

Jekyll and hyde questions

Literature



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In composing his novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mrs. Hyde* Scottish author Robert Lewis Stevenson's main focus is the duality of man and his human nature. Influenced by western literature, Stevenson composed a story where the main characters act as perfect foils for each other. In this battle of good vs. evil, Dr. Jekyll is the source of all good while Mr. Hyde is driven by pure evil, creating the dynamic balance of duality which all humans battle against. Dramatically, both characters exist in one body, thus the struggle is heightened due to the intensity and hunger for survival each possesses.

Stevenson portrays the acts of this struggle of survival through resources of language embedded in his novella, proving that ultimately, as good and evil try to battle for survival one outlives the other. In his journey Henry Jekyll is found theorizing the duality of man and how two 'polar twins' constitute man: good and evil. In his attempt to manifest both identities Jekyll finds himself between a revolution of two 'personas' competing for survival in his body in attempt to eliminate the other. ...This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from one degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of Edward Hyde but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all and Hyde alone, that was guilty.

Jekyll was no worse he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible, to undo the

evil done by Hyde. And this conscience slumbered...but this danger was easily eliminated from the future...'and when, by sloping my own hand backward, I had supplied my double with a signature, I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate. '" Interestingly, Stevenson demonstrates how Jekyll is aware of the identities which he possesses. Consciously Jekyll knows of the power he has over both identities therefore he decides to live both personas while he can.

Stevenson uses personification to give Dr. Hyde (Jekyll's evil self) a form of life. Stevenson often compares Hyde to a beast, 'bestial avidity' due to his evil characteristics. In this quote, Hyde is said to be 'drinking pleasure' when the reader knows that pleasure really can't be drunk. Yet, this diction allows the character to better understand with what pride Hyde takes his persona. Another example of personification in this quote is 'I sat beyond the reach of fate,' the reader knows this shows personification because while one can sit and reach for something, fate is not something that can grasp or be grasped as it is an intangible.

However, the reader understands that sitting beyond the reach of fate means that Hyde (or Jekyll) will be undisturbed by his actions as fate cannot even get the best of him. " There comes an ending to all things, the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. I was like my neighbors; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active good will with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vain-glorious thought, a qualm came over me.

I began to be more aware of a change on the temper of my thoughts..." " This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts, or see his own face. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end. " Ultimately, Jekyll's determination to prove that man is not truly one person, but two, drove him to display the evil crimes of Hyde. Thereupon, his inner conflict was fruited and self-control was beyond reach.

Edward Hyde's mortal devilish sins took hold of Jekyll and conquered his respectability, corrupting his good yet Stevenson emphasizes that Jekyll is who holds the power of life and death over Hyde. In his theory of duality, Jekyll learns that while good and evil attempt to outlive each other, neither can exist alone. With this awareness in mind, Stevenson manifests through Jekyll's character that absolute control is possible, yet with a lot at stake. Hyde's " love of life is wonderful," but Hyde is also aware of Jekyll's " power to cut him off by suicide (Stevenson 101).

It is the awareness of each for the other, which confirms that neither can exist alone. When evil Edward Hyde commits mortal sins far beyond the comprehension of what the devilish side of Henry Jekyll could imagine, he realizes that his good side has become lost to the evil and try, as he might, can never regain itself. The character of Dr Jekyll is portrayed, as the epitome of respectability while Edward Hyde is the opposite of any kind of respectability in the 19th century. The definition of respectability in the era of Jekyll carried the meaning of propriety for decency, the rulers of the earth, dull and full of righteousness and virtue.

Respectability kept the world from being savage. While carrying this upward image, the inner soul of Jekyll longed for the sinful side of life. Still he did not want to risk his image of goodness or the impression that people carried of him. Jekyll believed that man is not truly one person, but two, that being the reason that he had such inner conflict between good and evil. He was determined to prove the two-ness of man by an experiment on his own body, this way he could be free to display his wilder, amoral tendencies and not sacrifice his good self.