

# Victorian villains

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



The Victorians were very xenophobic in the way in which they regarded criminals. It was also very stereotypical, believing that all criminals 'were reluctant to do an honest day's work for an honest day's wage, and who preferred idleness, drink, 'luxury' and an easy life'. This quote has been taken from the article 'Crime and Victorians' by Clive Emsley.

When people thought of a criminal, they always seemed to be male, very rarely were there female criminals. Females were always treated a lot worse than men if they committed a crime, because even though they were in court for breaking the law, they had also 'transgressed the perceptions of womanhood'. A woman's place was thought of as being in the home, looking after the home, children and husband.

This means it was even harder to live down the shame, and some families would even disown them. Where as, with men it was a very casual happening. As it was so hard for women to live down the shame that they decided that it was easier to keep committing crimes.

The three villains that I will be writing about in my essay are very similar; they are all working class men, have a lack of education, and are violent, evil, dirty, scruffy and dangerous.

All three atmospheres from the stories are very alike. In 'Oliver Twist' the setting was filthy, 'dark and gloomy'; this shows danger, scariness and the unknown. Also it says it has the 'smell of liquor', this is a sign of alcoholism. Most of the villains from the Victorian Period were alcoholics because they kept stealing alcohol from nearby shops. The smell of alcohol also shows that they working class men. In 'Great Expectations' the extract that I read was <https://assignbuster.com/victorian-villains/>

set in a churchyard in a small silent village. This gives a creepy, spooky atmosphere.

It was a 'bleak place overgrown with nettles', this shows that not many people are likely to pass by, which is not helpful if anybody is in a bad situation there. Church is often thought of as a sanctuary, and is related to God, who is supposed to help people in danger. But, he is in the churchyard, surrounded by dead bodies, but not just anyone's, they are the corpses of his parents, brothers and sisters. Also 'the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed', black gives a gothic setting and shows that the night is closing in.

Red shows danger, it's almost as though it's a warning to Pip. Mr Hyde, from the story 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', lives in an extremely different environment to the others that live in very tranquil areas. He lives in Soho, London; this is a dirty, grubby place that is very disrespected by everyone. This is the place that Hyde goes to to take drugs, takes prostitutes and where he hides when he has murdered somebody. This is very different to the village in which Magwitch had escaped to, as this is in a large disruptive city.

Bill Sikes was wearing 'a velveteen coat, drab shorts, half boots and stockings', this is a very scruffy outfit to be worn in the Victorian Times. They were expected to be dressed in a clean suit, shoes and hat. His sense of dress had immediately singled him out from the rest of society and was thought of as not being a loyal Victorian, but as a criminal, this was just from the way in which he dressed. In one of the extracts from 'Oliver Twist', Bill

Sikes has a weapon in each hand. 'Seizing the poker in one hand and deliberately opening with the other a large clasp knife, which he drew from his pocket, this shows how aggressive he is.

This is what he carries around with him; he looks like a very dangerous man. Magwitch has the same problem as Sikes, as he wore 'iron on his leg. A man with no hat, with broken shoes, and with an old rag ties around his head. ' Because he has an old rag instead of a hat, he is instantly different to other Victorians; it was disrespectful not to wear a hat in those days. He also has 'iron on his leg' this is another term for a tag that is placed on all prisoners, this shows yet another sign of danger, and also how he is a fugitive.

He is a man 'soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars'. This shows that he doesn't take care of himself very well, although it is hard for him as he is an escaped convict and needs to be careful amongst society. There's not much description about Mr Hyde's appearance, however, it does say 'he was small and plainly dressed', this makes you think of an average man. Then it continues to describe the overall 'look' of him, 'even at a distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination'.

This says that he dresses like an ordinary man, but is clearly not as he triggers people's instinct when they see him, even from far away. He was also named as a 'caveman'; this is very ironic because criminals were thought of as being a part of an African Tribe as they were scruffy. They were also said to be sub-human because of the way in which they acted, it was un-human like, and could be described better as an animals behaviour.

My expectation of a Victorian Villain would be a tall, scary looking man, with greasy hair and dirty ragged clothes.

