

REVISION GUIDE

Jekyll and Hyde / Characters

HOW TO ANALYSE THE CHARACTERS IN *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Stevenson's characters are noted for their representations of Victorian society; they give us a contemporary understanding of the human condition, as well as encouraging deeper contemplations on the nature of good and evil. When analysing characterisation in Stevenson's work, you need to acknowledge the complex process that goes into creating a character. This includes their **dialogue, actions, and descriptions**. Combine your understanding of these three traits with social, psychological and historical context, as well as how **language techniques** are used, and you will be able to build a full picture of Stevenson's characters. You may also consider the difference between **static** and **dynamic characters** - static characters are fixed and don't change over time, whereas dynamic characters change and grow as the plot progresses.

DR HENRY JEKYLL

- Dr Jekyll is a brilliant scientist, medical man, and philanthropic gentleman who is led to dangerous and ingenious experimentation which periodically liberates his troubling moral duality by transforming him into an evil **alter ego** — the pale, dwarfish Edward Hyde, who tramples over a child and clubs Sir Danvers Carew to death.
- Although Dr Jekyll makes Hyde his heir through his will, when he can finally restore his original personality, he kills himself in the person of Hyde.
- Jekyll seems to be a respectable gentleman who has been suppressing his darker nature. Attempting to cover this up, he creates a potion which he hopes will keep his darker impulses in check. Instead, Jekyll becomes Edward Hyde, the physical and intellectual embodiment of his evil nature.
- Hyde becomes increasingly dominant over Jekyll. This process of transforming from Jekyll into Hyde leads to Jekyll becoming evil himself, a 'disconsolate prisoner' of Hyde's.
- In Chapter 10, *the revelation of the secrets*, a full statement of what Jekyll has done is provided in the end, that "man is not truly one, but truly two". This was a very frightening conclusion for Victorian readers because it suggests that Jekyll is

not an anomaly, which encourages the audience to question themselves and their repressed urges and fears.

- Jekyll is never fully virtuous but an imperfect and erratic genius.
- Dr Henry Jekyll is the **antagonist** of the piece because he created Mr Hyde, the evil **alter ego** that terrorises London. While Jekyll is a good man on the outside, he hides a dark side that he can't control. This makes him a dangerous opponent for anyone who crosses his path. Hyde is also a danger because of his violent and destructive tendencies. Together, they make for a formidable foe.
- Dr Henry Jekyll is egotistical because he works for himself, while Lanyon's approach to science is altruistic - done for the good of society.
- The title 'Dr' in Henry Jekyll's name is relevant because it represents his profession as a doctor. This title reinforces Jekyll's status as a professional and shows that he is skilled in his field. Additionally, the title 'Dr' is often associated with prestige and respect.
- Dr Jekyll also shows the "Duality of man", particularly in the form of the contrast between the image of, and the reality of, the Victorian upper classes. Upper classes were involved in nefarious practices which would ruin their reputation if revealed - frequenting prostitutes and opium dens, Stevenson sought to expose the sordid underbelly of seemingly perfect Victorian society through his text.
- Taking into consideration Dr Jekyll's decline and ultimate demise, the moral of the novella is complex. It may be warning Victorians of the dangers of giving in to their impulsive and savage needs, but it may also be a warning of the rapid progress of science and technology as distinct from spiritual and moral questions. Overall, it acts as a complex discussion on the relationship between the, supposedly, civilised world and the savage origins which underpin it.
- In keeping with the view of many Victorians in his time, Stevenson portrays criminality as a physical trait that can be observed in someone's appearance. This can be linked to Cesare Lombroso's **theory of physiognomy** (first proposed in 1784), which led to the contemporary Victorian belief that certain physical features (heavy set jaws, 'sugar loaf' shaped skulls and pointed heads) can indicate whether a person is likely to commit a crime. One significantly frightening thing about Dr Jekyll is that when he transforms into Mr Hyde, he no longer physically looks like himself - Hyde demonstrates signs of physical deformity which mirror his deformed soul, yet Dr Jekyll is able to entirely hide and suppress the dark side of himself and therefore seems like a victim rather than the perpetrator for the majority of the novella.

TASK: Dr Henry Jekyll is supposed to be an upstanding member of Victorian society, but his actions could be seen as scandalous by many Victorians. Write a scandalous

MR HYDE

- Mr Hyde is an aspect of Jekyll's psyche, which acts as the darker, more primal side of Jekyll's personality. Hyde is impulsive and aggressive, representing Jekyll's desire to escape his restrictive moral code. Hyde also represents Jekyll's fear of becoming too detached from humanity. However, Jekyll uses Hyde so he can better understand and control his impulses by incorporating Hyde into his personality.
- The revelation at the end leads the reader to realise that all their dislike of Hyde is, in fact, a dislike of Jekyll - Hyde is not really his own person; he's a projection of Jekyll's repression.
- The phrase "trampled calmly" makes the readers dislike him and shows his sociopathic nature, as he appears to commit aggressive actions against others without thinking.
- The back door through which Mr Hyde enters and leaves Dr Jekyll's property is a key **symbol** - it opens onto a dark alleyway, a degenerate and frightening space that is figuratively used to represent the dark, hidden psychology of Jekyll's character. The entry in the first part of the novella symbolises change and also relates to the dual nature of Dr Jekyll. It doesn't seem like the same house; this shows how the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde is not apparent. The Victorians were known for their prudishness and insistence on maintaining a sense of decency. Therefore, they would likely deliberately ignore anything that contradicted their view of the world, especially if it could embarrass them or make them look foolish. For example, Dr Jekyll might be caught in a compromising situation with Mr Hyde. The Victorians would likely try to ignore or sweep this under the rug to maintain their reputation and uphold social norms.

