

The Monkey's Paw

A Reading A-Z Level V Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,367

Connections

Writing

Write a friendly letter to Damien encouraging him not to use the monkey's paw. Offer Damien a different solution to his problem.

Social Studies

Research the objects people in different cultures associate with wishing. Choose one and use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast it with the monkey's paw.

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The Monkey's Paw



**Multi
Level
V•Y•Z^o**

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Focus Question

Do you think the monkey's paw really has power? Why or why not?

Words to Know

descends	persist
disheveled	shriveled
fidgeting	sluggishly
gurgling	sodden
horrid	twitches
illogical	withered

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Level V Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL V

Fountas & Pinnell	R
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



Miguel digs his roasting stick into the glowing embers of the campfire. Kara and Damien stare at the flames as they all bask in the pure laziness that only comes at the beginning of summer vacation. They survived their first year of middle school—they deserve a break.

The trio barely look up from their daydreaming as Shelly shuffles out of the darkness, looking exhausted. She flings something into the flames that bounces off a log and lands between Miguel's sneakers.

He leans forward and sees that it's a severed hand, the fingers curled into a clawlike fist.

"What the—!" Miguel squeaks as he bolts upright.

"You should toss that back in the fire," Shelly says, her voice shaking.



"What . . . why do you have a *hand*?" Damien stutters. Kara pokes at it with a stick, and the three shudder as the fingers open on their own.

"It's not a hand—it's a monkey's paw, and you need to torch it," Shelly snaps. "It's supposed to grant wishes, but everything you ask for turns out horrible." She darts around the fire, but Kara grabs the paw and clutches it behind her back.



Shelly steps away, her fearful expression melting into something distant. “I’m warning you: burn that thing before it ruins your life, too.” With that, she turns and sprints away.

Kara holds the paw up to the light. “This is pretty amazing.”

“You don’t actually believe that story about wishes,” Damien protests. “Let me see it.”

She hands the paw to Damien, who grips it with a frown of distaste.

“Of course I don’t believe the story, but it’s just cool to have,” Kara says with a shrug.

“I told my mom I’d be home before ten,” Miguel says. “Help me with the fire.”

“That means I have to go home and pooper-scoop the backyard before Dad comes home tomorrow,” Damien grumbles, **fidgeting** with the monkey’s paw. “Do you guys have any idea how much a mastiff poops? I wish I didn’t have to clean up after Bruiser anymore.”

The monkey’s paw **twitches** in Damien’s hand. He chucks it on the ground and screeches, “It moved!” Kara and Miguel start laughing.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Kara says, picking up the paw. “It’s just a dried-up old shell of a hand. There’s nothing to be afraid of.”





Three days later, Damien's mastiff is hit by a truck and killed. When Miguel and Kara hear about it from other friends, they try texting and calling Damien, but he doesn't respond. After days of silence, they ride their bikes to his house. As the evening shadows stretch toward a storm beginning to brew on the horizon, they knock on the door.

Damien answers, looking **disheveled** with red-rimmed eyes.

"I'm so sorry," Kara says and jerks him into a hug.

"Thanks," Damien mumbles into Kara's shoulder. Eventually, Kara releases him, and the three go inside to sit in the living room in uncomfortable silence.

Finally, Miguel breaks the tension by asking, "How are you doing?"

"Not great," Damien replies. "Bruiser used to sleep on my bed, and now I can't sleep without him there. My parents don't seem concerned. They went to some work party tonight and left me here."

"That's harsh," Miguel says.

"The worst part is that his death is my fault." Damien's voice catches in his throat. "Shelly warned us to burn the paw."

"I know you're in a lot of pain," Kara says, "but do you really think a *shriveled* knickknack could cause something like this?"

"It's the only logical explanation," Damien retorts.

"It's the most **illogical** explanation possible," Kara says.

"Do you have it with you?" Damien asks.

"It's in my backpack. . ." Kara starts.

Before she can finish, Miguel says, "You're not thinking about—"

"If it worked once, it could work again," Damien snaps.



“Except for the ‘everything you ask for turns out horrible’ part, or have you forgotten that?” Miguel asks. Rain begins to patter softly on the roof above.

“I have a chance to get my friend back, and I’m going to take it,” Damien states as he seizes Kara’s backpack off the couch. He yanks out the paw in a flash and holds it up.

One **withered** finger is curled down.

“This is an awful idea,” Miguel says.

