

Edexcel English Literature GCSE

Character Profile: *Dr Jekyll*

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Dr Henry Jekyll

SYMBOLISES REPRESSION & INSATIABLE CURIOSITY

INTRODUCTION

A **well-respected doctor**, thought to be based on notorious nineteenth century individuals William Brodie and John Hunter, Jekyll is a member of the upper-class with a very large secret to hide. His secret is Mr Hyde, who was created as a result of his experimentation. He is shown to be **kind and generous**, but shocks Utterson when he decides to change his will to leave everything he owns to Mr Hyde. It is implied inexplicitly that he was rather rambunctious and ill-behaved during his late teens / early twenties, alongside subtle hints that he may have engaged in homosexual relationships.

He develops a concoction which separates the positive and negative characteristics of himself and **creates Hyde**, a seemingly separate person which allows him to act in a way disapproved by society, to fulfil his pleasures. As the story unfolds, **Jekyll loses control** leading to Hyde appearing uninvited: this is perhaps Stevenson commenting on the increasing lack of control individuals can have over their behaviour after giving into temptation. It could be argued that **Jekyll and Hyde are not separate characters** but should be considered as **one entity**, and it is this **conjunction of personalities** which creates the drama in the novel and the relationships which provides the text's power. Whilst he is able to liberate himself of his 'evil' side, **his own personality remains a turbulent mix of good and bad traits**, serving to question the true nature of **"good and evil"**.



CHARACTER IN CONTEXT

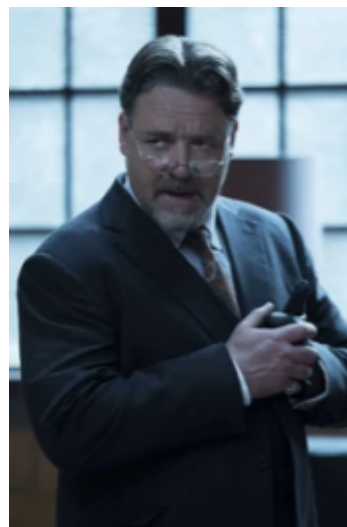
- **Religion:** Dr Jekyll is portrayed as having **a turbulent relationship with religion**.
 - The text suggests he has completed religious work and study - **"he was now no less distinguished for religion."**
 - He turns to God for redemption after realising his mistakes - **"had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God."**
- **Freud's structural theory of the mind:** Dr Jekyll can be viewed as symbolising the **ego** - a balance between man's basal instincts and moral thought.
- **Marxism:** **Dr Jekyll is a member of the bourgeoisie** and, by extension, Hyde could also be considered a member. The violent actions that take place due to Jekyll's creation of Hyde could be shown as Stevenson's commentary on the behaviour of those with high status in society
 - The violent trampling of the girl could be Stevenson commenting on the bourgeoisie's behaviour towards the lower classes.



- The murder of Carew, a fellow member of the bourgeoisie, could be used by Stevenson to show the selfishness and lack of loyalty shown by people in those circles.
- **Influence of William Brodie:** Brodie was a member of the town council so a well respected member of the community in Edinburgh. He often fixed locks on people's furniture so had the opportunity to copy their keys which allowed him to steal from his clients at night. In this respect was living a double life. Many believe this influenced Stevenson to consider the duality of human nature and this led to him choosing to include the dual relationship between Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.
- **Influence of John Hunter:** John Hunter is often considered Stevenson's inspiration for the character of Dr Jekyll. He was a Doctor of a high status who was well regarded within his circle of friends in London. Hunter's wife often threw large parties in their large house in the fashionable Leicester Square, however, the other side of the house contained Hunter's specimens and students' accommodation. It was these quarters which backed onto a dingy alley from which grave-robbers provided Hunter with bodies to experiment on. Jekyll's house is thought to be modelled on this layout. By having this **duality within houses**, Stevenson is showing how the upper class in London are unable to completely isolate themselves from the lower class.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **MORAL & HONOURABLE** - Jekyll participates in charity-work and is community-minded, although it is implied that he engaged in some questionable behaviour when he was younger. This increases the shock experienced by the reader as it is revealed at the end of the novel the true nature of Jekyll and Hyde's relationship. It could also be argued that his original aim was to create a drug that could separate out the good parts of his personality to make himself a better person so he did in fact have good intentions. He is also very **social and friendly**, demonstrated by his tendency to hold dinner parties for his friends and acquaintances, however is also quite self-involved, contrasting Utterson's outward focus.
- **INVENTIVE** - Jekyll is **highly intelligent** with a **curious mind**, and decides to experiment with separating the 'evil' side of himself and housing it in the body of Mr Hyde. The character of Jekyll **symbolises the encroachment of science on religious thought** during the Victorian era.
- **ERRATIC** - Jekyll becomes increasingly erratic as the novel progresses, as he is faced with hiding the existence of Hyde from the rest of the characters.



