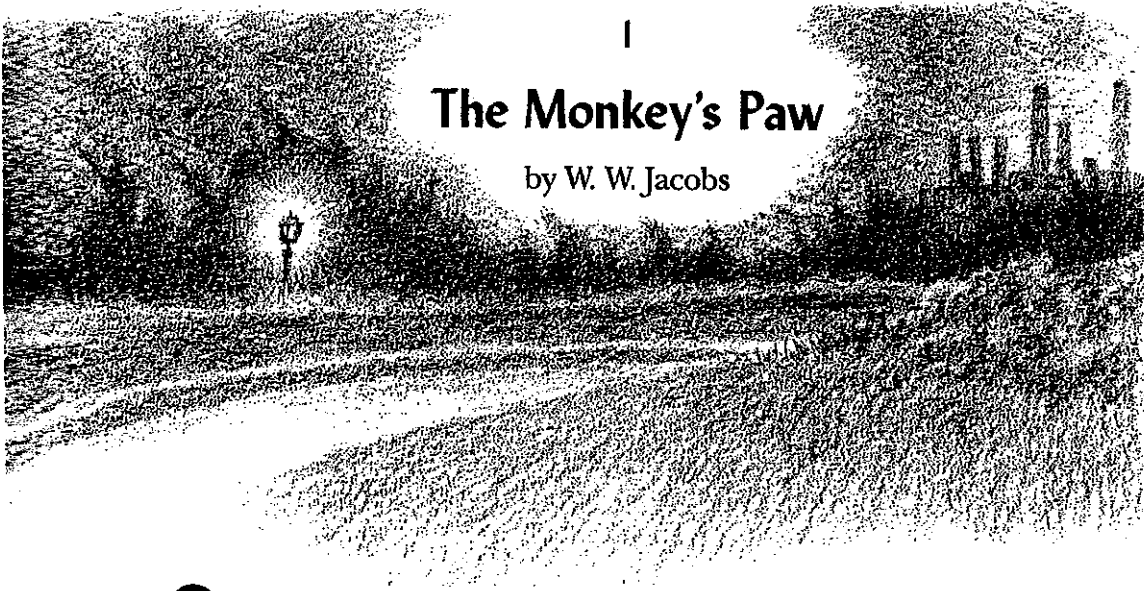

I

The Monkey's Paw

by W. W. Jacobs



Outside the night was cold and wet. But in the small house, the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly in the fireplace. Mr. White and his son were playing chess.

"Listen to the wind," said Mr. White, looking up suddenly.

"I'm listening," said his son, Herbert, as he stared at the board. He stretched out his arm and moved a piece. "Check," he said.

"The weather's so bad," said Mr. White. "I doubt that Sergeant Morris will come tonight."

The boy nodded and made the final move. "Checkmate!" he said.

"That's the worst part of living out here," scowled Mr. White. "Of all the out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst! The yard's like a lake and the path's all muddy."

"Now, now, never mind, dear," said his wife, who was knitting near the fire. "Perhaps you'll win the next game."

Just then they heard the gate banging loudly, and the sound of heavy footsteps coming toward the door.

"There he is," said Herbert.

Mr. White rose and opened the door. A tall, powerful man with bright, beady eyes, entered the room. His face was red from the cold.

"Let me introduce Sergeant Morris," said Mr. White.

The sergeant shook hands and took the seat that was offered to him near the fireplace. Mr. White put a kettle on the fire, while the sergeant warmed his hands.

After several minutes the sergeant began to talk. The little family circle listened with eager interest as he spoke of the distant places he had visited. His eyes grew even brighter as he spoke of daring deeds and strange events.

"I'd like to see India, myself," said Mr. White. "Just to look around a bit. I'd like to see those old temples. What was that you started telling me about the other day—a monkey's paw, or something, Morris?"

"Nothing," said Sergeant Morris, quickly. "At least nothing worth hearing."

"Monkey's paw?" said Mrs. White, curiously.

"Well, it's what some people might perhaps call magic," said the sergeant, thoughtfully.

