

The Monkey's Paw

W.W Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw" has reminded readers for over a century to be careful what they wish for. Published in 1902, the British short story employs a deadly take on the magical wishes trope seen throughout literary history from tales of the Scottish Highlands to Aladdin in Arabian Nights. "The Monkey's Paw" centers around the mystical number of three and offers a warning for all who dare to wish before considering the consequences and meddle with their own fate. Pulling from historical, allegorical, and symbolic sources this short story is bound to terrify and remind us of what is most important in life. Rife with parables about life, death, and fate- "The Monkey's Paw" remains to be one of the most prominent horror stories of all time.

Vocab:

Fakirs: a Muslim or Hindu religious ascetic

Talisman: an object that possesses occult significance or powers

Trifle: a very small amount of money

Henpecked: someone who is being bullied or intimidated by their wife or girlfriend

Maligned: possessing a dark or even pernicious disposition

Antimacassar: an ornamental covering that is placed over furniture to protect it from wear and tear

Simian: relating to monkeys or apes

Prosaic: dull

Betokened: indicated

Avaricious: to be filled with greed

Connexion: connection

Fusillade: an outpouring of something

Questions:

1. Write a summary of "The Monkey's Paw".
2. How would you describe the plot structure of the story?
3. How do you interpret the ending of the story?
4. What classic horror elements does Jacobs employ in his text to create suspense?
5. What other allegories can you find in the story? How do they contribute to the overall effect of the narrative?

6. List all of the times the magical number “three” is used in the text. Look beyond the obvious.
7. Compare and contrast how each wish individually affects Mr. and Mrs. White.
8. Why do you think that the White’s use the paw even when explicitly told that the talisman only brings misfortune? What does this tell us about human nature?
9. Do you think that the White’s socio- economic status was a factor that lead to their destructive wish? Why or why not?
10. Did the gender swap of Mr. Morris to Mrs. Morris in the Chamber Theatre film change anything about the way you understood or interpreted the story? Did the switch add or detract anything for you?

Creative Questions:

1. If you were given three wishes- what would you wish for? What could a possible consequence of each wish be?
2. Create your own supernatural talisman from materials found in your home. Create your own set of mystical rules for the talisman.



The Necklace

“The Necklace”, published in 1884 and penned by prolific French author Guy de Maupassant, is a bitter-sweet tale of envy and irony. The main protagonist Mathilde Liosle, struggles and ultimately fails to manifest the life of opulence and luxury she had always envisioned for herself, ending up heartbroken and penniless. The story is written in an objective manner in which behavior is observed, and then reported about to the reader without any exploration of the character’s inner thoughts, feelings, or emotions. Most noticeably, the story ends rather abruptly and without any moral or psychological explanation. Maupassant’s style of naturalistic and objective writing as exhibited in “The Necklace”, made him a literary icon and source of inspiration for a litany of legendary authors and intellectuals.

Vocab:

Distinguished: set apart from the crowd often due to unparalleled excellence

Ingenuity: cleverness

Supple: flexible

Hierarchy: the ranking of individuals in a society

Shabby: dingy, well-worn

Delicacies: fancy or rare objects, materials, or substances

Antechambers: a waiting area in a home or apartment

coquettish: flirt

Candelabra: a holder for several candles

Sphinx: an Egyptian creature with the head of a human and the body of a lion

Francs: French money

Ornament: an accessory of adornment

Ecstasy: extreme bliss

Rapture: extreme delight, or a theological experience

Homage: a form of acknowledgment

Waltz: an Austrian slow dance

Seine: a river that runs through Paris

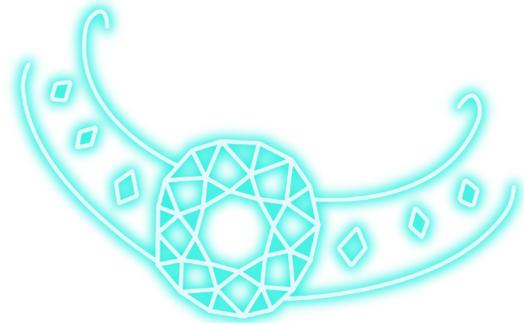
Quay: a landing place near a body of water

Vestibule: a hallway or small antechamber between the outside of a house and the inside

Calamity: a great disaster

Garret: an attic

Odious: detestable or disgusting



Manuscript: an author's original draft

Champs Elysees: an avenue in Paris

Irony: an outcome that is contradictory to what was expected

Realism: a literary style that depicts the facets of everyday life in a matter-of-fact manner

Objectivity: A style of writing that is not influenced by personal thoughts, feelings, or emotions

Subjectivity: A style of writing that is influenced by personal thoughts, feeling, and emotions

Questions:

