

SHOCKS

15 Startling Stories to Shock and Delight

With Exercises for Comprehension & Enrichment



by Burton Goodman

Jamestown



Publishers

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Shocks

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To the Student

This book contains 15 exciting stories by some of the world's greatest writers. As the title suggests, each story provides a *shock*. These tales offer you hours of reading pleasure. And the exercises that follow will help you improve your reading and literature skills.

You will notice that the exercises are also based on a *shock*:

Selecting details from the story

Handling story elements

Observing new vocabulary words

Completing a cloze passage

Knowing how to read critically

Selecting details from the story helps you improve your reading skills.

Handling story elements helps you understand key elements of literature. On page 7 you will find the meanings of ten important terms. If you wish, look back at those meanings when you answer the questions in this section.

Observing new vocabulary words helps you strengthen your vocabulary skills. Often, you can figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word by using *context clues* in the story. Those clues are the words and phrases around the unfamiliar word. The vocabulary words in the story are printed in **boldface**. If

you wish, look back at these words before you answer the questions in this section.

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE helps you strengthen your reading *and* your vocabulary skills through the use of fill-in, or cloze, exercises.

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY helps you sharpen your critical thinking skills. You will *reason* by using story clues, making inferences (figuring things out), and drawing conclusions.

Another section, **Questions for Writing and Discussion**, gives you opportunities to think, discuss, and write about the stories.

Here is the way to do the exercises:

- There are four questions for each of the SHOCK exercises above.
- Do all the exercises.
- Check your answers with your teacher.
- Use the scoring chart at the end of each exercise to figure out your score for that exercise. Give yourself 5 points for each correct answer. (Since there are four questions, you can get up to 20 points for each exercise.)
- Use the SHOCK scoring chart at the end of the exercises to figure your total score. A perfect score for the five exercises would equal 100 points.
- Keep track of how well you do by writing in your Score Total on the Progress Chart on page 150. Then write your score on the Progress Graph on page 151 to plot your progress.

I know that you will enjoy reading the stories in this book. And the exercises that follow them will help you master some very important skills.

Now . . . get ready for some *Shocks!*

Burton Goodman

The Short Story— 10 Important Literary Terms

Characterization: how a writer shows what a character is like. The way a character acts, speaks, thinks, and looks *characterizes* that person.

Conflict: a struggle, fight, or difference of opinion between characters.

Dialogue: the words that a character says; the speech between characters.

Main Character: the person the story is mostly about.

Mood: the feeling that the writer creates. For example, the *mood* of a story might be humorous or suspenseful.

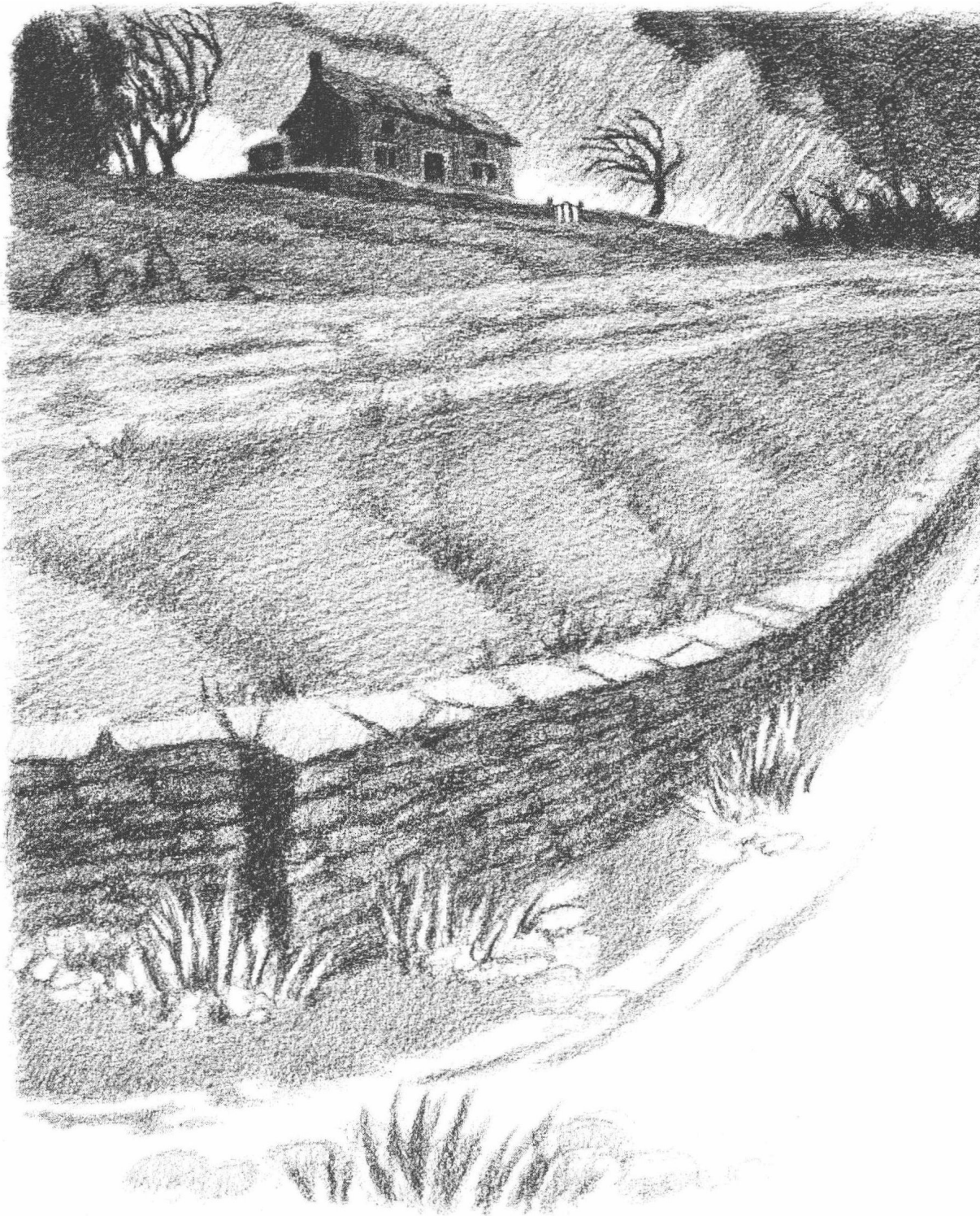
Plot: the outline, or order, of events in a story.

