

# Edexcel English Literature GCSE

## Character Profile: *Mr Utterson*

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## Mr Gabriel John Utterson

**SYMBOLISES HONESTY & ACTS AS THE MORAL COMPASS OF THE NOVELLA**

### INTRODUCTION

Mr Utterson is a **lawyer** who serves as the **main protagonist** of the novel and is a **bachelor**. Utterson is displayed to be the **epitome of the Victorian gentleman**; he is respectable, reputable, and rational. Given his **central position in the social circle of characters** he is in the best position to **investigate** the case. The reader experiences the novel from **Utterson's perspective**; his narrative provides a **stable anchor point** through which we view the gruesome and mysterious events of the story. Whilst we are exposed to Utterson's own opinions on the events of the novel, it is generally assumed (due to his respectable profession and loyal and honest character qualities) that readers are being displayed a true portrayal of events and Utterson serves as a **reliable narrator**.



### CHARACTER IN CONTEXT

- **Law:** Mr Utterson's occupation as a lawyer is referenced multiple times in the texts, starting in the first chapter when he states **"I incline to Cain's heresy,"**. This connection to law may have shaped Mr Utterson as a moral and relatable character for many of the wealthier members of Stevenson's readership. Moreover Utterson may reflect Stevenson's own education in the field of law - he studied it in case a career in writing fell through.
  - The law isn't always seen as a positive force by Utterson. In Chapter Four he comments on how the law makes him reflect on his past mistakes hinting that he isn't entirely squeaky clean: **"thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers, which may at times assail the most honest"**.
- **Religious impact:** Mr Utterson formulates his routine around the church bells near his house which demonstrates the subtle but rigid importance of religious schedules in his life: **"until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed"**. This shows that **he lives a moral life**.
- **Victorian Gentleman:** Alongside Enfield, Mr Utterson is portrayed as a Victorian gentleman, which also serves to emphasise Mr Hyde's evil and unreputable behaviour. As a man in Victorian London, going for walks would help to maintain your **public appearance**.



## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- TRUSTWORTHY & LOYAL** - Utterson keeps a very **strong friendship with Jekyll** even when he has doubts about his private activities. This demonstrates his loyalty to those he likes and respects. He has an **“approved tolerance for others”** and maintains good relationships with all the characters other than Mr Hyde.
  - This sentiment is also reflected in how other characters are shown to see Mr Utterson - for example, Dr Jekyll states: **“you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection”**.
- RESPECTABLE** - Utterson is very aware of the public expectations of a reputable individual in his society. In public he maintains a serious demeanor and is very solemn, however he enjoys pursuits such as the theatre (despite never going) in private.
- CURIOS** - Despite generally conforming to society’s norms and expectations as much as possible, Utterson has a curious streak. This becomes increasingly apparent as the narrative becomes centralised on Utterson attempting to figure out the case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and he becomes increasingly persistent.
- CANDID** - He tends to speak the truth, expressing his honest feelings of dislike towards Hyde whenever he encounters him, and also chooses not to open the letter he keeps from Lanyon, even when his curious nature is facing him. He states: **“I can’t pretend I shall ever like him.”** and speaks his mind even when it may compromise his friendships, such as with Dr Jekyll.

## KEY MOMENTS

CH	OCCURRENCE	SIGNIFICANCE
1	Readers are introduced to Utterson as he takes a walk through London with Enfield.	Utterson’s curious nature is revealed as he enquires as to whether Hyde used a key to open the door. We are exposed to his close relationship with his distant cousin, Enfield, and learn the importance of their Sunday walks.
3	Utterson visits his friend Dr Jekyll, concerned that he has changed his will, and presses Jekyll for more details about his strange relationship with Hyde.	This chapter shows Utterson’s intensely loyal and caring personality, especially towards his friend Jekyll. The strong bond between Jekyll and Utterson is emphasised. It also shows how seriously he takes his profession, and how he lets it define him.
8	Utterson is contacted by Poole, who has become concerned about Jekyll’s strange behaviour. Utterson discovers the duality between Jekyll and Hyde upon discovering their dead body.	Utterson’s rational attitude and determination in his quest for the truth is particularly apparent in this chapter.