1. Write a brief summary of The Necklace.
2. Track two characters' arcs over the story. How do they compare and contrast?
3. What are three themes utilized in the text? Make sure to use quotes as direct examples.
4. How would you describe the plot structure of the story?
5. What are two different interpretations of the ending?
6. What was your experience like watching The Necklace versus reading The Necklace?
7. Explain the irony of "The Necklace" by using direct quotes.
8. How does Maupassant's word choice distinguish Mathilda's dream world from reality?
9. From whose point of view is the story told from and how does that influence the overall narrative tone of the story? How would the story differ if it was told from Mathilda's point of view?
10. What do you think Maupassant was trying to convey with this story? What is the moral? Do you agree?
11. What other sources or historical movements could Maupassant have drawn from to create his short story?
12. How does Maupassant's "The Necklace" compare and contrast to other short stories you have read in style, content, and structure?

Creative Questions:

1. Do you sympathize with Mathilda in the story or do you think she deserved her fate?
2. Can you think of a moment in your past where a pivotal mistake changed the way that you lived your life?

The Tell-Tale Heart

The Tell Tale Heart is widely regarded as Edgar Allan Poe's most infamous short stories. Written in 1843 the tale investigates the dark themes of madness and violence through the first person lens of an anxious narrator who strives to convince the reader of his sanity by disclosing his details of his murderous actions in great detail. First published in Poe's birthplace of Boston Massachusetts in the *The Pioneer: A Literary and Critical Magazine*, sources reveal that Poe was probably only given around \$10 for his short story.

Vocab:

Acute: very sharp or intense

Sagacity: soundness of mental judgment

Suppositions: a supposed belief or assumption

Audacity: brash boldness with often little to no regard of potential dangers

Vexed: irritatingly provoked

Vehemently: strongly impassioned

Derision: ridicule

Hypocritical: advertising and or possessing that one has virtues and beliefs that one does not actually hold

Profound: holding deep meaning

Anxiety: distress of the mind often about the imminence of an upcoming event

Wary: expressing caution when proceeding

Foresight: to act with care and or knowledge concerning the outcome of a committed action

Syntax: the structure and rules of the arrangement of words, phrases, clauses, and punctuation that constitute sentences.

Dialogue: a spoken exchange between two or more characters in a work of text.

First Person Narration: When a story is related to the reader through one character's perspective by using the pronoun "I".

Unreliable Narrator: a first person narrator whose information may not be taken at face value and therefore they may not be relaying the information of the text in an unbiased fashion whether consciously or unconsciously.

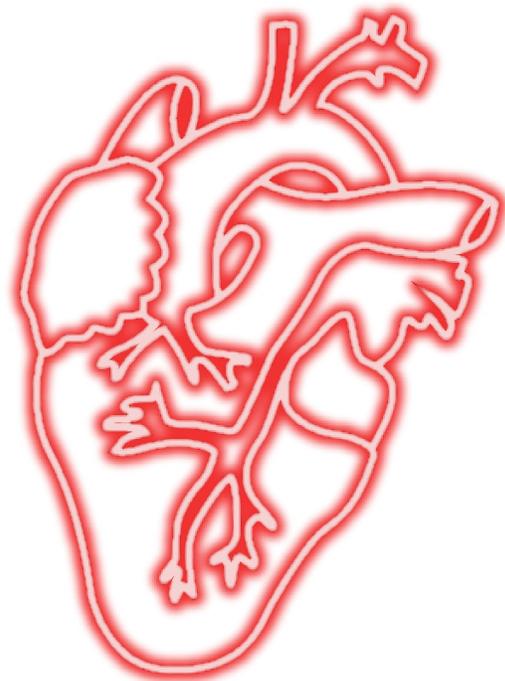
In Medias Res: when a story starts in the middle of the action, rather than beginning with exposition and gradually leading up to the main conflict of a story.

Questions:

1. How did your experience of seeing the short film compare with your reading of “The Tell Tale Heart”? Did seeing the visual dramatization of the story make you feel different about the character of the narrator? Did you respond differently than when you read the story?
2. The narrator claims to be mad. Are you convinced of this statement or were there certain personality traits that contradict what the narrator claims?
3. What does the story tell us about obsession, guilt and conscience?
4. What drives the narrator to commit his crime?
5. Why do you think that that narrator tears up the floorboards and confesses to his crime after taking such extreme precautions to evade suspicion?
6. How would you describe the overall mood or tone of this story?
7. Identify three different literary devices used within this story and make sure to give examples.
8. What elements of the story relate to the gothic genre?

Creative Questions:

1. Write a brief first person narrative of “The Tell- Tale Heart” from the old man’s perspective.
2. Write your own gothic inspired short story. Make sure to include these parameters: night, solitude, and a supernatural element.



