

Dr jekyll and mr hyde persuasive essay



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Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was published in 1886 and is one of the best known of Stevenson's novels. It is thought to be an example of a 'supernatural fiction'; this is when one of the characters goes against the laws of nature. The main themes are usually good and evil, hate and love. One of the characters tries to change from one state to another and this usually amuses the reader because in some way it creates tension, excitement, pity and terror as the characters struggle to change back to their normal natural self. Stevenson explores duality in a significant number of ways; through speech, characters, setting and through society. The book was written during the reign of Queen Victoria.

At this time, England was just industrialising and becoming powerful in both literature and technology. The people of the Victorian England were so vulnerable because they were forced to believe in Christianity and almost everyone practised it. They also believed that there was God and Satan. This encouraged writers to write horror novels. Most horror novels used to scare the Victorian readers because they used to have a character that opposed the readers believe or human nature like in this case, Hyde. In this novella, there are major setting factors which show the real life boundaries which occur in real cities with different classes and cultures.

At the time this was written, many cities had large boundaries; the one that would have been most obvious to Stevenson would be the two sides of Edinburgh, where he grew up and wrote the story. Growing up in the Victorian era, Stevenson had a very strict, repressed upbringing. He was born into a Presbyterian way of life, and was taught the values of the belief by his families nurse; this meant that he was taught to believe the bible and

nothing that contradicts it. He was also taught to respect the rich, and frown upon the poor. This often came natural to Victorian society, there was either an upper class or a lower class, and nobody would dare say that these two could clash, as reputation was everything. The side where the rich people lived with high class, posh reputations and then there is the lower class side which is dirty, dark and dingy.

This is how rebellious temptations are involved. Instead of following his usual upbringing, Stevenson hangs around the opposite places he would normally have to be in. This just proves to how even the author himself, had a dual life. However in the book, the two places are Soho and Cavendish square, which are both in London. This is further represented in with the posh house of Jekyll that is juxtaposed to the dirty slum in Soho where Hyde lives. These influences are shown in Stevenson's work in the way he writes it and how relevant Stevenson's life is to the book.

The most obvious way Stevenson explores duality is through the characters of Jekyll and Hyde. Dr Jekyll is portrayed at the beginning of the book as a social person and gives pleasant dinners. This shows Jekyll is an entertainer and likes the company of others. However, later in the book, he becomes reclusive and the reader begins to guess that something is not right with Jekyll. Jekyll is a scientist and focuses on the concept of duality.

He thinks that every living creature including humans has two sides; good and evil. He thinks he can control these two sides with a potion, which will bring out the side the person, or creature does not usually show. He invented the potion specifically to separate his darker side from his good side,

although drinking it caused him “severe pain” he still felt “younger, lighter, happier in body” and “an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul”. When he is Jekyll, he has a very high reputation, firstly, by fulfilling the acts of being a doctor and secondly that he is a highly respected person in society and by changing into Hyde, he feels like a burden has been lifted off his shoulder and he has nothing to feel cause for concern for so that's what makes him feel “lighter”. Jekyll ends up fixated with the concept of duality and becoming Hyde.

This could also be linked to Stevenson's own life, as he himself, experienced this Dual Nature, being an honest and innocent boy by day then sneaking off at night. In this instance, by day Stevenson is Jekyll and by night he is Hyde. Describing the heartlessness of Hyde he uses the characteristics of animals, mainly the primate, to show how brutal and careless he is. Stevenson, later in the book gives significant quotes which prove that man is truly two.

“These polar twins should be continuously struggling” The “polar twins” is cleverly used and the two poles (Arctic and Antarctic) are on two different sides of the world, in two different hemispheres of the earth. This could be that the poles are so far apart, but similar in climate, so closer than they might think, as is the case for the two sides of Jekyll, and each is struggling to gain power over the other. There are many differences between Jekyll and Hyde one of them being appearance. Jekyll is described as “a well-made, smooth faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast” perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness.