But the villains in these stories are completely opposite. This is why Mr Hyde stands out most to me, it says he was short and plain, which is far from what I thought a villain would be like. Magwitch seems to be the man that stands out most to my prediction; tall, scruffy, dirty and an escaped convict. Bill Sikes is also a scruffy person but this is because he is too lazy to look after himself properly. Whereas, Magwitch cannot look after himself as well just in case he gets put back into prison.

Violence and physical aggression is used frequently throughout the extracts from the books that were used. Bill Sikes drops to his knees, in 'Oliver Twist', to make it easier for him to kill the dog. 'This resistance only infuriated Mr. Sikes the more; who, dropping on his knees began to assail the animal most furiously', this is where he beats the dog for looking at him and licking a fresh cut on one side of his mouth. Dropping to the knees is usually a religious sign for most people, as this is the way that they pray to God for forgiveness etc. ut Bill does it for opposite reasons. Nancy, Bill's Girlfriend, drops to her knees to show how sorry she is for what she has done to Bill and to show sincere apology to him. She is praying that he will not hurt her for what she has done, and she wants God to tell Bill not to hurt her. 'Let me see them again, and beg them, on my knees, to show the same mercy and goodness to you', she is praying for him to give her another chance, and not to hurt or kill her; she knew he was capable of murder and panicked.

Bill Sikes never listened to Nancy as she was praying and begging for him to leave her alone, but he didn't take any notice of her. He 'double-locked the door, and lifting a heavy table against it, drew back the curtain of the bed', now she cannot escape from Bill and nobody can see in because he had closed the curtains. Now he could do whatever he could to her. She 'was lying, half dressed', this shows that she is vulnerable towards Bill as she has nothing to cover her body with.

Magwitch is not as bad as Bill Sikes because he doesn't actually kill anyone, he just threatens to. 'I'll have your heart and liver out', this is what he said to Pip as he was tilting him over the tombstone. This makes Pip feel vulnerable and unable to fend for himself. 'You get me a file. ' He tilted me again. 'And you get me wittles. ' He tilted me again'. This shows that Pip is getting more vulnerable every time he gets tilted back. Also, Pip is looking for sympathy in the reader because it feels to him as though Magwitch was lowering him into the grave. He is lowering him; this could mean that if Pip doesn't listen to him, he will end up in one of the graves. Dead!

Also, this shows cannibalism, he is so hungry and is acting like an animal towards fresh meat because he hasn't eaten properly in such a long time, it's his last resort. 'Your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate', Magwitch doesn't care if he scares the boy because if he scares him, then he knows he will get what he wants. Mr Hyde's actions were different to both of the other villain's, as he would snap at any second. 'All of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman.

This shows that he can be perfectly fine one moment and then lose all of his self control. Just before he lashed out, Hyde wasn't saying a word, 'but he never answered a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience'. He was waiting for the man to stop speaking before he hurt him, and he wasn't speaking a word, this could mean he was very frustrated or he was thinking about what he was going to do to the older man. The man was older than Mr Hyde, so he was more vulnerable and Mr Hyde could hurt him better as he would have been fitter than an old man.

This makes the older man feel intimidated because he may get hurt by a young man. 'With an ape-fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows,' he didn't have a care in the world for the man; he just wanted to take all of his frustration out on him. This was why Hyde killed so many people, he didn't have any self-restraint. Magwitch was the only villain that I have concentrated on that hasn't hurt anybody, he has threatened but that's the most he has done. The threats have been very vicious; however, the attacks by Bill Sikes and Magwitch are even worse.

Bill Sikes tried to kill his dog just for looking at him and licking a fresh cut at the side of his mouth. Then he went on to kill his girlfriend, after he had raped her and made her feel bad about herself. Mr Hyde then kills an old vulnerable man in a back lane, in Soho where he lives, with a large wooden stick and stamps all over his head. I think Magwitch is nasty but he still acts as though he is a human unlike the other two. In both of the extracts that were written by Charles Dickens, uses very long sentencing, they are mostly complex - compound sentences.

There are a few simple sentences in there but Dickens' style of writing is mostly long complex writing. Robert Louis Stevenson, author of 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' uses mostly simple or compound sentencing, and they tend not to be as long as Dickens'. Superlative adjectives were used a lot throughout 'Oliver Twist', using superlative adjectives helps to describe the setting, character etc. more, so that the reader can feel more involved. This is certainly the case for 'Oliver Twist' because as you are reading about it, you can picture it all in your mind.