His three listeners leaned forward eagerly, as the sergeant fumbled for an object in his jacket. He took something out of the pocket and showed it to them. "To look at," he said, "it's just an ordinary little paw, dried up and dirty."

Mrs. White drew back with a look of shock on her face, but Herbert took the paw and examined it curiously.

"And what is there special about this?" asked Mr. White, as he took the paw from his son and placed it on the table.

"It had a magic spell put on it by a fakir—a very holy man in India. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who **interfered** with fate did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three people could have three wishes from the paw.

His manner was so serious that his listeners held back their smiles.

"Well, then, why don't *you* have three wishes, sir?" asked Herbert White.

The sergeant stared at the young man and shuddered slightly. "I have," he said quietly, and his face turned pale.

And did you really have the three wishes granted?" said Mrs. White.

"I did," said the sergeant, nodding his head slowly.

"And has anybody else wished?" asked Mrs. White.

"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." The sergeant paused and then added, "That's how I got the paw."

"If you've had your three wishes," said Mr. White, "the paw's no good to you now. Why do you keep it?"

The sergeant shook his head. "I did have some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will. It has caused enough trouble already. Besides, people won't buy. Some think it's all nonsense, and others want to try it first and pay me later."

"If you could have another three wishes," said Mr. White, eyeing him closely, "would you have them?"

"I don't know," said the sergeant. "I don't know."

He took the paw suddenly and hurled it into the fire. Mr. White, with a cry, stooped down and pulled it out.

"Better let it burn," said the sergeant solemnly.

"If you don't want it, Morris," said Mr. White, "give it to me."

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

Mr. White shook his head and examined his new possession closely.

"How do you do it?" he asked.

"Just hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud," said the sergeant. "But I warn you of the **consequences.**"

"It sounds like a children's story to me," said Mrs. White, as she went into the kitchen.

Her husband stared at the paw as the sergeant, with a look of alarm on his face, caught him by the arm.

"If you *must* wish," he said pointedly, "be very careful what you wish for."

They all sat down for dinner and the business about the paw was nearly forgotten. When the meal was over, the sergeant told some more tales of his adventures in India.

After their guest had left, Mrs. White asked her husband, "Did you give him anything for the paw?"

"Just a little something," he answered. "He didn't want it, but I made him take it. And he begged me again to throw the paw away."

"Why, father," said Herbert, jokingly, "we're going to be rich and famous. Wish to be a king, father. That's a good way to start."

And he and his mother marched around the table, saluting him cheerfully.

Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it questioningly.

"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."

"You'd be glad to pay off the house, wouldn't you," said Herbert, with his hand on his father's shoulder. "Well, wish for five hundred dollars, then. That'll just do it."

His father held up the paw as Herbert winked at his mother.

"I wish for five hundred dollars," Mr. White said very clearly.

No sooner had he finished saying these words, than a loud shuddering cry came from the father. His wife and son rushed toward him.

"It moved!" he cried, with a glance at the paw as it lay on the floor. "As I wished, it suddenly twisted in my hand like a snake!"

"Well I don't see the money," said Herbert, as he picked up the paw and placed it on the table. "And I bet we never will."

"It must have been your imagination," said Mrs. White, looking worriedly at her husband.

He shook his head. "Never mind, then," he said. "There's no harm done. Still it gave me a shock just the same."

They sat down again by the fire. Outside the wind was howling harder than ever. Mr. White jumped nervously at the sound of a door banging upstairs. An unusual silence settled on all three until the couple rose to go to bed.

"You'll probably find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed," teased Herbert, as he said goodnight. "And some horrible creature sitting next to it who'll watch you count your unearned treasure."

A bright winter's sun shone over the breakfast table next morning. Herbert could not resist joking about what had taken place the night before.

"The idea of our listening to such nonsense," said Mrs. White, turning

toward her husband. "How could wishes be granted these days? And even if they could, how could five hundred dollars hurt you?"

"Might drop on his head from out of the sky," Herbert said, laughing.