When Jekyll is described as, slyish this could link to his concept of duality and this is the slightest mark of his evil side. Also with the fact that he kept Hyde hidden from the world makes him seem even slyer. In contrast, Hyde is described as “ pale and dwarfish; he gave an impression of deformity without any malfunction with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness. This tells us that Hyde was displeasing to look at and would probably be shunned from society, as they would be scared of him. There is no resemblance from the two characters and Jekyll would not be remotely associated with Hyde in any circumstance. All Gothic beasts usually have some form of abnormality or deformity.

This used to scare the readers of the Victorian times because they were very religious and they believed that Satan existed and is always associated all evil things, doings and characters. Most gothic beasts for example, Dracula, Frankenstein or Mr Hyde usually have meaning to their names which is either associated with evil, death, blood or the devil himself. For instance, the meaning of Hyde is unsuspected or hidden evil. It could also mean a shadow of someone’s wrong and evil doings.

This can also be likened to his personality and attitudes because Mr Hyde is the evil personality to Dr Jekyll who is a nice, respectable and loving man. Stevenson also explores duality through the characters in the text. Mr Hyde is very cunning, fast and quickly covers up his wrong doings and actions and he is also an uncontrollable character. He is represented as a human who has some form of deformity with “ no face”.

Hyde in general reminds you of the action “to hide” which is mainly, not being visible, and similarly his relates to Mr Hyde since he is a monster hiding inside the shadows of Dr Jekyll. Another difference between Jekyll and Hyde is their characteristics; From Jekyll’s actions, he is well presented and accepted highly in society whereas Hyde is seen as a murderer and is not accepted in society. In addition, Jekyll moves around through the day but Hyde moves by night and will be therefore seen as suspicious by society. At the beginning of the book Hyde described as deformed “I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why.

He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point.” What Enfield is saying is that Hyde’s ugliness is not purely physical; it is more metaphysical attached to his soul more than his body. An example of his evilness is in the first chapter, where we see Hyde walking straight in front of a little girl, but instead of walking around her, he walks straight over her and tramples over her ‘calmly’, and leaves her ‘screaming’ The reason why this so evil is because it conjures up the idea of physically harming a child, because it is not a human trait to inflict pain without feeling remorse. Secondly, in the Carew murder case chapter, Hyde is greeted by a gentleman (Carew), however, instead of being polite and answering back, Hyde instead turns around and beats Carew to death with a stick. Hyde was said to have “clubbed him to the ground”, with “ape like fury”, and “shattered” the man’s bones, with his “storm of blows”. The shattered comment uses onomatopoeia to make the image of smashing and splintering his bones very vivid.

The storm of blows given is a metaphor for being thunderous, harsh, violent and sudden like a storm. The “ape like fury” quote is a metaphor for Hyde being an animal; this could be a link between the religious aspect and the moral aspect represented by the Darwin theory. Overall in these two cases Hyde is seen as a merciless psychopath, who is ‘evil’ and ‘demonic’ in physical and mental form. He is described as ‘ape like’ removing him therefore from human characteristics.

Their status in the community is a main part of the book as there is duality in that itself as Jekyll is at the top and Hyde is at the bottom. This also relates to Stevenson’s own life, he led a life with a varying hierarchy, high status by day and low status by night. Clearly, they are contradicting one another in terms of both appearance and characteristics. Jekyll is a doctor, who serves society and helps people whereas Hyde shocks people and doesn’t really serve society positively. Another example is that Jekyll is described as good looking but Hyde is represented as having “no face” which is rather unusual. Because Hyde is never truly defined, it makes the reader think that there is something wrong with Hyde’s personality, or Stevenson could be leaving Hyde’s appearance to the readers’ imagination.

