Taken from *The Monkey’s Paw* written by W W Jacobs (1902)

In this extract, an elderly couple are grieving the death of their son in an accident at work a week earlier. The wife has demanded her husband use a talisman from India – a monkey’s paw - with reputed magical powers to grant its owner three wishes. She has asked her husband to wish their son, Herbert, alive again.

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| 1  2  3  4  **5**  6  7  8  9  **10**  11  12  13  14  **15**  16  17  18  19  **20**  21  22  23  24  **25**  26  27  28  29  **30**  31  32  33 | He went down in the darkness, and felt his way to the parlour, and then to the mantelpiece. The monkey’s paw was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him before he could escape from the room seized upon him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the dreadful thing in his hand. Even his wife’s face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was white and hopeful, and to his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. He was afraid of her.  “Wish!” she cried, in a strong voice.  “It is foolish and wicked,” he faltered.  “Wish!” repeated his wife.  He raised his hand. “I wish my son alive again.”  The monkey’s paw fell to the floor, and he regarded it fearfully. Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind. He sat until he was chilled with the cold, glancing occasionally at the figure of the old woman peering through the window. The candle end, which had burnt below the rim of the china candlestick, was throwing pulsating shadows on the ceiling and walls, until, with a flicker larger than the rest, it expired. The old man, with an unspeakable sense of relief at the failure of the monkey’s paw, crept back to his bed, and a minute or two afterward the old woman came silently beside him. Neither spoke, but both lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked. A squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive. After lying for some time screwing up his courage, the husband took the box of matches, and striking one, went downstairs for a candle.  At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another, and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door. The matches fell from his hand. He stood motionless, his breath suspended until the knock was repeated. Then he turned and fled swiftly back to his room, and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.  “What’s that?” cried the old woman, starting up.  “A rat,” said the old man, in shaking tones-- “a rat. It passed me on the stairs.”  His wife sat up in bed listening. A loud knock resounded through the house.  “It’s Herbert!” she screamed. “It’s Herbert!” |

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| 34  **35**  36  37  38  39  **40**  41  42  43  44  **45**  46  47  48  49  **50**  51  52  53  54  **55**  56  57 | She ran to the door, but her husband was before her, and catching her by the arm, held her tightly.  “What are you going to do?” he whispered hoarsely.  “It’s my boy; it’s Herbert!” she cried, struggling mechanically. “I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door.”  “For God’s sake, don’t let it in,” cried the old man trembling.  “You’re afraid of your own son,” she cried, struggling. “Let me go. I’m coming, Herbert; I’m coming.”  There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing, and called after her appealingly as she hurried downstairs. He heard the chain rattle back and the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman’s voice, strained and panting. “The bolt,” she cried loudly. “Come down. I can’t reach it.”  But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If he could only find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey’s paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish.  The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it were still in the house. He heard the chair drawn back and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road. |

1. Read again the first paragraph, beginning: ‘He went down in the darkness …’

List **four** details in this paragraph which suggest the man is frightened. **(4 marks)**

5. Read again paragraph three, beginning: ‘The monkey’s paw fell to the floor …’

How has the writer used language to create suspense for the reader? **(8 marks)**

You could include the writer’s choice of:

• words and phrases

• language features and techniques

• sentence forms.

1. You need to think about the **whole extract** now.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?  **(8 marks)**

You could write about:

• what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning

• how the writer changes this focus as the extract develops

• any other structural features that interest you.

1. Focus this part of your answer from paragraph four to the end of the extract.

A student, having read this part of the text said: “The writer makes this moment of the story very dramatic.”

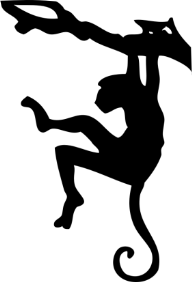
To what extent do you agree? **(20 marks)**

In your response, you should:

• write about the way that the writer increases the tension

• evaluate how the writer makes this a dramatic moment

• support your opinions with quotations from the text.



**Teacher’s answers**

The following suggested answers will help you to mark students’ work with regard to its content. For skills descriptors, please refer to the AQA mark scheme.

1. Answers might include:

* 'a horrible fear ... seized upon him'
* he 'lost the direction of the door'
* he 'caught his breath'
* his brow was 'cold with sweat'.

1. Answers might include references to:

* adjectives like ‘trembling’ and the adverb ‘fearfully’ to describe how he regards the paw, conveying his belief in its supernatural power
* the verb ‘crept’ suggesting his anxiety or fear, despite the seeming failure of the paw to grant his second wish
* references to the stillness and silence, highlighted by the mouse scurrying ‘noisily’
* the telegraphic sentence ‘A stair creaked’ employed to escalate tension as the silence is broken.

1. The focus at the start is on the protagonist and his fear. It then shifts to the staccato dialogue - the conflict builds tension and advances the plot. The focus then narrows on the shadows and the candle expiring, plunging the couple into darkness as tension escalates. There is then a shift to the sound of knocking, followed by the technique of simultaneity of experience (two things happening at same time): the wife downstairs, desperately trying to let the son in, and the husband upstairs, frantically wishing him to his grave again. The tension reaches a climax and the interest for readers lies in wondering who will be successful.