Purpose: the reason the author wrote the story. For example, the author's *purpose* might be to amuse the reader.

Setting: where and when the story takes place; the time and place of the action in a story.

Style: the special way that a writer uses language. How a writer arranges words, sentences, and ideas helps to create that writer's *style*.

Theme: the main idea of the story. Note that the *theme* is the central idea of the story. The plot is the arrangement, or order, of events.



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.

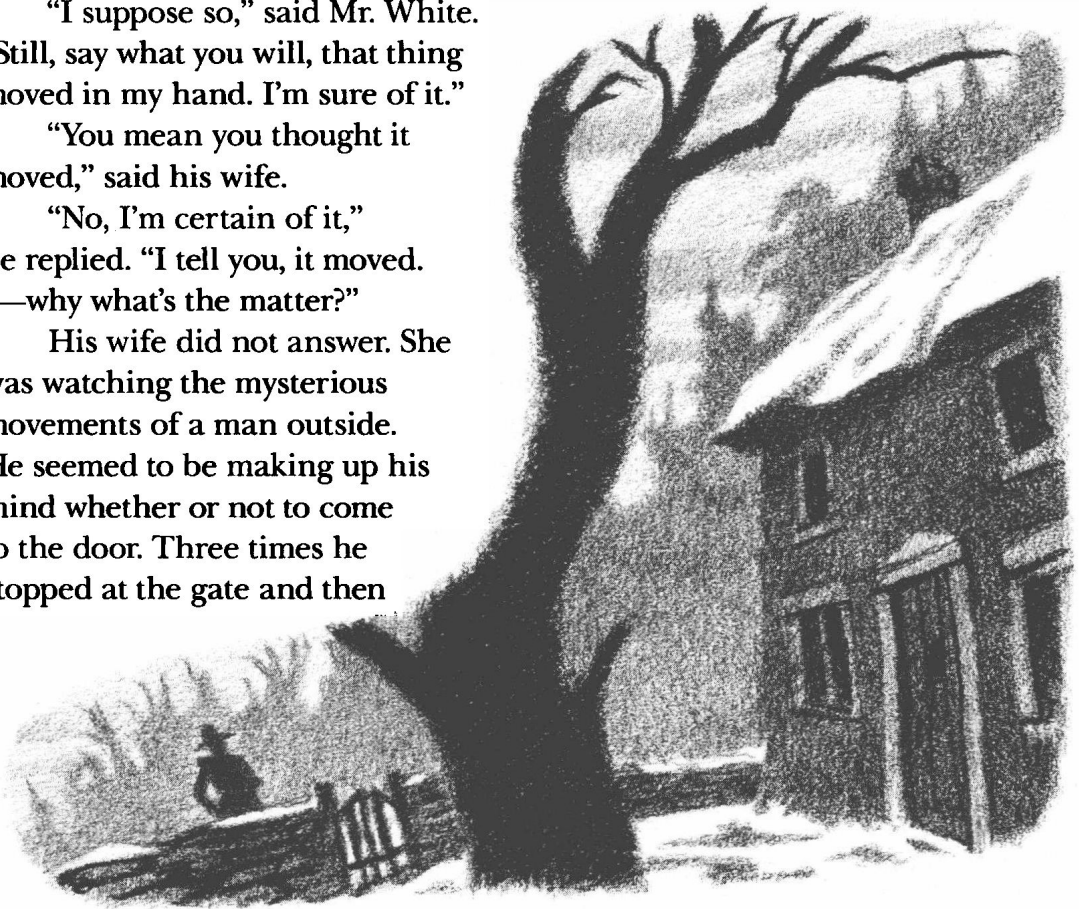
"I suppose so," said Mr. White.

"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.

bodies buried
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.

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