## RELATIONSHIPS

**Jekyll** | Utterson has had a close friendship with Jekyll for many years, and **Jekyll confides in him frequently throughout the novel**. Utterson eventually discovers the truth about Jekyll's activities experimenting with Hyde. However, it is clear they have very contrasting personalities; whilst Utterson is clearly rational and reserved, Jekyll tends to be more unconventional in his line of work and in his life. Despite their friendship, Jekyll appears reluctant to reveal anything to Utterson implying that there is distance between even the closest friends depicted in the novella.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jekyll\\_and\\_Hyde\\_Ch15\\_Drawing2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jekyll_and_Hyde_Ch15_Drawing2.jpg)

**Hyde** | Utterson takes an obvious, immediate disliking to Mr Hyde, after he first hears about him through Enfield's story about the door. He is suspicious of the man and shocked by Hyde's violent nature as it makes him nervous and scared. Mr Utterson is also used to contrast with Mr Hyde's general solitude. Despite Stevenson's presentation of Utterson as rational throughout, his immediate dislike towards Hyde could be interpreted to show Utterson as prejudiced.

**Enfield** | Utterson's friend and cousin, they frequently take walks around London and he is the person who initially informs Utterson about Hyde. Utterson considers their Sunday walks the most enjoyable time of the week: **"the two men put the greatest store by these excursions"**. The reader is provided little insight into Utterson's life apart from these walks and his investigations which implies that he is lonely.

## KEY QUOTES

**"A rugged countenance that was never lighted by a smile"**

- **Reserved** character; seemingly not affected by emotion, this gives his voice **authority** as it is unlikely to be biased by emotionality.
- Aware of the divide between public and private persona in Victorian society.

**"If he be Mr Hyde... I shall be Mr Seek"**

- Utterson is a curious, **inquisitive** member of society - this quote displays the **insatiable curiosity** intrinsic to Utterson's character which propels the plot of the novella forwards.
- He wishes to ensure his clients are safe.
- Emphasises the theme of duality, opposites, and contrast which is woven throughout the novella, providing Utterson with the role of investigator in the case of Jekyll & Hyde.
- The idea of hide and seek alludes to the detective novel conventions Stevenson **"borrows"** in his work.



***“The last good influence in the lives of down-going men”***

- He is the last chance at rescue for criminals. This shows that he is good in his role as lawyer as well as a **man of significant morals**.

***“I shall consider it my duty to break in that door”***

- He is **investigative, reasoned and rational** - constantly wishing to protect the integrity and safety of his clients, whilst respecting their wishes, at all times.
- He feels **duty** bound to protect his friend, Jekyll. This shows the strength of his moral code especially when juxtaposed against Enfield who would have shied away long beforehand.

***“I felt bound to do as he requested”***

- This highlights Utterson’s **trustworthy** nature and aptitude suited to that of his profession: law.
- It also demonstrates the strong relationship formed between Jekyll and Utterson.

***“professional honour and faith to his dead friend were stringent obligations; and the packet slept in the inmost corner of his private safe.”***

- This demonstrates how, for Mr Utterson, friendship will always be valued over curiosity, even past the point of death. This also proves to the reader that Mr Utterson can be considered as a **reliable narrator**.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jekyll\\_and\\_Hyde\\_Ch5\\_Drawing1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jekyll_and_Hyde_Ch5_Drawing1.jpg)

***“The lawyer put it in his pocket. ‘I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit.’”***

- By referencing Utterson’s profession here, Stevenson is also referring to the **professional** relationship he has with Dr Jekyll, in addition to the bond of friendship. Mr Utterson is worried about sustaining his relationship with Jekyll, both because he feels he should as his employee, but also as a friend.

***““They have only differed on some points of science,’ he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions (except in the matter of conveyancing), he even added: ‘It is nothing worse than that!’”***

- **Science does not interest Mr Utterson** therefore, he has no conflict of interest caused by strong opinions on science, making him the perfect person to research the relationship which has arisen between Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.
- This may also make the reader relate to Mr Utterson, as the average member of Victorian society will not be overly involved in the realm of science, nor particularly interested. This emphasises his relatively **reliable** stance as a narrator.

