

Name _____



Three's Curse

In *The Monkey's Paw*, the number three plays an important role in shaping the story's events and deepening its message about fate and consequences. W.W. Jacobs carefully weaves this number into the structure of the tale, using it to create suspense and emphasize the dangers of tampering with destiny.

The story begins with a warning—Sergeant-Major Morris, the mysterious visitor, tells the White family that the monkey's paw grants three wishes, but they come at a terrible price. This is the first sign that three will be a fateful number in the story. He also shares that the first owner of the paw made three wishes, with the last one being for his own death. This warning foreshadows the tragic events to come.

Despite the cautionary tale, Mr. White makes the first wish for two hundred pounds. At first, nothing happens, but soon they learn that their son, Herbert, has died in a factory accident. The company compensates them with exactly two hundred pounds. The wish was granted—but not in the way they had hoped.

Overcome with grief, Mrs. White forces her husband to use the second wish: she wants Herbert to return. The moment the wish is made, a slow and heavy knock echoes at the door. The suspense builds as the knocking continues, growing louder and more desperate.

Just before Mrs. White can open the door, Mr. White makes the third and final wish. The knocking stops, and when she opens the door, there is nothing outside but the cold, empty night.

The use of three throughout the story highlights its central message: fate should not be changed. Three warnings, three wishes, and three terrifying moments all lead to a haunting conclusion. Each wish proves that no one can control destiny without facing terrible consequences. By the end, the number three is a symbol of both hope and horror—a pattern that repeats and reminds us of the cost of interfering with fate.