# OCR English GCSE

## Jekyll and Hyde: Themes

*The Gothic & the Supernatural*

## The Gothic and the Supernatural

The gothic is a style of writing which aims to evoke fear in the reader. It usually deals with **transgressive topics**, especially those linked to **contemporary issues**. The supernatural is often included in **gothic literature**; something could be described as supernatural if **it defies human explanation**.

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**Exam Tip**
When writing about the theme of the supernatural, first consider your own view, do you believe that Hyde is a work of the supernatural or is he in fact decidedly human?

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Mr Hyde
Gothic literature often includes **supernatural creatures** such as vampires. Stevenson has created his own 'creature' in Hyde. Yet Stevenson makes the story all the more terrifying by **showing Hyde as both supernatural and human**. Through grounding his character within the realm of humanity he shows the reader that they too have the capacity to be like Hyde.

There is evidence for Hyde's humanity in the description of him as *"troglodytic"*. **Troglodyte** is another term for a caveman. By describing Hyde in this way, Stevenson may be suggesting that Hyde represents the **common ancestor** from which all modern humans are descended.

Hyde's acts of violence defy explanation so by definition are supernatural. They are all **unprovoked** and also devoid of emotion. He *"trampled calmly over the child's body".* The **verb** *"trampled"* **connotes animalistic aggression** whilst the **adverb** *"calmly"* emphasises Hyde's detachment from his actions.

Mr Hyde is depicted to be the literal bringer of death through the **metaphor** *"froze the very blood"* in *"But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the gentleman below".* The potency of *"abject terror and despair"* is reinforced by Stevenson's use of **sibilance**.

Gothic setting
**Pathetic fallacy** is often used in gothic literature to emphasise the supernatural aspect of the text. The sinister setting is highlighted by the pathetic fallacy and sibilance used in *"The fog still slept on the wing about the drowned city".*

Moreover, sinister goings on often happen at night. Before the murder of Danvers Carew Stevenson uses **pathetic fallacy** to create a **tense atmosphere**: *"Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless… the lane… was brilliantly lit…".*