"Still," said Mr. White, "Morris seemed so serious about it all. And about bad luck always following the wishes."

"Well, don't spend all the money before I get back," said Herbert, smiling, as he rose from the table to leave for work.

Mrs. White laughed and followed him to the door. She watched him go down the road before returning to the table. And although she made light of the paw, she seemed somewhat nervous all day and rushed to the door at the slightest noise.

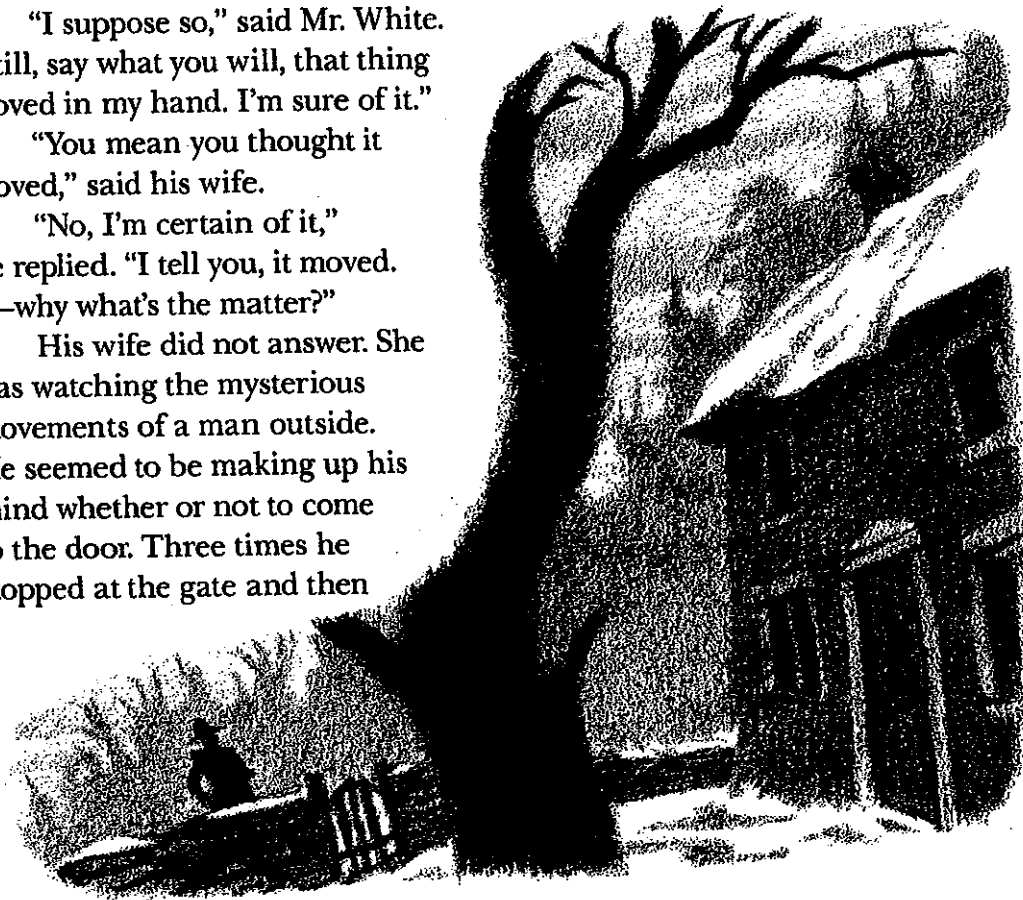
"I guess Herbert will have some more funny remarks to make when he comes home from work," she said as they sat at lunch.

"I suppose so," said Mr. White.
"Still, say what you will, that thing moved in my hand. I'm sure of it."

"You mean you thought it moved," said his wife.

"No, I'm certain of it," he replied. "I tell you, it moved. I—why what's the matter?"

His wife did not answer. She was watching the mysterious movements of a man outside. He seemed to be making up his mind whether or not to come to the door. Three times he stopped at the gate and then



walked away. The fourth time he pushed it open and walked up the path. Mrs. White thought of the five hundred dollars, for she noticed that the stranger was very well dressed. She hurried to the door and asked him in.

