

AQA English Literature GCSE

Jekyll and Hyde: Themes
Friendship



Friendship and Bachelorhood

The theme of friendship is one which is less explicitly prominent in the text however is fundamental to the plot.

- The friendship between Mr Utterson and Mr Enfield establishes Mr Utterson's interest in Mr Hyde.
- It is Utterson's friendship with Dr Jekyll which causes him to pursue the case so persistently.

There is a distinct lack of female influence in the text so rather than romantic relationships being depicted, Stevenson only presents the **friendships between bachelors**.

Good friendships

True friendship is presented as an admirable trait by Stevenson. Jekyll is, at heart, a sociable man who enjoys hosting friends. ***“Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Dr. Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer”***. Here, the prospect of 'seclusion' concerns both the mental and social.

The narrator observes that ***“even [Utterson's] friendships seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity of good nature”***. The verb ***“founded”*** evokes **connotations of security, longevity and reliability** all traits of a good friend. Stevenson's reference to ***“catholicity of good nature”*** has **religious connotations** which add to the reader's impression of Utterson's morality, implying that he is a good person and therefore a good friend.

Despite it being evident that Utterson is unhappy about what Jekyll is doing; ***“the lawyer listened gloomily; he did not like his friend's feverish manner”*** Stevenson's use of the **noun “friend”** emphasises to the reader the relationship the two have despite their disagreement. At the same time, Stevenson references Utterson's profession as a lawyer. As this is in a separate clause, it shows both the professional and personal capacity in which Utterson is related to Jekyll within the text.

Bad friendships

Utterson says ***“Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me”*** and thus seems more preoccupied with worrying about his friend's wellbeing than the fact he is acting immorally. Stevenson's use of **temporal deixis “became”** emphasises the extent of their disagreement and suggests the distance grew between them over time. Meanwhile the **fricatives** in ***“fanciful”*** imply falsity. Here, Stevenson could be implying that Lanyon should be interpreted to be a false friend.

