

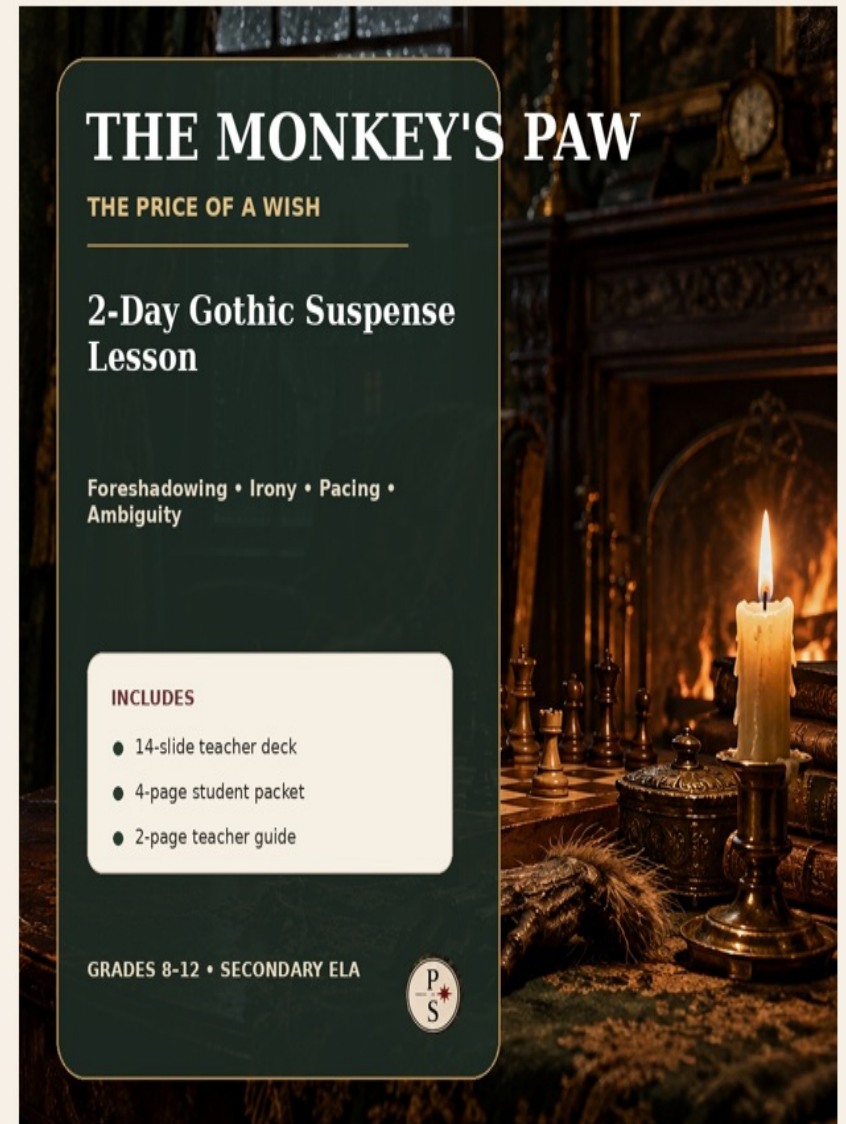
THE MONKEY'S PAW — THE PRICE OF A WISH

A compact two-day Gothic suspense lesson for secondary ELA

Keep the story tense instead of stopping every few paragraphs.

Students read with only a few deliberate stops, then go back and examine how Jacobs uses warning, irony, pacing, atmosphere, and ambiguity.

14-slide deck • 4-page packet • 2-page teacher guide



DAY 1 – MAKE THE WISH

Warnings, choices, consequences, and a deliberate cliffhanger

Before You Read

You are offered three wishes.
Someone you trust tells you the wishes bring consequences.

Do you use them?

YES I would use the wishes.

NO I would walk away.

IF SURPRISED I need to know more.

Then explain what would make you change your mind.

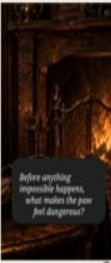


Reading Stop 1: Morris's Warning

What exactly has Morris told the Whites?