The stranger seemed ill at ease and did not speak at once.

"I—I was asked to call," he said at last. "I come from the office of Maw and Meggins."

Mrs. White jumped. "Is anything the matter?" she asked breathlessly. "Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?"

Her husband interrupted. "There, there," he said quickly. "Don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure," he said to the man.

"I'm sorry—" said the visitor.

"Is Herbert hurt?" demanded the mother.

The visitor shook his head slowly. "Badly hurt," he said quietly. "But he is not in any pain."

"Thank goodness for that," said the mother. "Thank goodness—"

She broke off instantly as she suddenly realized the terrible meaning of the visitor's words. She caught her breath and turning to her husband, put her shaking hand on his.

"He was crushed in the machinery," said the visitor, finally, in a low voice.

"Crushed in the machinery," repeated Mr. White, looking dazed.

He stared blankly out the window. "He was our only son," he said softly.

The visitor coughed and walked slowly to the window. "The company wished me to offer their sincere sympathy to you in your great loss," he said. "They asked me to say that Maw and Meggins bears no **responsibility** for the accident. But in consideration of your son's service, they wish to present you with a certain sum of money."

Mr. White dropped his wife's hand and gazed with a look of horror at the visitor. "How much?" he asked.

"Five hundred dollars," was the answer.

Unaware of his wife's cry, Mr. White fell, like a senseless heap, to the floor.

In the huge new cemetery two miles away, Herbert was buried. The old couple came back to a house of shadow and silence. It had all happened so quickly they could hardly believe it, and their days were long and weary.

It was about a week after that that Mr. White awoke suddenly in the middle of the night. He stretched out his hand and found himself alone. The room was in darkness, and he heard the sound of his wife weeping near the window.

He raised himself in bed. "Come back," he said tenderly. "You will be cold."

"It is colder for our son," she answered quietly.

His eyes were heavy with sleep, and he began to doze when a sudden wild cry from his wife woke him with a start.

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

He jumped up in alarm. "What? What's the matter?"

She stumbled across the room toward him. "I want it," she said firmly. "You haven't destroyed it?"

"It's in the living room, on the shelf," he answered in a startled voice. "But why?"

She cried and laughed at the same time and bent over and kissed him.

"I just thought of it now," she said wildly. "Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?"

"Think of what?" he asked.

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

"Wasn't that enough?" he demanded angrily.

"No!" she cried triumphantly. "We'll have one more. Go down and get the paw quickly, and wish that our boy were alive again."

The man sat up in bed.

"Get it," she demanded. "Get it quickly, and wish."

