

Mr utterson's perspective



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson employs Utterson as the narrator and voice of the novella, as well as the investigator or detective figure that allows the story to be 'discovered' dramatically by the reader. Utterson also provides a contrast as a the voice of reason compared to the supernatural and fantastical elements provided by Jekyll and his experiments. In another turn of meaning, Utterson is used as a representation of the secretive and masquerading Victorian gentleman, who hides his flaws beneath an impeccable and impenetrable facade.

At the beginning of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson uses Utterson to demonstrate a logical response to the horrific story of a man trampling a young girl, as recollected by Enfield, Utterson's companion. Upon hearing the story, Utterson remarks simply 'tut tut', demonstrating his disapproval of Hyde's behaviour, but with very little emotion. This is typical of the Victorian gentleman and demonstrates to the reader that despite his supposed practice of not interfering with others, Utterson is unwillingly curious about the sordid affairs of others. In this way, he is beginning to contradict himself, as in the opening of the novella Utterson states, 'I incline to Cain's heresy [...] I let my brother go to the devil in his own way.' Here, Utterson is declaring that he will not interfere in the affairs of his 'brother' and will not stand in the way of any wrongdoings. However, we know this is not true, as by a few pages later Utterson is involving himself in the story of Hyde and the trampled girl. Furthermore, throughout the rest of the book, Utterson is curious and near obsessed with discovering the truth of Jekyll, who in this instance represents Cain, Utterson's 'brother' who condemns himself to hell through his wrongdoings. Utterson's immediate contradiction links to the

theme of reputation in the book, where Victorian society was obsessed with their public image and would hide the dark aspects of their lives. Utterson's contradiction between the passive character he chooses to present and the obsessive, investigative character he really possesses is an example of the hypocritical nature of Victorian society, and also links to the idea that everyone is dual in nature. Utterson has two opposing characters of passive and assertive, just as Dr. Jekyll has his own character and that of Mr. Hyde.

Utterson is also used to demonstrate the effects of the horrific story on ordinary people. Utterson is haunted by Hyde and even dreams of him, reinforcing to the reader the image of Hyde as a repulsive and truly frightening character. Utterson is described as having 'tossed to and fro' as he dreams, showing the lawyer's fear of Hyde. This encourages the reader to also feel fear, and as we trust Utterson as a logical character and we view his fear of Hyde, and therefore of man's duality, as inescapable and rational. As Utterson is described as a 'lover of the sane', demonstrating how he is a sensible character, his opinions can be trusted and therefore replicated by the reader. Furthermore, Utterson's love of order contrasts the chaos caused by Jekyll, who disrupts the order of nature. Here, Stevenson is teaching the reader that you cannot separate good and evil, as it is Utterson, the blend of good and evil, who restores balance by the end of the novel, and it is Jekyll who disrupts it. Indeed, the disruption is first caused by Jekyll's alter ego, and can only be resolved once Utterson has discovered the truth and Jekyll, and therefore Hyde, have died. Utterson is also used as a narrator so that the reader discovers the plot in a dramatic and mysterious way, as we discover the truth through Utterson's research and discoveries. Utterson is

used to collect the information told through various mediums and characters, and thus compacts the story and makes him Stevenson's envoy to the reader.

Finally, Utterson is used to hint at the duality of all men and society, particularly Victorian society. Despite being presented as on the whole reputable, trustworthy and slightly dull, Stevenson makes several hints to Utterson having a darker side. For instance, the very first page of the novella describes Utterson as 'long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable.' This contradiction immediately demonstrates the duality of Utterson's character and sets up the idea that everyone has two sides to their being. By showing that even the most respectable of men to have a dual nature, Stevenson is teaching the reader that no one is exempt from duality and we are all bound to that other half. He is teaching the reader that it must remain a part of you, and if you try to separate yourself from it, just as Jekyll does, it will end grievously. Moreover, Stevenson hinting at Utterson's dubious side is also a comment on society as a whole. Stevenson is remarking that the whole of society has a corrupt and evil nature within it, but everyone is hiding from it. He is showing how hypocritical society is, for despite having darker sides to their personality, Utterson and the other characters are still horrified at Jekyll's transformation to Hyde. This can also be read as Stevenson's own horror at what man is capable of, and a demonstration of what are reactions are when we are confronted with the bleak reality of our nature. Utterson is also shown as the archetype of the Victorian gentleman through his fear of scandal. He prioritises his reputation above all else, and is plagued by the 'terror of the law', which again hints at a corrupt and secretive side to

Utterson. The lawyer cannot discuss what he learns for fear of keeping up appearances, fearing a scandal.

Indeed, it is interesting that his name is possibly a pun for 'Utters-none', reinforcing the idea that he will not share what he discovers of Jekyll to the police or anyone else. It is left unclear why he does this, as it could be because of his obsession over reputation, but more sinisterly, his silence could be from his realisation that he or anyone else could have been in exactly the same position of Jekyll, with the exception that their evil side is within them, and does not have corporeal form like Hyde does. Despite these connotations of silence, Utterson is used for structural effect, and to allow the reader to view Jekyll's story from an external and ambiguous view. Yet Utterson is also used as a representation of the typical Victorian gentleman, who reminds the reader that Jekyll's duality is present within all of society and within every person.