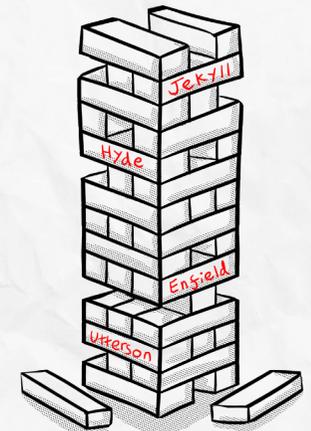
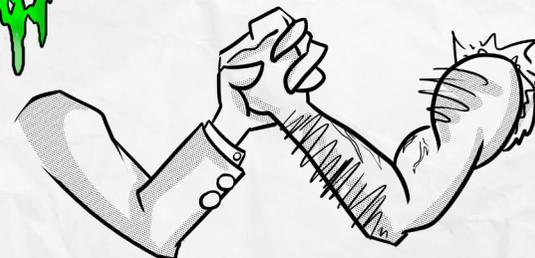
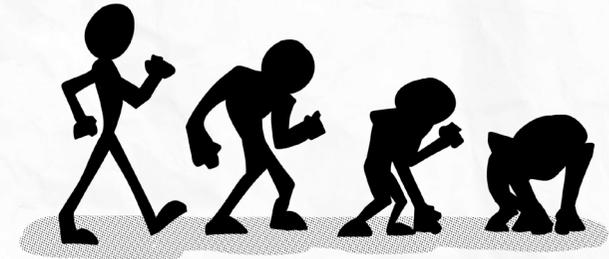
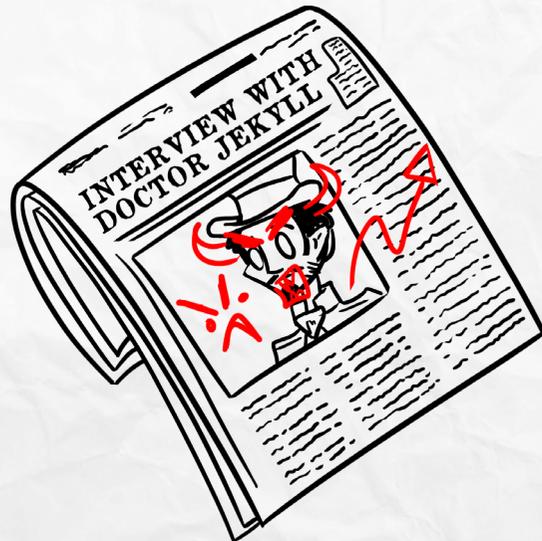


# GCSE Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

R L Stevenson



ThinkIT

## Structure

Think about the chapter titles. What is their relationship to the content of the chapter – are they all purely descriptive, for example? How do the chapter titles relate to the narrative as a whole?

Think about the order in which RLS introduces the reader to the different characters. What effect does this have on the reader? For example, why do you think RLS introduces the reader to Utterson before Jekyll or Hyde?

*“He had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds”*

*“In this character it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of downgoing men”*

RLS also introduces us to Jekyll and Hyde through other characters' impressions, before the reader meets them. For example, one of our first impressions of Jekyll is through Dr Lanyon: 'It is nearly ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind.'

What effect does this have on the reader? Particularly think of the word **fanciful** – how do you think this would have been received by a Victorian reader?

## Mystery - 'If he be Mr Hyde [...] I shall be Mr Seek'

What structural and narrative techniques does RLS use to enhance the suspense and mystery in the novel?

Think about how RLS ends chapters. *'The Last Night'*, for example, ends with Utterson returning to his office 'to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained'.

What are the different characters' attitudes towards the mysterious? How do they affect you as a reader?

*Enfield: 'No, sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask'*

Can you think of moments in the narrative where RLS withholds information from the reader in order to heighten the suspense of the narrative?

## The Written Word

Think about the relationship between plot and the written word in the text. How does RLS utilise different writing styles? What effect does the introduction of letters and individual characters' first person narratives have on the reader?

How do you see the relationship between what is **written** and what is **spoken** in the novel? How does this fit in with your understanding of Victorian social etiquette? Do you think there are some things that can't be said out loud?

## Language Choices

Think about the description of Jekyll's chemicals: *'Half-full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell' 'Suddenly and at the same moment, the ebullition ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple which faded again to a watery green'* What sort of language is RLS using here? How does it compare to the language used elsewhere?

