” on pages 24-25. As a class, discuss the following questions, which apply to both texts.

**Critical-Thinking Questions**

In the play, is Mr. White right to make his final wish? Why or why not? Some students may say yes: Mr. White is doing what he believes is necessary. Others might say no: Mr. White is going against his wife's wishes simply because he's afraid.

Would the authors of the informational text agree with the play's theme, “be careful what you wish for”? Explain. The authors of the article would likely agree that you should be careful what you wish for. They would argue that you should wish only for things that you truly want and that are good for you. They would not, though, agree that it's dangerous to have wishes or to have them come true. They state this clearly in the introduction, then go on to give advice for how to make your wishes come true, which they wouldn't do if they thought pursuing wishes was a bad idea.

What benefits might you get from working to make a wish come true rather than having it come true through magic? You might learn things as you work to achieve your goal, have the opportunity to change your mind about what you want before it's too late, and feel pride and satisfaction in your accomplishment.

- Return to the Anticipation Guide and discuss:
  What in the texts supports or challenges students' responses? Have any students changed their positions based on what they read?

**4 Skill Building**

**Featured Skill: Theme**

*(15 minutes, activity sheet online)*

Have students complete the activity Theme: Making Wishes Come True. This activity will prepare students to respond to the writing prompt on page 25. For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.