Since their appearances and characteristics are so opposed to one another, it only concludes to one thing- there are two sides to this. This goes onto saying that “man is not truly one, but truly two”, meaning that although man is only one, he still has the two components which make him, him. They are good and evil also known as Jekyll and Hyde. Other characters of interest the book also represent some of the themes to the book, but more subtly.

For example, in chapter one, Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield are described as unlikely friends because nobody could see what they shared in common, they would go on walks every Sunday and set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted. This links to Jekyll and Hyde because no one can see why they are associated with one another, such as Jekyll leaving Hyde everything in his will, but Utterson couldn't understand why. The hypocrisy of the hidden duality in the book is demonstrated not just through Jekyll and Hyde, but through other, fairly decent characters as well. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in the 1900's.

Stevenson was greatly influenced by his surroundings and the times. Science was a large influence, especially Darwin's theory. Stevenson could have been inspired by Charles Darwin for Hyde's character during the period before the novel was written; Charles Darwin had published his new theory about the evolution and development of humans. He said that apes had evolved over a long period of time and had evolved into humans.

This idea was controversial and shook the medical and religious world. This led to many fears about evolution and the consequences of it. This is seen in Stevenson's novel as Mr Hyde is described with animal characteristics. "Ape-like fury" is a phrase used to describe Mr Hyde as he beats Sir Danvers Carew to death. This could show his savage like side of him having "ape like" anger being easily frustrated and violent. Additionally, in the Carew Murder Case, where he is said to be "clubbing him to the ground", this adds to my point that it was very troglodytic of him to be "clubbing" him to the ground.

The use of this strong word “clubbing” just shows how aggressive his hits were. This troglodytic form of action just reminds you of the stereotypical caveman- which links straight to being the violent side of man. In the chapter the Last night, the men who try to break into Jekyll’s laboratory find inside Hyde, the “monkey” and this makes them feel sick. This is established when Poole says, “Well, when that masked thing like a monkey jumped up from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice! What this means is that Poole and other men who have witnessed this sight are scared of what they have seen because it reminds them of themselves, yet they cannot come to terms with it, as they are reserved in terms of their thoughts.

The terrible events Mr Hyde commits are not in spiteful or emotional bursts but are random acts. This suggests that Stevenson is addressing the contrast in intelligence and consciousness between humans and animals. Animals don’t need a reason to kill and have no manners. Charles Darwin’s evolutionary scale is hinted at a couple of times in this book. Hyde is described as “less-upright and “ape-like. This is the total opposite to the principles expected of the Victorian society.

Jekyll’s appearances and personality have been juxtaposed with Hyde. In the book Jekyll is often complimented for his looks and his wealthy nature, whereas Hyde is criticised for his ugliness and the fact that he gives the impression of an animal. This therefore suggests that Jekyll is much higher up in the evolutionary scale than Hyde. Stevenson also looks into the theories of Freud; classing Hyde as the Id and Jekyll as the ego.

We can easily class the two in this way from the behaviour that Stevenson portrays in this book. Jekyll seeks to separate good from evil and therefore has high expectations and is definitely respected for it. Hyde is classed as the Id, as he attacks violently almost in a state of insanity, there is no morality at all in him, and he is a total opposite to the nature of Jekyll. He is totally unaware of what he does, and attacks at will.

. Much of the duality in the novel can be found within the setting. He shows the good side of London for example “ the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare of with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen”. This suggests that the shops are so attractive it sounds welcoming to go there.

However on the other street a house door is described as “ the door which has no bell or knocker” This gives the feeling that there is no one wanted and it’s very unwelcoming. The idea that this is duality because there is two sides to London one side where it’s open and one side where it’s unwelcoming. When we get to Hyde’s flat, we also see duality. The flat is described as “ furnished with luxury and good taste. But it is then described as bearing “ every mark of a room that has been recently ransacked” This shows duality because it is refined and stylish as in the manner of Jekyll, but is also in a state of chaos like the character of Hyde.