There aren't many superlative adjectives in 'Great Expectations', but verbs are used a lot to describe what Magwitch looked like. 'Soaked', 'smothered', 'lamed', 'cut', 'stung' and 'torn' are the verbs that Dickens' used. This helps the reader to think about how he looks, and it will make them understand how he is seen in society. The reader feels more involved once they understand what the setting and characters look like, they can start to put themselves in the position of the victims in the stories.

The language that Bill Sikes and Magwitch use is very similar, they are all uneducated speakers of the English Language, and often use 'taboo language'. However, Mr Hyde speaks correct English. This is one difference between them. They do not pronounce words as they should, for example, 'Keep quiet, you warmint! ' This is what Bill Sikes says to his dog before he hurts him. He wants to say vermin not 'warmint' but because of his lack of education he doesn't know the difference.

He also says, later on in the extract, 'and d-me' this is bad language and shouldn't have been used at all in the Victorian times. 'Pint out the place,'



Magwitch says this to Pip, for him to let Magwitch know where he lived, he is actually saying point, but like Bill Sikes, he has had a lack of education, so his speech is not formal English. He also uses non-standard English later on when he says, 'and if I han't half a mind to't! ', if you translate this to standard English it reads 'and if I haven't half a mind to do it', but because of his lack of education he speaks incorrectly.

Ain't' is also used, this is a very common word to use whilst speaking to somebody, but again it is incorrect and should be avoided as it's a misuse of English. Mr Hyde uses correct English, and doesn't use any 'taboo language'. Although, the way he speaks stands out the most. He hisses, and speaks in a hoarsely manor, this was looked upon in the Victorian times because they should be talking politely, and acceptably.

When the lawyer approaches him, and says they have common friends, he instantly replies, 'Common friends? Who are they? Here he is commanding the woman to tell him who they are because he doesn't have many friends, and thinks she is lying to him. Also the pace speeds up because he is so eager to know who she has been talking to. Bill Sikes uses commands when he goes to see Nancy, also the command he uses when he first comes into contact with her is a mono-syllable. He says 'Get up! ' this is a very simple command, but he says is very harshly, with no sympathy. He is very angry with her and wants her to obey all of his commands. Magwitch uses orders and commands more than Hyde and Sikes.

He orders Pip to fetch him objects that he will need to survive. 'You get me a file', 'And you get me wittles', 'You bring 'em both to me'. He was also using

repetition of the word 'you', it's as though he was telling Pip that if he doesn't get him what he needs then it will be him that will get hurt. There are many terms of lexical field to animal imagery in all three extracts, or if there isn't animal imagery then it is devil imagery. Bill Sikes is compared to a 'wild beast' which is a dog, because of the way he is acting towards his dog. Bill Sikes uses many different references to hell including, 'devil! , 'hell's fire' and 'she devil'.

All of the Victorian villains that I am focusing on use these references to hell a lot. Magwitch gets compared to an animal or sub-human because he 'growled', also he said he wants to be an animal, 'I wish I was a frog. Or an eel. ' This is a lexical field of animal imagery. He uses references to hell and also references to cannibalism. He uses words such as 'devil' to relate to the references to hell, and 'Darn me if I couldn't eat em', this is his reference to cannibalism.

Mr Hyde is compared to an animal, a snake; he is compared to this because he hisses. 'With an hissing intake of breath', being compared to a snake is relevant for him, because all throughout the extract he can be compared to this. Snakes can be sly and sneaky; Hyde is like this in the lane in Soho because he isn't talking at all, and then he turns and starts being nasty. He does it in a sneaky way; by trying to convince the old man he is normal. The most threatening villain is Bill Sikes; this is because he is the most violent out of three. He will kill people for a pathetic reason, and torment them. He is closely followed by Mr Hyde; he comes across to people as somebody he is not.

He seems to be an average Victorian man, apart from the way he dresses and lives, but he can change so quickly, it's very intimidating. Magwitch is last, although, he is capable of hurting people, it is not shown in the extract. Magwitch is described very well, and I thought he was the best character out of all three of them. When he was being described you could picture what he looked like, it was as though you were there with him and Pip. I now know that Victorian Villains were more violent than I expected them to be, I thought they would just commit small crimes, for example theft. They were much worse than that.