https://hero.fandom.com/wiki/Dr._Henry_Jekyll



KEY MOMENTS

| CH | OCCURRENCE | SIGNIFICANCE |
|----|--|--|
| 3 | Jekyll hosts a dinner party at his house, afterwards Utterson remains behind to question him about the change in his will. Whilst Jekyll clearly trusts Utterson, he doesn't reveal much additional information about Hyde. | It's obvious that Jekyll is acting unusually and it becomes clearer as to why Lanyon has fallen out with him. Jekyll is clearly withholding information about the strange relationship between himself and Hyde, which may lead readers to think Jekyll and Utterson's friendship isn't as strong as originally thought. |
| 5 | Jekyll is visited by Utterson, who thinks he looks on the brink of death, causing Utterson to wonder what is causing this illness. Later, Utterson's assistant compares the handwriting of Hyde and Jekyll and discovers that they are very similar. This leads Utterson to wrongly assume that Jekyll has forged a letter for Hyde. | This chapter starts to demonstrate the influence and power that Hyde has begun to have over Jekyll. |
| 10 | In Jekyll's confession, he describes how Hyde came to be, descending from scientific curiosity about the human nature of good and evil. | Jekyll is the last character who we hear from in the novel, which highlights his importance to the narrative. His motivations for creating Hyde further exemplify his inquisitive nature and propensity to question stagnant Victorian beliefs about science, religion and morality. |

RELATIONSHIPS

Lanyon | Whilst Jekyll entrusts him with the secret about Hyde, they drift apart after they disagree on the **improper and immoral usage of science**.



https://jekyllmusical.fandom.com/wiki/Mr_Utterson

Utterson | Utterson and Jekyll have a very strong relationship, and this drives the plot forward. Both intrinsic curiosity and concern for his friend cause Utterson to uncover the case of Jekyll & Hyde. Their relationship appears to have an unconditional quality of loyalty to it, it is seemingly unphased by differences in opinion. This may be because Utterson is a neutral character. Utterson's care for his friend is unwavering throughout despite Jekyll's growing self imposed isolation.



Hyde | The **power imbalance** and increasing control Hyde has over Jekyll appears to propel the narrative of the novel forwards. The boundary between them becomes **increasingly fluid and uncontrollable** as the plot progresses, it is almost as if two is becoming one again.

KEY QUOTES

“A fortnight later, by excellent good fortune, the doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies, all intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine”

- Jekyll is **sociable, well respected** and well liked: behaving in a socially acceptable way. He is described elsewhere as a **“charitable man”** who carries **“his head high”** in public and social matters, putting on **“a more commonly grave countenance before the public”**.

“Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of me”

- Dr Jekyll, abiding to the status quo of the time, **“concealed his pleasures”** and suppressed his sinful side in favour of social respect and withholding his **“position in the world”**.

“He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion”

- Jekyll attempts to re-assimilate into society after indulging in Hyde and feeling a **“morbid sense of shame”**.

“My devil had long been caged, he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught, of a more unbridled, a more furious propensity to ill”

- This quote references the inner **“devil”**, which is a **manifestation of Jekyll’s deepest desires** in the form of Hyde. The notion of **“devil”** through **religious allusion** denotes a stark contrast with **Christian ideas of morality**.
- Furthermore, the verb **“roaring”** has connotations of an animalistic, uncontrolled, agitated and deadly **expression of his repressed elements in Hyde**, and the phrase **“Propensity to ill”** indicates a deeper, now natural tendency and inclination to immorality.

“I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy”

- Here, the hand, a **symbol of respectability and honour**, is invaded by free flowing hair, insuitating ideas of uncontrolled freedom.



https://hero.fandom.com/wiki/Dr._Henry_Jekyll



“There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body, within I was conscious of a heady recklessness... a current of disordered sensual images... a solution of the bonds of obligation”

- This suggests the **restraints of society are burdensome**: without them, he, or more specifically Hyde, is able to indulge freely. The tricolon structure shows Jekyll's delight. This links to his moral obligations, which are worn away by his chemical mixture as he is no longer constrained by the maintenance of reputation when in a different body.

“For any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might, by the least scruple of an overdose... utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to change.”

- The phrase **“immaterial tabernacle”** has religious undertones; Jekyll's practices in **“drugs”**, shaking the **“fortress of identity”** encroaches on God's territory.

“Both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering”

- This shows Dr Jekyll has failed in splitting the good and the bad - rather he has enabled the evil to thrive and to subsume his underlying purity and innocence; **he can no longer return to society**.

“Man is not truly one but truly two”

- Jekyll risks death to test his hypothesis that the human psyche can be split, and the quote's **syntactic parallelism** emphasises the view that man cannot be pure as he is constantly in equilibrium between good and evil.

“I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life which lies at the root of religion and one of the most plentiful springs of distress”

- Stevenson uses alliteration in **“law of life”** and **“root of religion”**. This refers to conscience and guilt. By separating his moral and immoral sides, Jekyll attempts to avoid guilt.

“I have been made to learn that the doom and burthen of our life is bound for ever on man's shoulders and when the attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure”

- The phrase **“Doom and burthen of our life”** relates to attempting to balance good and evil; when one tries to isolate and exploit the individual aspects of good and evil, they unite with greater force.

“Late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil...with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion”

- The phrase **“Late one accursed night”** uses the **motif of darkness**. Stevenson also uses **lexis from the semantic field of chemistry** in **“I compounded the elements”**, and in **“Strong glow of courage”** suggests the erratic manner of Jekyll's personality and



behaviour, and also shows he understood the risks he was taking when deciding to take the potion.

“Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations...and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend”

- Here, **“Noble spirit”** and **“empire of generous or pious aspirations”** highlight notion of Jekyll being in accordance with scientific and moral protocol. **Inverse iconic word order** is used in **“death and birth”**, highlighting the fact that Jekyll’s desire to isolate moral and immoral goes above and beyond the restrictions of generations.