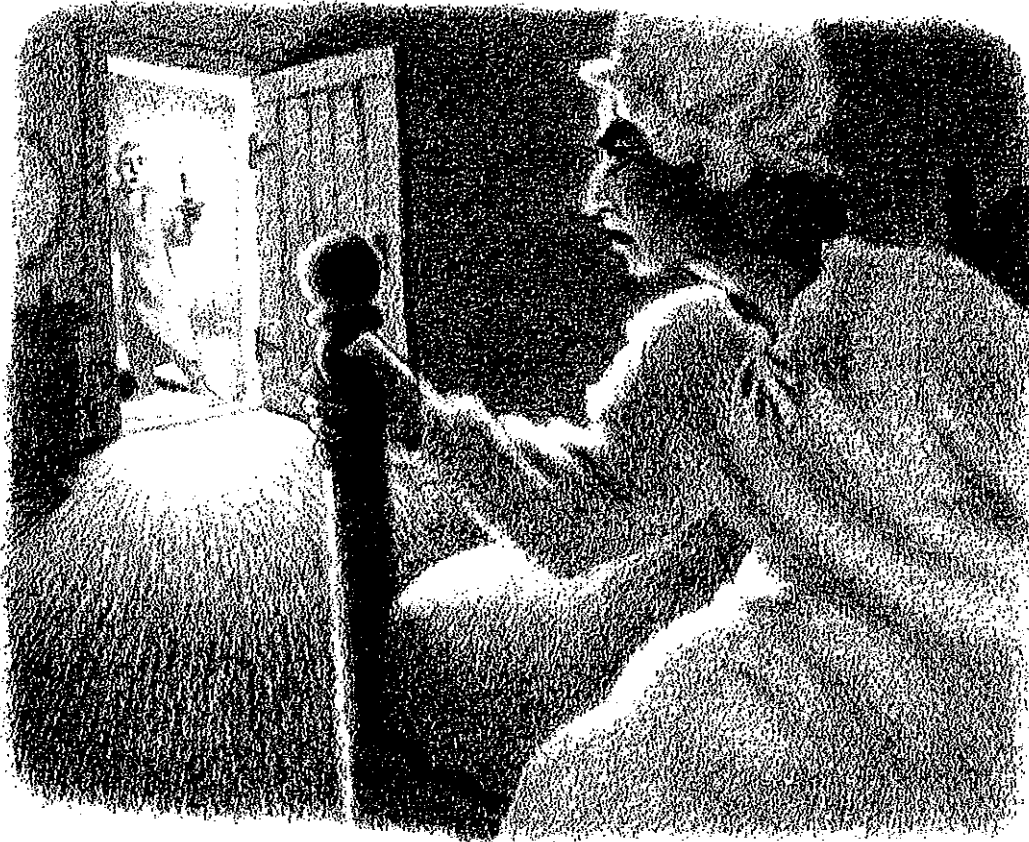
"Go back to bed," her husband said, uneasily. "You don't know what you are saying."

"We had the first wish granted," she said, her voice rising with excitement. "Why not the second?"

"It was a coincidence," muttered the old man.

"Go and get it and wish!" cried his wife.

Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. Then he made his way down to the living room and to the shelf. The monkey's paw was in its place, and he found it. Then he was struck by a horrible thought! The wish might



bring him his mutilated son—torn and crushed—before he had time to get out of the house! His head spun in terror as he made his way back to his wife.

Her face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was very pale and seemed to have a strange look on it. He was suddenly afraid of her.

“Wish!” she cried in a strong voice.

“It is foolish and wrong,” he said, hesitating.

“Wish!” she repeated.

He raised his hand and said slowly, “I wish my son alive again.”

The paw fell to the floor, and he looked at it in fear. Then he sank, shaking, into a chair. He watched as his wife, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the shades.

He sat until he became chilled with the cold, glancing now and then, at his wife who was peering through the window. After a while, the candle burned down and went out. With an enormous sense of relief that the paw had failed, he went back to bed. A few minutes later, he heard his wife returning.

Neither spoke. In the silence they listened to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and the darkness pressed down upon them. After a while, the husband took the box of matches and struck one. Then he went downstairs for a candle.

At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he stopped to light another. At the same moment, he heard a soft knock at the front door.

The match fell out of his hand. He stood still, holding his breath until he heard the knock again. Then he turned and rushed back to the room and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.

"What's that?" cried his wife, jumping up.

"It's nothing" he said, his voice breaking. "It's—it's the wind against the roof."

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

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

She ran to the door, but her husband caught her by the arm and held her tightly.

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

"It's Herbert," she cried. "I forgot that the cemetery was two miles away. Why are you holding me back? Let me go. I must open the door."

"Don't let it in!" cried the old man, shaking.

"Are you afraid of your own son?" she said, struggling. "Let me go! I'm coming, Herbert!"

There was another knock and another. The old woman broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed her to the landing and called after her as she hurried downstairs.

He heard the chain rattle and the sound of the lower door bolt being drawn open. Then he heard his wife's voice calling to him.

"The upper bolt," she cried loudly. "Help me! I can't reach it!"

But her husband was on his hands and knees, searching wildly for the paw. If only he could find it *before the thing outside* got in!

The banging on the door echoed loudly throughout the house. Then he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife pulled it toward the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it moved slowly back. At that moment, he found the monkey's paw. Wildly he made his third and last wish!