The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Washington Irving's, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" has been central to the American literary canon since its publication in 1820. Originally included in the author's collection of essays and short stories entitled, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" emerged as the standout of the anthology becoming both publicly and critically lauded. The native New Yorker's gothic tale chronicling eccentric Sleepy Hollow school teacher Ichabod Crane's encounter with the now infamous beheaded Hessian provided readers with an ominous supernatural narrative contained within a fun, spirited, and humorous condensed read. Containing breathtaking descriptions, complex sentences, and recently developed American mythology, the tale kept readers coming back for more every autumn. The "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" has inspired countless adaptations and renditions over the years as the lure of the Headless Horseman continues to fright and delight audiences of every age.

Vocab:

Propensity: an inclination to do something

Stripling: a young person

Descendant: a living offspring of a certain ancestor

Sequestered: to have withdrawn into solitude

Glen: a small valley

Apparition: the appearance of a supernatural being

Hessian: A German soldier that fought during the Revolutionary War for the British

Spectre: a ghost

Sojourned: to have temporarily stayed in a place for a period of time

Drowsy: sleepy

Cognomen: a surname, also known as a last name or family name

Conscientious: principled, someone who strives to do what is right

Harbinger: a person or omen that foreshadows an upcoming event

Pedagogue: a schoolteacher

Chanticleer: a rooster

Roystering: acting in a boisterous manner

Rantipole: wildly reckless

Pliability: something's level of flexibility



Vocab (cont.):

Ferule: a flat piece of wood traditionally used for punishing children

Gallant: brave

Choleric: very irritable

Enumerated: to name one-by-one as if in a list

Mynheer: a Dutchman

Pommel: the protuberance at the front and top of a saddle

Legend, An unverifiable story that persists due to years of oral tradition

Questions:

1. Write a brief summary of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”.
2. How would you describe the tone of this story?
3. Who do you think the narrator of this story is?
4. What does Ichabod’s enormous appetite reveal about him as a character?
5. How is “song” used throughout the story?
6. What do you think the significance of the Horseman being a Hessian is to the story?
7. How do you think the titular word “legend” influences the way the story is read?
8. What are three themes you can pull out from the story? Make sure to support your choices with direct quotes and thorough analysis.
9. Do you see any uses of allegory at play?
10. How would you describe Ichabod’s character arc over the entire story?
11. Make a list of historical events that you think could have influenced Irving’s short story.
12. What literary devices does Irving use to make Ichabod’s midnight ride so suspenseful?
13. How do you interpret the ending of the story? What do you think Irving wanted his readers to come away with?

Creative Questions:

1. Using Irving gregarious descriptions, create your own map of Sleepy Hollow
2. Write your own backstory of the mythic the Headless Horseman.

The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

Iconic American author Mark Twain first found literary success with his short story entitled, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” in 1865. Originally called, “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog”, the story within a story launched Twain’s career and propelled him to the forefront of the American literary scene with its publication in multiple magazines and newspapers. The all American East meets West coast tale featured a hilarious story line, colorful characters, and a cheeky satisfying ending. Twain, who was experienced in creating exaggerated wacky tales from his time in Nevada writing for a local paper in which he would often invent news, had perfected the formula of the “larger than life” tall- tale story. Though “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” became Twain’s most popular tall-tale, it sure wasn’t his first, or his last!

Vocab:

Compliance: cooperation

Myth: a story that is not firmly rooted in fact. Often featuring fantastical elements and passed down through oral traditions.

Dilapidated: a state of ruin or decay due to age, neglect, or extreme use

Monotonous: lacking in variety, “one-note”

Flume: a narrow passage in a mountain that has a stream running through it

Consumption: an early name for tuberculosis referring to the body wasting away

Ornery: an unpleasant manner

Lattice: a pattern created by crossed strips

Quaalude: a sedative drug

Vagabond: a nomadic person

Afflicted: to be troubled by something

Anecdote: a short account of a particular event

Tall Tale: a story with exaggerated elements and characters that are often described as “larger-than-life”

Frame Narrative: a type of storytelling that is told through a narrator telling a story.

Questions:

1. How does the opening narration shape the way in which the entire story is read?
2. How does your experience seeing the video of “Frog” compare with your experience of reading the story? What is gained and what is lost from seeing the live reenactment?
3. How would you describe the form of the story?
4. What is the tone of this story? Is there a difference in tone between the opening narration and the story within the story?
5. How does the setting of the story add to its content?
6. List the different ways in which “Frog” embodies a tall- tale.
7. List three sources or resources that Mark Twain drew upon to tell his tale and make sure to include how they impact the story.
8. What do you interpret both endings of the story to be?
9. Explain the significance behind the names “Daniel Webster” and “Andrew Jackson”. Make an educated guess as to what those names could represent or mean for the story.

Creative Questions.

1. Make a chart of the action in the story. The chart can look like anything you want it to but make sure to chart all major events of the story.
2. Create your own Tall- Tale about a story or event that has happened in your own life. Make sure to exaggerate some aspect of the story and make the characters larger than life!