“Just let him try,” Kara says. “Maybe it will help him feel better to do everything he can, even when it doesn’t work.”

Damien whispers something. They wait and listen to the rain, which is coming down harder now.

After what seems like forever, Kara says, “See, it’s just a creepy old monkey’s paw—nothing more.” She grabs the hand and returns it to her backpack.

Thunder rumbles in the distance, and night **descends**. Soon, the three friends are covered in blankets on the couch, eating popcorn, watching Damien’s favorite comedy, and laughing as if nothing terrible could ever happen.



They see the flash of light out front a split second before the crack of thunder shakes the windows. The house plunges into blackness. Kara throws the blanket over her head, Miguel nearly jumps off the couch, and Damien yelps in surprise.

A moment later, they are all laughing at each other's reactions—until Miguel shushes them.

“Did you hear that?” he asks and whips out his cell phone to turn on the flashlight.

They listen. From somewhere at the back of the house, they hear a faint scratching over the rain.

“What is that?” Miguel asks. Kara shakes her head, but Damien's eyes grow wide.

Slowly, they climb off the couch. The scraping sound grows louder as they near the back door, but when they're close enough to touch the handle, it stops.

They can hear their own nervous breathing as Miguel peeks through the blinds covering the window in the upper part of the door. “It's completely black out there,” he says.

“Must be a branch or something caught in the thunderstorm,” Kara suggests.



The scraping sound starts again, this time on the outside of the house. It moves **sluggishly**, like something dragging itself along.

Miguel tracks the sound with his cell phone light as it works its way across one wall and then another. It halts.

Lightning flashes, and Kara squeals. “Let's go back to the living room,” she pleads to Miguel and Damien, who both nod eagerly.

They enter the living room, Kara diving onto the couch and covering herself with the boys' blankets.

Miguel and Damien move toward the couch but freeze when something strikes the front door.

Thump.

It sounds like something **sodden** and heavy being tossed against the door.

Thump.

Miguel shines his light on the front door, and Kara tries to bury herself in the corner of the couch. Damien covers his mouth in alarm.



Thump.

Miguel and Damien inch toward the large curtained window next to the front door.

“Stay away from—” Kara starts.

Thump.

As they near the window, Miguel and Damien carefully push the fabric aside and lean forward to peer through the rain-streaked glass.

“I can't see anything,” Miguel says, his breath fogging the window.

THUMP!

Something smashes into the door, rattling the hinges, and the boys bound back. A **horrid** snorting noise and a **gurgling** rumble that could be mistaken for a deep growl follow the thump.

The thing outside scratches at the door. Damien's eyes grow wide as the scratching comes again, long and slow. He steps forward.



“No, don't,” Miguel begs, grabbing Damien's arm, but Damien shakes him off.

“Damien, don't open the door!” Kara screams as he reaches for the dead bolt. Miguel is frozen in horror.

The scratching and the gurgling growl **persist**. Behind Damien, Kara fumbles with her backpack's zipper. Damien unlocks the dead bolt.

THUD!

The door shakes. The low growl turns into a horrific snarl. Kara opens her backpack and plunges her hand inside, pulling out the monkey's paw. Two fingers are curled down.

With trembling hands, Damien unlocks the doorknob and whispers, "Bruiser . . ."

Kara squeezes her eyes shut and wishes. The paw twitches faintly in her hand.

Damien swings the door open to see the rain falling gently in the deserted darkness beyond.



Glossary

descends (<i>v.</i>)	moves downward (p. 10)
disheveled (<i>adj.</i>)	messy or disordered (p. 7)
fidgiting (<i>v.</i>)	moving in a restless, nervous way; making small, restless movements (p. 6)
gurgling (<i>adj.</i>)	making a hollow bubbling sound like water flowing over rocks (p. 14)
horrid (<i>adj.</i>)	very unpleasant, frightful, or shocking; causing horror (p. 14)
illogical (<i>adj.</i>)	not reasonable or sensible (p. 8)
persist (<i>v.</i>)	to continue longer than usual or expected even with difficulty or challenge (p. 15)
shriveled (<i>adj.</i>)	dried up and wrinkled (p. 8)
sluggishly (<i>adv.</i>)	in a slow or lazy manner; without energy (p. 12)
sodden (<i>adj.</i>)	soaking wet and heavy (p. 13)
twitches (<i>v.</i>)	makes a small, sudden movement that is not planned or controlled (p. 6)
withered (<i>adj.</i>)	shriveled and dried (p. 9)