The knocking suddenly stopped. He heard the door open, and a blast of cold wind blew up the staircase. A loud cry of disappointment from his wife gave him the courage to run down to her side. He rushed out to the gate and looked around. The streetlamp shone on a deserted road.

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY. Each of the following sentences helps you understand the story. Complete each sentence below by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer.

1. According to Sergeant Morris, the monkey's paw brought people
 a. happiness.
 b. luck.
 c. trouble.
2. Mr. White's first wish was for
 a. five hundred dollars.
 b. the wealth of a king.
 c. cash tied up in a bag.
3. Herbert was killed when he was
 a. drowned in a lake.
 b. crushed in machinery.
 c. trapped in a fire.
4. Mrs. White demanded that her husband wish that
 a. they had a new house.
 b. they could travel to India.
 c. their son were alive again.

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NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS. Each of the following questions reviews your understanding of story elements. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer to each question.

1. What happened first in the *plot* of the story?
 a. A stranger offered the Whites five hundred dollars.
 b. Mrs. White pulled a chair toward the door.
 c. Sergeant Morris threw the paw into the fire.
2. Which sentence best *characterizes* Mr. White?
 a. He was greedy and longed to be rich.
 b. He was unhappy because he didn't get along with his family.
 c. He was satisfied with what he had until he obtained the monkey's paw.
3. "The Monkey's Paw" is *set* in
 a. a factory.
 b. a small house.
 c. an office.
4. What is the *mood* of the story?
 a. humorous and amusing
 b. serious and suspenseful
 c. happy and joyous

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OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS. Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. If you wish, look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. He began to **doze**, when a sudden cry from his wife woke him with a start. What is the meaning of the word *doze*?
 a. tremble
 b. think
 c. sleep
2. Although the company offered money after Herbert died, they took no responsibility for the accident. As used here, the word *responsibility* means
 a. blame.
 b. reward.
 c. grief.
3. The **sergeant** warned Mr. White of the consequences of making a wish. The word *consequences* means
 a. joys.
 b. results.
 c. arguments.
4. He believed that fate ruled people's lives, and those who interfered with it met with sorrow. The word *interfered* means
 a. assisted or helped.
 b. wondered about.
 c. got in the way of.

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 NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE. Complete the following paragraph by filling in each blank with one of the words listed in the box below. Each of the words appears in the story. Since there are five words and four blanks, one word in the group will not be used.

A group of people was once asked the following _____₁: "What would you wish for if you could have _____₂ wishes?" The people were asked to write their answers on slips of paper. The papers were collected later and were read with great _____₃. More than half of the people wished for more than three _____₄.

interest	sergeant
wishes	
question	three

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 NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY. Each of the following questions will help you to think critically about the selection. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer.

- Mr. White was afraid that his son would return and
 - a. accuse him of murder.
 - b. start a fight with Sergeant Morris.
 - c. be terrifying to look at.
- We may infer (figure out) that Mr. White's last wish made
 - a. his wife happy.
 - b. his friend, Sergeant Morris, angry.
 - c. his son disappear.
- Clues in the story suggest that the monkey's paw brought Sergeant Morris
 - a. great pleasure.
 - b. many treasures.
 - c. unhappiness.
- Which statement is true?
 - a. When he wished, Mr. White thought that the paw twisted in his hand.
 - b. Herbert was certain that the paw would make them rich.
 - c. Sergeant Morris demanded that Mr. White pay him for the monkey's paw.

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NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

Questions for Writing and Discussion

- Sometimes a story offers a moral or lesson. What lesson or lessons can be drawn from "The Monkey's Paw"?
- What do you think Mr. White wished for at the end of the story? Provide his exact words. Suppose you were Mr. White. What would you have said?
- Suppose Mrs. White had *not* cried out in disappointment at the end of the story. Do you think Mr. White would have run to her side? Explain your answer.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 150 and 151.

	S ELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY
+	
	H HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS
+	
	O BSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS
+	
	C OMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE
+	
	K NOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY
▼	
	Score Total: Story 1