The first time we encounter Jekyll’s house it is from the side in which Hyde lives. Stevenson describes the street this side occupies as “ shining out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood” Yet Hyde’s house is described as “ a certain sinister block of building” with a door which is “ blistered and

distained” This side of the house is also portrayed as “ bearing in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence”, Yet when we come to Jekyll’s side of the house it is the exact opposite. It is described as “ wearing a great air of wealth and comfort” This is personification and Stevenson uses it to make it easier for us to paint a mental picture of scenes in the book. When Utterson goes inside this house there is a warm and welcoming feeling. The hall is “ comfortable,” and there is a glowing fire, suggesting a cosy and warm atmosphere in which you would feel relaxed. However, when things begin to take a sinister twist in the plot, the aura of the area is described in a completely different light.

When Utterson is making his way to Jekyll’s house the weather is described as “ wild, cold,” “ of the most diaphanous and lawny texture” and “ the wind flecked blood into the face” These are all animal like descriptions and I believe that Stevenson uses this device to make us consider the weather at this time as like a wild animal, or even like Hyde. Stevenson also explores the hidden duality in this book through doors and windows. For instance, Hyde’s house is described at the beginning as “ two stories high; showed no window, nothing but a door” A blind forehead of discoloured wall” And bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door was “ blistered and distained”. Utterson described this house referring to Hyde’s influence, but also as if it was a person.

The features are all ways we would somehow describe a human, which nicely links into the idea of the doors hiding and almost keeping secrets, and windows openly showing themselves. The house is also hidden and secluded around a back alley, out of view from the public, and very secretive, and it

had no windows, and windows are let you see what is going on, they have no secrets. Through this idea of doors and windows, reflects also on the people. Before Hyde was entered into the picture, Jekyll was a very open and honest man. His door was always open.

As Hyde's power begins to grow, we can see that Jekyll becomes more engulfed and isolated in his own home because of his secret, and finds it hard to let anyone in, even people, such as Utterson, whom he trusted with his life. As the book goes on, doors are opened to show that questions are being answered, but there is also a physical use for the doors and windows. Jekyll's house is very welcoming on a main street. The courtyard behind the house links to Jekyll's house. Hyde is allowed to come and go as he pleases through the back door, creating even more mystery and arousing suspicion with occupants of the house. In conclusion, Stevenson created a mystery story that is "haunting, sinister and profound".

This is in his descriptions of the Jekyll and Hyde changes and also the links between the Victorian society and the actual setting. He carefully used the characters, plot and setting to show the many characteristics of the Victorian society he was living in. When Stevenson portrayed duality within people he tried to emphasise that we all have a darker side within ourselves. All humanity is like Dr Jekyll, trying to keep a Mr Hyde or evil side under control.

Even though Robert Louis Stevenson wrote Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in the Victorian era the idea of duality is still significant in modern times. During Victorian times, people feared scientific progress by scientists if it was not controlled. Yet curiosity has always been a characteristic of humanity. This

can relate to Dr Lanyon and Dr Jekyll's experiments. They were performed without any regulations and rules and therefore became dangerous.

. Robert Louis Stevenson was writing about things that affected society when he was alive. His novel is so popular because the points he made are still relevant to society anytime and this is what makes this book great. He also compares the duality of man to that of good and evil.

He shows however nice and perfect one can seem, they have a much darker side to them and that Dr Jekyll was merely grasping at his and getting to “walk on the wild side” so to speak. Another example is when he says that human beings are made purely of good and evil, “all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil” By using the word “commingled”, it shows how purely mankind is double-sided, as if, goodness and evil has been weaved into our body. Another example used in reality is “two-faced”. This comparison is taken as people having two different faces; good and evil. In my opinion, Stevenson's most effective way of exploring duality is through the setting. In all stories, setting is always the most important and significant part which always tells you something, and Stevenson's vivid descriptions of the setting just link perfectly into the Duality of Jekyll and Hyde.