

AQA English GCSE

Jekyll and Hyde: Overview and Key Scenes

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Overview and key scenes

Key characters

- **Mr Utterson** - A **respectable lawyer**, he **symbolises honesty** and acts as the **moral compass** of the novella.
- **Dr Jekyll** - A seemingly reputable **doctor**, he **symbolises repression** as well as insatiable curiosity.
- **Mr Hyde** - Dr Jekyll's **evil doppelganger** he **symbolises man's basal instincts**.
- **Dr Lanyon** - A well respected member of the scientific community he **symbolises reputability** and acts as a **foil** to Dr Jekyll.
- **Poole** - Dr Jekyll's butler, he symbolises loyalty.
- **Sir Danvers Carew** - An **MP** and **member of high society** his death symbolises Hyde's disregard for conventional authority.
- **Mr Enfield**- Mr Utterson's cousin, he is key to the **theme of repression** and **silence**.

Overview

Revision tip- A quick way of revising this text is to read the last chapter as it contains an account of many of the important aspects of the plot.

1. Mr Enfield tells Mr Utterson about a young girl being violently trampled by an evil looking man, Mr Hyde.
2. He later discovers that his friend, Dr Jekyll is Mr Hyde's friend.
3. Utterson visits their mutual friend, Dr Lanyon to ask his opinion. Lanyon tells Utterson that he no longer speaks to Jekyll over scientific differences.
4. A year later, a maid witnesses Sir Danvers Carew, an MP, be beaten to death by Mr Hyde in an unprovoked attack.
5. Lanyon gives Utterson a letter with instructions to not open it before Jekyll is dead, Lanyon soon dies from shock soon after.
6. Poole visits Utterson and they decide that they will break down the door of Jekyll's laboratory. They do so and find Hyde's body along with a letter written by Dr Jekyll to Mr Utterson.
7. Lanyon's letter says that Hyde came to his house and then drank a potion which caused him to transform into Jekyll.
8. Jekyll's letter contains his confession that he developed a drug which caused him to transform into Hyde, his evil side. He then found himself less able to turn back into Jekyll and later ran out of his original drug which he could not recreate. He knows that after writing the letter he will no longer be able to turn back into Jekyll.



Key scenes

(Numbers refer to those on the page before)

Scene 1

This is significant as it is **our first introduction to Hyde** so shapes our perceptions of him throughout as well as **introducing key themes to the reader**.

- **“the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood”**- This establishes the **theme of duality**. This links to the interpretation of the novella as a **metaphor** for the division seen in Stevenson’s contemporary Edinburgh. The **sibilance** used in **“street shone”** implies that the presence of **this duality poses an underlying threat**.
- Hyde is described as **“some damned Juggernaut”** - The **satanic connotations** of **“damned”** are **juxtaposed** against the **omnipotent connotations** of **“Juggernaut”**. This implies that **Hyde is unrestricted by conventional ideas of religious morality**.
- **“something displeasing, something downright detestable”**- The **repetition** of **“something”** implies that Hyde is more of a thing than a being, Stevenson also uses repeated harsh **“d” consonants** in **“displeasing”, “downright”** and **“detestable”** to introduce Hyde as a **force of evil**.
- He is also described as giving **“a strong feeling of deformity”** - The **ambiguity** created by **“feeling”** establishes an impression of uncertainty surrounding Hyde. Stevenson’s characterisation of Hyde as mysterious is a detective novel convention he has “borrowed” in his work of **gothic fiction**.

Scene 2

Stevenson creates a sense of foreboding by introducing Dr Jekyll in the context of his will.

- **“all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his ‘friend and benefactor Edward Hyde’”** - This links Hyde and the death of Jekyll from the outset, foreshadowing Jekyll’s ruin.
- By giving all of Jekyll’s qualifications in **“Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., L.L.D., F.R.S., etc.”** his high rank and respectability are shown. He can be aligned with conventional expectations of the **Victorian gentleman** here.

Scene 3

Lanyon reveals his opinions of Jekyll, further intriguing Utterson as well as the reader.

- Lanyon is first presented to be a reliable source through Stevenson’s description of him living in **“Cavendish square, that citadel of medicine”** this contrasts with the earlier description of Jekyll living closer to a less reputable part of London (**“tramps slouched into the recess”**).
- Lanyon then refers to Jekyll’s **“unscientific balderdash”**. As Jekyll and Hyde was written in 1885 and Darwin’s theory of evolution was published in 1859, people’s scientific views were a contentious issue at the time so despite Utterson’s dismissal of their argument as a **“little spirit of temper”**, a contemporary reader would be aware of the significance of Lanyon’s distaste towards Jekyll.

Scene 4

Although the trampling of the girl is horrific, the murder of Carew is the first act of evil that the reader “witnesses” creating more horror.



- Stevenson describes Hyde's **"ape-like fury"**. This **simile** has **animalistic connotations** and also alludes to Darwin's work.
- The police officer states that **"this will make a deal of noise"** - this use of **metaphorical language** shows how Hyde has disregarded Carew's high status in his act of violence, it also shows Victorian society's preoccupation with rank.