TASK: Mr Hyde is considered evil and unpleasant by the majority of the characters in the text, but what is it about him that upsets them? Create a table with two columns. On one side, make a list of Mr Hyde's actions throughout the novella, on the other, write people's reactions.

GABRIEL UTTERSON

- The **protagonist** of the story - the main figure in the novella until Chapter 8.
- Utterson is a distinguished and upstanding lawyer held in high esteem across the community of London. Although Utterson is reticent, polite, and maybe even a little lacking in creativity, he seems interested in life's seedier aspects. This is in **contrast** to his restrained and dignified demeanour.
- On the other hand, his rationality renders him incapable of coping with the supernatural aspects of the Jekyll-Hyde link.
- A proto-detective figure - a neutral and objective observer of the case, nosy and inquisitive - at times he's quite pushy about retrieving the right information or following clues.
- Utterson is not a man of science, but he is similar to his friend Dr Lanyon and maybe Victorian civilization as a whole in that he is dedicated to rational explanations and denies the existence of the supernatural.
- He may seem dull, but he provides a counterpoint and a sensible viewpoint on the "strange case" surrounding his close friend, Dr Jekyll, and works as a balance in the story.
- Provides a "reliable" perspective on the story - we trust his judgements, insights and opinions.
- Not a perfect character - "lean, long, dusty, dreary... yet somehow loveable" - this description makes him more likeable and more realistic.

TASK: Utterson is an important character because his journey helps build suspense. Create a bullet pointed list of Utterson's discoveries about Jekyll and Hyde. Note down next to each discovery how it builds further suspense.

- Inspector Newcomen is a driven individual who gets things done. Surprisingly, he is thrilled to hear of the passing of a renowned politician, as he believes it will help him advance in his job.
- When things go wrong with the investigation, he is left in total disbelief; it is very doubtful that law enforcement will ever be able to apprehend the offender.

SIR DANVERS CAREW

- A respected and well-liked elderly gentleman who served as a Parliament Member and was one of Utterson's customers.
- He is brutally put to death by Mr Hyde, and the maid, who is upstairs at the time, watches in terror through the window. After the murder, Hyde is forced to go into hiding for many months.
- The gentleman is quite polite, as seen by the way he bows to another man on the sidewalk and greets him "with a very pretty manner of politeness."
- In addition to this, Carew emits warmth and inner calmness. The story's narrator features that he "seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content."
- The politician's pleasant nature only makes his death appear even more tragic. Furthermore, he is of aristocratic heritage, as shown by the title 'Sir' - this means that typically the average Victorian would highly respect him and defer to him, which makes Hyde's disregard for the gentleman even more disconcerting.

ENFIELD

- Enfield is a well-known and respected individual, although his exact profession is unknown, it is clear from his deportment and behaviour that he is from a middle class, educated background. He is Utterson's close friend and is also a distant relative. Though he doesn't appear much in the novella, his presence is significant in that it reinforces Utterson's views and beliefs about the immorality of Hyde and the way in which he provokes disgust from those who have only even met him briefly, or become aware of him in passing.
- Enfield is the ideal of the refined Victorian gentleman, complete with a stable moral compass and immaculate manners in all circumstances.
- Enfield detests gossip and considers it a stain on a man's character, which he views as being of the highest significance. Despite this, he inadvertently spreads rumours about Mr. Hyde when he shares his unsettling encounter with Utterson.
- Enfield demonstrates the conflicted character of Victorian culture several times. For example, he explains why he doesn't inquire further into strange occurrences by saying, "The more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask." Despite giving the

impression that he isn't interested in the oddities he encounters, as any decent Victorian would, we learn that he has a detailed description of such incidents - suggesting that something within him is in fact drawn to the strange and unusual.

- Enfield's personality serves as an **explanatory tool**. He introduces the initial part of our antagonist's tale and illustrates the societal conventions and expectations of the setting.

POOLE

- Poole is the head servant that works for Dr Jekyll. He has worked for him for the last twenty years and knows him well. As the butler for Dr Jekyll, he is familiar with his master's routines, the tone of his master's voice and his general appearance.
- He is a "well dressed, older servant," according to the description.
- Poole is well-mannered and conducts himself in a manner befitting his rank. He is devoted to Dr Jekyll as a loyal servant, and shows genuine concern when Jekyll is clearly sick - he aids Utterson in filling in details about Jekyll's recent strange behaviour and subsequent refusal to leave his laboratory. Near the novella's conclusion, when Utterson has reason to think that something sinister is going on, Poole directly assists Utterson in breaking into Jekyll's laboratory.

MESSRS. MAW

- The term 'Messrs.' is an old fashioned way to pluralise 'Mr'. These men are chemists to whom Dr Henry Jekyll writes for a special ingredient which allows him to make the potion that transforms him into the pale, deformed Edward Hyde.

MR GUEST

- Utterson's clerk and confidant, whose main function is to help his friend's investigation.
- His main skill is in recognising handwriting, hence why he is able to spot the similarities between Jekyll and Hyde's writing. He associates slanted writing with a darker disposition.