1 Record the strongest warning.
Which detail makes the warning hardest to ignore?

2 Do the Whites already have enough information to walk away?
YES / NOT YET



Reading Stop 2: The £200 Wish

Before anything actually happens, why does the wish already feel like a bad idea?

the fire the paw itself the characters' reactions Morris's behavior

the setting

Your job Identify one detail and explain what you think it is setting up.

Stop immediately after the wish.

The Wish Ledger

What were they warned about? What did they do anyway? What happened next?

WARNING	CHOICE	RESULT
What warning matters most?	What does Mr. White do anyway?	What has happened so far?

PREDICTION What will the Whites do with the two remaining wishes—and what makes you think so?

Students stop only when the stop matters.

They notice Morris's warnings, consider why the first wish already feels wrong, and end Day 1 with the £200 consequence and two wishes still unused.

DAY 2 – PAY THE PRICE

Finish the story first. Analyze the ending second.

Would You Touch It Again?

Yesterday, wishing for £200 seemed harmless.
Now we know what it cost.

Would you touch the paw again?

YES NO

Be ready to explain your choice in one sentence.



Read the Ending Straight Through

NO STOPS.
Read the knocking sequence straight through first.
Analysis comes after.

As you read, just notice:

- 1 How long Jacobs makes you wait.
- 2 How the sound of the knocking changes the scene.
- 3 What Jacobs never lets you see.

Finish the story without interruption.

Rewind the Final Scene

How does Jacobs make the ending feel almost unbearable?

SECOND WISH WAITING KNOCKING FINAL WISH

1 2 3 4

What changes immediately? What makes the waiting feel longer? How does regret/loss increase tension? Why is the last action powerful?

Use one specific detail from each stage in your packet.

What Is Actually Outside the Door?

Jacobs never lets us see what's **there**. Interpretation you find strongest.

4 Herbert has returned
The paw works literally, and Herbert comes back horribly changed.

5 Something supernatural is there
Something is at the door, but Jacobs never shows us exactly what.

6 Nothing supernatural is proven
Grief, loss, timing, and coincidence may explain the scene without anything supernatural happening.

Defend your choice with TWO details from the story.

The knocking sequence is read straight through so Jacobs's pacing can actually work on students.

Then students rewind the scene, trace the tension, and defend an interpretation of what may—or may not—be outside the door.

THE STUDENT PACKET

Four pages, clean writing space, and no busywork

DAY 1 — THE PRICE OF A WISH 

Quickwrite • Reading Stop 1

BEFORE YOU READ

You are offered three wishes. Someone you trust tells you the wishes bring consequences. Do you use them?

☐ YES — I would use the wishes. ☐ NO — I would walk away.

☐ IT DEPENDS — I need to know more.

Explain what would make you change your mind:

READING STOP 1 — MORRIS'S WARNING

What is the strongest warning Morris gives the Whites about the paw?

Do the Whites already have enough information to walk away?

☐ YES ☐ NOT YET

Why?

THE MONKEY'S PAW — IN 16 JACOBS

DAY 1 — THE WISH LEDGER 

Reading Stop 2 • Offhanger

READING STOP 2 — THE LONG WISH

Before anything actually happens, why does the wish already feel like a bad idea?

Choose one detail that makes the scene feel uneasy. Explain what you think it is setting up.

THE WISH LEDGER

WARNING	CHOICE	RESULT
What warning matters most?	What does Mr. White do anyway?	What has happened so far?

PREDICTION

There are still two wishes left. What do you think the Whites will do next—and what makes you think so?

THE MONKEY'S PAW — IN 16 JACOBS

DAY 2 — REWIND THE FINAL SCENE 

Tension • Pacing

REWIND

Now that you know what the first wish cost, would you touch the paw again?

☐ YES ☐ NO **Why?** _____

HOW JACOBS BUILDS THE FINAL SCENE

Record the detail that increases tension at each stage.

SECOND WISH What changes immediately?	_____
WAITING What makes the waiting feel longer?	_____
KNOCKING How does expectation increase tension?	_____
FINAL WISH Why is the last wish powerful?	_____

Jacobs makes you wait, listen, and imagine. He never shows you everything.

THE MONKEY'S PAW — IN 16 JACOBS

DAY 2 — WHAT DOES JACOBS LEAVE UNKNOWN? 

Ambiguity • Final response

WHAT IS ACTUALLY OUTSIDE THE DOOR?

Choose the interpretation you find strongest.

