

Classroom Drama From Classic Literature

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Skills and Knowledge Acquired in this Unit

A. Vocabulary Study

- Dictionary skills
- Synonyms/antonyms
- Using words in context

B. Comprehension

- Details
- Cause/effect
- Compare/contrast
- Inference/drawing conclusions
- Main idea
- Summarizing
- Interpreting quotations
- Evaluation

C. Literary Elements and Devices

- Characterization
- Figurative language
- Plot
- Conflict
- Foreshadowing
- Irony
- Setting
- Mood
- Symbolism

D. Writing:

- Creating dialogue
- Essays
- Report
- Stories
- Critique
- Short answers
- Journal

E. Speaking

- Debate
- Drama
- Formal speech
- Interview

F. Art

- Comics
- Website design
- Illustrations
- Collage

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF

Adapted by Patricia Hutchison from the story by O. Henry

SCENE 1: At a small shack in a little town called Summit.

Cast of Characters:

Narrator

Sam

Bill

Red Chief

Narrator: My name is Sam and I'm going to tell you a story that you won't believe. We thought it would be a good thing, but it turned out all wrong. My partner, Bill Driscoll and I were down South in Alabama, when the idea struck us. We were in a little town called Summit, which was as flat as a pancake. The people there wouldn't harm a fly.

Bill: Five hundred ninety-nine, six hundred. We got six hundred dollars, Sam.

Sam: We need two thousand more to pull off that scam in Illinois.

Bill: How we gonna raise it?

Sam: I have an idea. Love for children is strong in rural communities. I think we ought to perform a kidnapping. I'm sure Summit doesn't have but a few policemen with lazy bloodhounds. And there are no reporters hanging around to stir up talk. So this would be the place to do it.

Bill: Sounds good to me. Who we gonna steal?

Sam: There's a man here named Ebenezer Dorset. He's very well-known and respected. He has only one son, a boy of ten. He has freckles and red hair. I bet old Ebenezer would gladly pay two thousand to ransom his only son.

Bill: What are we waitin' for? Let's get started!

Narrator: There was a little mountain about two miles from Summit. It was covered with cedar trees. Behind it was a cave. We stored our provisions there. One evening, after sundown, we drove our buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street throwing rocks at a kitten.

Bill: Hey little boy! Would you like a bag of candy and a nice ride?

Narrator: The boy hit Bill in the eye with a piece of brick.

Activities for The Monkey's Paw

Vocabulary Study

Write a synonym for each of these words:

1. torrent
2. municipality
3. formidable
4. scrawny
5. talisman
6. dubiously
7. liability
8. compensate
9. mutilated
10. expectant

Use each of these words in a sentence that shows the word's meaning:

1. fakir
2. consequences
3. installment
4. henpecked
5. corrupt

Comprehension Questions

Scene 1

1. What is the setting of scene 1?
2. Whom is the family waiting for?
3. Where did the Sergeant-Major serve most of his time in the armed forces?
4. How did the monkey's paw get its magical powers?
5. Why did the Fakir put a spell on the paw?
6. What was the previous owner's last wish?
7. What does the Sergeant-Major do with the paw? Who rescues it?
8. What warning does the Sergeant-Major give when Mrs. White asks for an extra pair of hands?
9. What does Mr. White finally wish for? What will he use it for?
10. Who has suggested this wish?

Interpretation Questions

1. Cite several uses of humorous vocabulary used by Walter Mitty in this story. How does this affect the reader's view of his character?
2. Walter Mitty is married to a woman who constantly patronizes him. Is this the cause or the effect of Walter's daydreaming? Give your opinion on this, citing evidence from the story to support your answer.
3. Discuss the meaning of one of these symbols: pocketa-pocketa-pocketa noise, overshoes and gloves, firing squad. Give evidence from the story to support your answer.
4. How do the people in his daydreams regard Walter Mitty?
5. What is the conflict of this story? Give evidence from the story to support your answer.

Story Projects

1. Use a chart to show each of Walter Mitty's daydreams, what sparks each one, and how he is brought back to reality.
2. In a well developed essay, compare and contrast Walter's real character with his imagined characters.
3. Research James Thurber's life. In a speech, compare the author to his Walter Mitty character.
4. Write a scene 9 for this play.
5. The ending of the story can be seen as either a victory or a defeat for Walter. With a partner, prepare and perform a debate on this issue.
6. Research Walter Mitty Syndrome. Write a report on it.
7. Give critiques of both the story and the movie.
8. How do you feel about the character of Mrs. Mitty? What would you like Walter to say to her? Prepare a short dialogue.
9. Snoopy, in the comic strip "Peanuts," is said to be based on the character of Walter Mitty. Draw a series of comic panels or make a collage of Peanuts cartoons, showing Snoopy performing this way.
10. Keep a journal of your daydreams for one day. Prepare a chart showing the precursor, the daydream, and the interruption of each.

Quiz

1. In Walter Mitty's first daydream, he is:
 - a. a mechanic
 - b. a surgeon
 - c. a parking garage attendant
 - d. a navy commander

2. Walter's first daydream was most likely caused by:
 - a. his fast driving
 - b. his wife telling him he needed overshoes
 - c. something he ate
 - d. a noise he heard