

AQA English Literature GCSE

Character Profile: *Mr Hyde*



Mr Edward Hyde

SYMBOLISES MAN'S BASAL INSTINCTS

INTRODUCTION

Edward Hyde is the **violent alter-ego of the doctor Henry Jekyll**; Jekyll has created him through scientific experimentation to embody all of his 'evil' traits. As the novel progresses, Hyde begins to gather more and more power over Jekyll and eventually becomes his downfall. Jekyll dies in Hyde's body, leaving a letter of explanation which serves as the tenth chapter. He is "**pale and dwarfish**" and **lives a carefree existence**. Hyde has a house in the sleazy area of Soho, bought for him by Dr Jekyll. He also has access to Jekyll's house.



CHARACTER IN CONTEXT

- **Atavism:** Mr Hyde is displayed as much smaller and younger than Dr Jekyll. Stevenson presents Hyde as having a "**strong feeling of deformity**". Here, his appearance is used to emphasise his criminality as through physiognomy, his appearance would convict him as such (see context notes for more information).
- **Repression:** It could be argued that Mr Hyde's name is an **apronym**, or name which reflects its owner's personality because he depicts elements of **typically masculine behaviour** that men in the Victorian era were expected to conceal and hide. Mr Utterson sets up a **pun** earlier in the novel highlighting this: "**if he is Mr Hyde, I will be Mr Seek**".
- **Fin De Siècle:** Gothic convention is seen in Mr Hyde as he presents many of the fears emerging at the end of the century (**fin de siècle**) and Victorian era. Mr Hyde could be seen as displaying the worries many people had about the advances of science and medicine and the effect this could have on the psychology of individuals. This could be interpreted as Stevenson warning his readership about the consequences of such **fast societal developments**. A prominent fear at this time was of "**devolution**", Hyde is a key product of this as he is the "**ape-like**" form of a formerly respectable member of society.
- **Classist system:** It could be seen that Mr Hyde, if considered as a single, unconnected entity, is a member of the working class, whereas Dr Jekyll is upper class. This disparity in wealth and status means that, to an extent, Hyde is not subject to the same societal scrutiny as Jekyll is: he can act with **aggression and a lack of remorse**. Furthermore, Hyde's violent murder of Carew can be seen to **represent a violent uprising of the proletariat**. On the other hand, if the reader considers Hyde an intrinsically linked extension



of Dr Jekyll, and therefore the trampling of the young girl is a reflection of the power the bourgeoisie can acceptably exercise over the working classes.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- VOLATILE** - *“with a flush of anger”* - it can be argued that Hyde is the embodiment of a wholly **id-controlled** mind (id is the part of the brain focused on animal instincts and pleasures), with no thought for remorse or consequences to his actions (such as when he tramples the girl or murders Sir Carew). He has few inhibitions so cannot restrain himself from committing this atrocious behaviour. He also causes a feeling of horror in those who encounter him *“there is something wrong with his appearance; [...] I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why”*.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strange_Case_of_Dr._Jekyll_and_Mr._Hyde

- VIOLENT** - He acts brutally, murdering Sir Carew with a cane, as well as trampling a young girl. He commits these acts seemingly without reason which emphasises his portrayal as the embodiment of **pure, unadulterated evil**. When he attacks Carew, he leaves the body *“incredibly mangled”* which implies his actions are intentional.
 - As Mr Hyde commits more evil acts the power he has over Dr Jekyll increases. This may be Stevenson suggesting that the more evil committed by an individual, the more power they have over society.
- ANIMALISTIC** - Utterson, Enfield and Lanyon all discuss Hyde in very disapproving manner, likening him to a creature on many occasions. This comparison serves to shock the reader.
 - “Shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath”*
 - “The creature”*
 - “Seizing, surprising and revolting”*
 - “Into a savage laugh”*



KEY MOMENTS

CH	OCCURRENCE	SIGNIFICANCE
1	Although Hyde doesn't directly appear in this chapter, the readers are introduced to him through Enfield's telling of the "story of the door" . Supposedly Mr Hyde was witnessed trampling on a young girl before entering the backdoor of Jekyll's house to get money to pay the girl compensation when pressed to by Enfield.	Immediately, Hyde is displayed as a very violent and remorseless individual with a short temper. Thus, Victorian audiences would pin him as a villain. He is also a very mysterious character and the readership is left wanting to know more about this character, a device Stevenson uses to heighten tension in the novel. By not directly describing him but having other characters talking about him he is presented to be elusive.
4	In the Carew Murder Case, it becomes apparent that Hyde murdered an elderly man by clubbing him to death with a cane. This violent act is witnessed by a maid who can identify the attacker as Hyde. Utterson leads the police to Hyde's house in Soho, but they only find the murder weapon.	Again, the violent nature of Hyde is displayed to the reader, further suggesting that this is a savage and vicious man. This chapter is made more shocking by it being the first time the reader directly experiences Hyde's character.
8	Hyde's body is found in Jekyll's laboratory, with a note from Jekyll explaining the truth.	Here, readers are provided with an articulate overview of the circumstances which lead to Hyde arising in the novel.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dr._Jekyll_and_Mr._Hyde_\(1920\)._-_Ad_4.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dr._Jekyll_and_Mr._Hyde_(1920)._-_Ad_4.jpg)