Scene 5

Stevenson gives the reader few details of the death of Lanyon, creating mystery and also implicating Jekyll further.

- **"He had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face"** - **fatalistic connotations** create an **impression of foreboding**, this is also a **metaphor** which fulfils gothic convention.
- **"Utterson could not trust his eyes"** - the idea of characters being betrayed by their senses is a typical gothic trope and adds to the mysteriousness of the scene. It is significant that it is Utterson who experiences this as he previously represented rationality.

Scene 6

This scene is the climax of the novella, all of the reader's fears and suspicions are relieved at this point, creating a feeling of **catharsis**.

- **"A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet"** - the auditory imagery of **"screech"** connotes an owl, an animal commonly featured in gothic literature. **"Mere animal terror"** reduces both Jekyll and Hyde to a creature of instinct, leaving this as their legacy.
- **"the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching"** - the **harsh consonants** in **"contorted"** as well as the use of the **continuous verb "twitching"** show his discomfort in death and sit uncomfortably with the reader.

Scene 7

This is the first scene in which the true identity of Hyde is revealed.

- **"like a man restored from death - there stood Henry Jekyll!"** - the **religious connotations** of resurrection contrast with the previous scenes which emphasises the amoral content of the novel. This is a key feature of the **fin de siècle** gothic genre.
- The horrific consequences of Jekyll's revelation to Lanyon is further shown through the **alliterative sibilance** in **"my soul sickened"**.

Scene 8

Whilst the rest of the novel can be seen as a detective case, this chapter acts as a confession by Jekyll. It is arguably the most significant chapter as all of the unknowns of the rest of the text are finally explained.

- **"compound man's dual nature"** - this links to **theme of repression** and shows Jekyll's awareness of the **duality** present in human nature.
- **"Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil"** - this shows that Hyde is the embodiment of all of the evil in Jekyll's character, **"alone in the ranks of mankind"** links to the **theme of isolation** and suggests that Jekyll felt isolated in his role as the stereotypical Victorian gentleman.



Structure

The text is ordered so that **the reader is disclosed information at the same time as Mr Utterson** which adds to the sense of mystery.

The novella follows a conventional dramatic structure, the intensity increases and then decreases:

- **Exposition** - Introduces the main characters and setting - Enfield tells Utterson the tale of Hyde trampling the girl.
- **Rising action** - Events of the story increase in intensity and more conflict is introduced - the contents of Jekyll's will is revealed and Utterson confronts him about it.
- **Climax** - The conflict reaches a peak - Carew is murdered and eventually Jekyll's laboratory door is broken down by Utterson and Poole.
- **Falling action** - Gradually the characters deal with the events of the climax section and the conflict begins to be resolved - Lanyon's narrative reveals the true identity of Hyde.
- **Denouement** - The truth is revealed and conflict is resolved - Jekyll's letter reveals the whole truth and all of the reader's questions are answered.

By placing Jekyll's account at the end of the novella, does Stevenson cause you to feel sympathy towards Jekyll? Or does it have the opposite effect on you by making it obvious that Jekyll sought his own destruction?

Form

Detective fiction

The title of the novella suggests that the story will be a scientific detective case however, **the story instead revolves around people's lives and friendships** which subverts the reader's expectations.

The form of the novel is similar to that of a **conventional detective novel**. A crime is committed at the beginning which, after a trail of clues is left, is eventually solved. Stevenson manipulates the genre by revealing the name of the criminal from the outset but leaving his true identity a secret. Most detective novels also contain a plot twist which occurs in Jekyll's confession.

Narration

The text is narrated by three different voices who slowly unravel the mystery behind the identity of the criminal.

- Chapters 1-8 focus on the perspective of Mr Utterson who acts as the detective. These chapters are written in the **third person** which creates the impression that he is a **reliable narrator**. The reliability of the narration is reinforced by the characterisation of Utterson as educated and rational.
- Chapter 9 is in the form of **a letter** written by Dr Lanyon in the **first person**. As this is the first chapter of the novella which is in first person, it is indicative of an **unreliable narrator** and foreshadows the forthcoming irrational events which defy the reader's expectations.



- The text ends with a **first person letter** written by Jekyll in which he summarises all of the previously described events from his own viewpoint. This is the resounding impression the reader is left with therefore it may create sympathy towards Jekyll. The letter also emphasises the **non-linear narrative form** of the novel.

Epistolary form

By including letters in the narrative, Stevenson adopts the **epistolary form**. His use of documents such as Jekyll's will and the letters at the end increases tension by adding to the impression of the book being an investigation. The **epistolary form** is frequently used in other works of gothic literature such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

The documents also cause the reader to question Mr Utterson's narrative as documents such as Jekyll's testimony could be seen as more trustworthy than Utterson's point of view because they are documented. The 'officiality' of the documents is enforced because they concern three reputable members of society.