☐ A. Herbert has returned, but horribly changed.

☐ B. Something is at the door, but Jacobs never shows us exactly what.

☐ C. Nothing supernatural is proven; grief and coincidence may explain what happens.

Two details that support your choice:

RAFT LENS

☐ Foreshadowing ☐ Situational irony ☐ Suspense

☐ Pacing ☐ Gothic atmosphere ☐ Ambiguity

Which technique had the biggest effect on you in the ending? Why?

FINAL RESPONSE

Jacobs makes the monkey's paw frightening without ever fully explaining its power. What does that ambiguity add to the story? Use one specific moment in your response.

Answer in 3–7 thoughtful sentences.

THE MONKEY'S PAW — IN 16 JACOBS

Includes: quickwrite • reading stops • Wish Ledger • prediction • final-scene tracker • ending interpretation • craft lens • analytical response

TEACHER SUPPORT

Enough guidance to make the lesson easy to run—without overexplaining it

TEACHER GUIDE — PACING & PURPOSE

Two class periods • approximately 35 minutes each

LESSON GOAL

Students read with only a few deliberate stops, then go back and look at how Jacobs builds suspense through warning, pacing, irony, Gothic atmosphere, and ambiguity. The point is to let the story work before asking students to take it apart.

DAY 1 — MAKE THE WISH

3 min • Quickwrite: Would you use the wishes?

18–22 min • Read from the opening through the Maw and Meggins visit. Stop after Morris's warning and immediately after the £200 wish.

6–8 min • Pause after the £200 compensation. Students complete the Wish Ledger and prediction.

1 min • End on the cliffhanger. Do not let students read ahead if you want the Day 2 reset to work.

DAY 2 — PAY THE PRICE

2 min • Reset: Would you touch the paw again?

12–15 min • Finish the story straight through. No stops during the knocking sequence.

10 min • Rewind the final scene: second wish → waiting → knocking → final wish.

6–8 min • Discuss the ending, choose a craft lens, and complete the final response.

STORY TEXT NOTE

Use your anthology, textbook, or a public-domain copy. The story text is not reproduced in the student packet.

TEACHER GUIDE — DISCUSSION & ANSWER

NOTES Responses are flexible; reward defensible textual thinking

READING STOP 1 — MORRIS'S WARNING

Strong answers notice that Morris calls the paw dangerous, tells them the first owner's third wish was death, tries to burn it, and repeatedly warns Mr. White to leave it alone. Students may disagree about whether that is "enough" information; the reasoning matters more than the choice.

READING STOP 2 — WHY THE WISH FEELS WRONG

Useful details include Morris's reluctance, the disturbing history of the paw, the fire, the paw's movement in Mr. White's hand, and the family's nervous joking. Students should connect the detail to what it makes them expect: danger, regret, or a wish that comes true in the worst possible way.

THE WISH LEDGER

Warning: Morris makes it clear that using the paw means interfering with fate, and he expects that to end badly.

Choice: Mr. White wishes for £200 anyway.

Result: the family receives exactly £200 after Herbert's death. That is the story's cruel irony: Mr. White gets exactly what he asked for, but only because Herbert dies.

ENDING INTERPRETATION

All three options can work if students support them. The story strongly encourages a supernatural reading, but Jacobs never shows what is outside the door. Because he never opens the door for us, readers have to supply the horror themselves. Avoid treating "Herbert returns as a zombie" as the only correct answer.

FINAL RESPONSE — WHAT AMBIGUITY ADDS

Good responses may argue that the ambiguity makes the ending scarier because readers have to imagine what is outside; keeps the story balanced between fate and coincidence; makes the paw's power impossible to prove; or keeps the focus on the Whites' grief and choices instead of on a monster.

TEACHER MOVE

If discussion stalls, ask: What would the story lose if Jacobs opened the door and described Herbert?

Teacher guide includes pacing, stopping points, likely responses, and discussion notes.

WHAT YOU RECEIVE

Editable PowerPoint files + print-ready PDFs

- **14-slide editable teacher deck**
- **4-page editable student packet**
- **2-page editable teacher guide**
- **PDF versions of all three files**
- **Suggested responses and discussion notes**
- **Two-day pacing for a standard 40-45 minute class period**

Story text not included. Use an anthology, textbook, or public-domain copy of W. W. Jacobs's story.