RELATIONSHIPS

Jekyll | The audience are first shown the Jekyll - Hyde relationship as it is revealed that Hyde has a key to Jekyll's backdoor. After Utterson finds that Jekyll altered his will to leave all his money for Hyde, Jekyll defends Hyde. It is obvious that Jekyll knows him well as he has access to the house and all the servants are aware of him. Some critics argue that Jekyll and Hyde should be considered as **a singular character**, and it is clear that their relationship is central to the narrative of the novel. Hyde is a foil to Jekyll, emphasising his positive traits, and acting as an opposite character, or antithesis. As Hyde has a key to Jekyll's backdoor it could imply that he is always present in **Jekyll's subconscious**.



Utterson | Utterson takes a severe dislike towards Mr Hyde when he initially hears about his incident with the girl and the door in the first chapter. When he eventually makes an acquaintance with Hyde he suggests there is something **“abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature”**. He realises the true extent of Mr Hyde’s evil character earlier on and then begins to investigate the case.

Lanyon | Lanyon is the first person to discover that Hyde & Jekyll are the same, and also takes a hatred to him immediately. The transformation shocks him so much that he dies.

Enfield | Deals with him after the incident with the young girl in the first chapter, forcing him to confront his actions and pay the girl compensation. Enfield doesn’t appear that curious about the nature of Hyde.

KEY QUOTES

“Damned Juggernaut”

- A “juggernaut” is a wagon which was used to carry around the image of the Hindu God Krishna. Worshippers would sometimes throw themselves under its wheels and get crushed to death. More generally it means **a hugely overwhelming, destructive force**. The further theme of sacrifice implied by the word **“Juggernaut”** may reference the sacrifice Jekyll makes to Hyde in exchange for indulging in decadent and inappropriate behaviour. This suggests Hyde is controlled solely by **impulse**.

“A man who was without bowels of mercy”

- Hyde is merciless; the **alliterative “w”** gives a sense of difficulty in articulating Hyde as a character, and as a being who **lacks all morals**.

“So ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running”

- Hyde is a physical manifestation of evil. He **evokes disgust and revulsion** in all simply by sight. This **promotes the gothic conventions** of horror and terror in the text.

“His every act and thought centered on self”

- He is selfish, which is **far from Victorian ideals**. This contrasts with the characters of Utterson and Enfield who are reputable and presented as typical Victorian gentlemen. This emphasises the role of the Freudian id in the character of Hyde, and his self-centred existence further aligns him with animals rather than humanity.

“Drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone”

- This is a jarring description of excessive drinking and **bestial** behaviour as **“man of stone”** highlights a lack of conscience and suggests an air of immovability. The **hedonistic connotations of excessive drinking** further cause the reader to dislike Hyde as he appears to fully indulge himself.



“He had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness”

- There is **antithesis** and conflict between **“timidity”** and **“boldness”** which mirrors the internal conflict. **Alliteration** of **“murderous mixture”** could suggest this behaviour is intrinsic and inextricable to his very being, and also refers to the literal murder he commits of Sir Carew. This also provides depth to Mr Hyde’s character.

“He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something down-right detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere, he gives a strong feeling of deformity”

- Mr Hyde is a vague character in the eyes of the reader as descriptions of him are ambiguous. He **evokes fear in other characters**, posing a mechanism by which people may experience the inner terrors and sins that exist within them. Stevenson’s use of **ambiguity** forces the reader to imagine their worst fears in Hyde. The **alliterative “d”** reinforces a sense of repulsion; **anaphoric repetition** of **“something”** creates an air of unceasing intangibility.

“The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house”

- The words **“Savage”** and **“snarled”** gives a sense of unrestrained and uncontrollable destruction and freedom: Hyde is a **degenerate**, acting like an animal, without morals or social restraint. Alongside this, **sibilance** reinforces notion of underlying sinfulness. Furthermore, **“extraordinary quickness”** highlights Hyde’s supernatural force.

“There was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature”

- **“Abnormal”** differentiates Hyde from all other men and beings; **“creature”** again reinforces **animalistic imagery**. He is **troglydytic** in nature so without boundaries. By referencing the **“very essence”** Stevenson is commenting on the true evil personality of Mr Hyde, and this could link to the supernatural as this is considered impossible within society. This could also imply that **Mr Hyde is the true essence of Dr Jekyll**.

“That masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals”

- Reference to Darwin’s theory of evolution: Hyde is a degenerate both in the colloquial and scientific fashion. Hyde is separated from the rest of the characters by mentioning the **“chemicals”** from which he has been created.