Think about our first meeting with Mr Hyde: *'for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground'*.

It seems that RLS is using deliberately un-emotive language. Why, do you think?

Consider the following quotation: *'Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone, but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved'*.

How are these two sides – the intellect and the imagination – reflected in RLS' language choices in the novel?

## Relationship between external and internal

There is a Victorian notion that external disfigurement reflects an inner corruption. With this in mind, how do you react to Enfield's description of Hyde below?

*'He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong impression of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir, I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him'.*

Why do you think RLS made Hyde's physical appearance so difficult to describe in concrete terms?

Compare the above description of his appearance to this unambiguous description of his life and actions: *'Much of his past was unearthed, indeed, and all disreputable; tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent, of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career'.*

## Why Jekyll? Why Hyde?

In essence, there are two relationships between Jekyll and Hyde: the literal relationship between the two characters, and the symbolic struggle between what Jekyll and Hyde's characters represent.

What parallels can you draw between the literal relationship and the symbolic one?

You may want to consider:

- What Jekyll and Hyde say about each other
- The effect that their actions have on each other
- What do their characters represent within the narrative?

*'And Edward Hyde, alone, in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil'*

What does that make Jekyll?

## The Use of Dichotomies

Jekyll's research depends on a notion of duality, *'that man is not truly one, but truly two'*

- Do you agree with this idea? Do you think RLS agrees with Jekyll about this? Why/why not?
- What do you think the 'two' sides are? Is it as simple as good and evil? What else could they be?

*'One of your fellows who do what they call good'* – Do you think the novel draws a distinction between *doing* good and *being* good?

Think about how Jekyll describes his own story: *'If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also'*. Do you agree with this? Is Jekyll the chief sinner? Or the chief sufferer? Or both? Or neither? Think about his justifications for conducting the experiment. Do you think that the duality he experiences is particular to him, or is it something that most people experience?

## Accepting Responsibility

Do you think Jekyll accepts the flaws in his character?

*'Though so profound a double-dealer; I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest'*

*'My devil had long been caged, he came out roaring'*

*'He, I say – I cannot say, I'*

Why do you think RLS chose for Jekyll to not fully accept responsibility for the existence of Hyde?

## Genre

Would you call this novel Science Fiction? Why? Why not?

Is it a mystery novel? What is the balance between the mysterious and the scientific? Does one influence outweigh the other?

*Victorian melodrama* would often include 'stock' characters – a hero, a villain, a damsel, a fool etc. To what extent does RLS utilise stock characters in the novel? The Apothecary: *'He was the usual cut-and-dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe'*.

Another popular genre in the Victorian era was the moral tale – could you see this novel as having a clear and instructive moral? *'I have had a lesson – O God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had'*.

## Environment – 'the fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city'

Think about the opening description of London – does RLS' presentation of London change throughout the novel? Do you think London is a symptom or a cause of the narrative?

Think about the relationship between the *city*, the *weather* and the *plot*: *'The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare'*

What's the difference between a city in a nightmare and a city from a nightmare? Which one do you think fits the setting of the novel more? Are there other moments in the novel that would support or challenge your conclusions?

## Victorian Conservatism

Think about the different attitudes presented in the novel. Do you think RLS was challenging or adhering to conservative Victorian attitudes?

**Rejection of indulgence and self-discipline:** *'Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures' 'Within I was conscious of a heady mix of recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but nor an innocent freedom of the soul'*.

**Madness or mental affliction:** *'So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness'*, the implication is that you need a logical, empirical, reasonable argument or you are mad.

**Empiricism:** The majority of the characters seem in constant search of a scientific, rational explanation. Could part of the reason for why things went so badly wrong for Jekyll be that he was searching for a scientific answer to a philosophical question?

**Women:** There are very few female characters in the novel. What impression do you get of RLS' attitudes towards women. *'Weeping like a woman or a lost soul' 'And all the time, as we were pitching it in redhot we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies'*

**Law:** *'It offended [Mr Utterson] both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest'*. Think about the way the law is portrayed in the novel. In particular, think about how different characters react to the law, and the central role that the law plays in the plot?

**Class:** *'London was startled by a crime of singular ferocity, and rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim'* How would the novel be different if Jekyll had been of a lower social class? How are the working classes presented in the novel – how do other characters treat them?

Do you think a Victorian reader would have found the work controversial, based on any of the ideas above?