

# [Robert louis stevensons ”dr. jekyll and mr. hyde” essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/robert-louis-stevensons-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde-essay-sample-essay-samples/)

Robert Louis Stevensons Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a gothic novel in many of its aspects, but one of the most important reasons is that there is constant building of suspense. There are many ways that this is done: through his characters, through his vocabulary, the setting and even through the origins of the character of Hyde.

Stevenson created the character of Utterson as a neutral base for the whole story; much like the table on which the dinner is served. But in the chapter of The Last Night, the table creates suspense too. Because the story is seen through the eyes of Utterson, the reader feel what he feels, so when he gets scared, the reader feels the same. When he is told not to go into the room that Jekyll is supposedly locked in, Mr. Uttersons nerves gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance. This quote builds suspense very well, because in the beginning of the book, Utterson is hardly ever scared of anything and if he is, he manages to tell himself everything is explainable. According to what we know about Utterson from the rest of novel, Utterson is calm under pressure and doesnt get scared often, so if he is then the situation really is dire.

Utterson also uses his common sense to find explanations for things that arent explicable without accepting the out-of-the-ordinary possibilities. When trying to comfort Poole, he says, Your master, Poole is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer There is my explanation it hangs together and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms. Utterson keeps trying to explain everything strange thats happening with logical and reasonable explanations for all the strange happenings in order to comfort himself and keep his thoughts away from all the unexplainable (but true) possibilities of what is really going on. This builds suspense because we know that he is just making excuses and that what is really going on is a lot stranger than he wants it to be.

An important method that Stevenson builds suspense in the novel is by also withholding information. The reader will use their imagination to fill in any gaps that the author has left for them. After knocking on Jekylls door, Poole says, Sir, he said. Was that my masters voice? It seems much changed, replied the lawyer, very pale. Stevenson has not yet revealed that the voice is Hyde, so the reader will use their imagination and assume that it is. This keeps the reader going through the book in suspense because they want to know if they assumed correctly. Sometimes, the author builds suspense by making the characters know more than we do, so we want to keep reading to find out what is going on. At the beginning of the chapter, Utterson is very concerned of why Poole is so afraid; Ive been afraid for about a week, returned Poole and I can bear it no more.

The reader will want to find out why Poole is afraid, so they will read on in suspense. Stevenson uses dramatic language; I can bear it no more to keep the reader thinking that the situation is more terrible than they can imagine. At the end of the paragraph, the author uses repetition by repeating Pooles line I can bear it no more which emphasises his fear and concern for his master, therefore further suspense is built because the reader often feels the same way as the characters do. When they are planning to knock on Jekylls door, Poole says, And see here, sir, if by any chance he wants to ask you in, dont go. This is a very dramatic sentence, mainly because of the dont go chosen by the author. This increases tension because again, the reader will use his or her imagination to fill in the gap of what is behind the door and what will happen if they go inside.

The alternative of withholding information is to delay it. For example, after they have broken in the door, there is a whole paragraph describing how neat and tidy the room is. This leaves the reader shouting at the book for delaying and to just reveal what was inside and what would happen next. Stevenson is doing this deliberately to make us wait for the climax of when they find Hyde. He does this throughout the chapter; when they decide to break down the door (Poole, if you say that, it will become my duty to make [murder] certain. I shall consider it my duty to break in that door.), they take another 3 pages of planning and talking before they actually do it. Again, this makes the reader more and more impatient of the climax, which would be when they find Hyde behind the door.

When information is finally given as they break down the door, there are more gaps for the reader to fill in. As they are breaking in, Hyde says: Utterson, for Gods sake, have mercy! There lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. Will make the reader think that something really terrible must have happened to make Hyde beg for mercy and kill himself. You then assume that Hyde is dead, therefore they will find Jekyll for him to then explain what happened. But Stevenson twists in the other direction. Poole and Utterson then go to find Jekylls body. [Utterson] said sternly, Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master. Nowhere was there and trace of Henry Jekyll, dead or alive. Stevenson has been deceptive in this state deliberately because the reader will think that they are near the happy, explained ending, but the author changes direction and adds yet another mystery for the reader to attempt to explain, building further suspense before the final chapters in which all is explained.

Another way that Stevenson builds suspense in The Last Night is through the setting. For example, in the outdoor settings, there is rarely anyone else to witness what is going on. When Utterson is walking with Poole, Stevenson writes, [The wind] seemed to have swept the streets unusually bare of passengers Mr. Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. Never in his life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow creatures, for there was borne in his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. Stevenson clarifies in the text that Utterson is worried that no one is there to see what happens, and that he predicts something bad is about to happen. It builds suspense when there is no one around to help because even as the reader is reading they will feel unsettled by this fact. To have the character point out that he is scared of this same thing is even more nerve-racking. The low-visibility of the outdoors is also a factor; the time period in which Jekyll and Hyde is set is in the Industrial Revolution.

The outcomes of this meant that the setting in the novel follows some conditions which make the story scarier. Because of the gap between the rich and the poor, there was more crime, which made the streets more dangerous, especially for the higher class characters that Stevenson has chosen to create. Because of all the factories and machinery, London was overcome with pollution and smog. This adds to the gothic aspect of the novel because it adds darkness and danger would have been less easy to see. As Utterson is going to Dr. Jekylls laboratory, the atmosphere is described: The scud had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. Scud is present because of the factories pollution, and this is a way that the urbanisation of the time period in which the book is set has an impact on the setting therefore the suspense in Stevensons writing. Of course, its not just the content that builds the suspense; its also the way of writing it.

A lot of the tension in the story is helped with the authors use of language. His descriptions of the setting will stick in the readers mind, and often contribute to the suspense directly. When describing the outdoors again, he writes: It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her. This is an example of how the author can contribute indirectly to the suspense through his use of adjectives, as the setting has no direct link with the story but when those words are stuck in the readers mind, it will add to the tension in the chapter with the general eeriness of the sentence.

A further aspect of the book that makes it so tense is also the origins of characters; namely Hyde. One theory of where his character came from is that Stevenson created Hyde as a gimmick to represent the evil thats in all of us. At one point, Mr. Utterson says, Evil, I fear, founded evil was sure to come of that connection. Utterson is saying that evil was bound to be a part of the mystery of Jekyll and his acquaintance with Hyde. Jekyll explains that Hyde was his evil side, so this could also mean that he represents the evil side in human beings. Stevenson could have also based Hyde on the animalistic origins of man, which would explain why there are so many animal references to Hyde. that masked thing like a monkey I give you my bible-word it was Mr. Hyde! This could be interpreted as a clear reference to the Darwinian theory of the origin of man, as it uses the word monkey and it is saying that Hyde is animalistic, like early humans, and while Jekyll brings out the evil side of himself, he is also bringing out the wild animal that humans really are.

Additionally, we know that Stevenson was under the influence of a very hard drug while writing Jekyll and Hyde, and this could be a root of Hydes character. When looking through the laboratory, Stevenson writes: At one table, there were various measured heaps of white salt. This is the same drug I was always bringing him, said Poole. Not only does this seem like a solid reference to the drug, but there are other moments in the book where the theory that Hyde is based on the transformation that comes over someone when they use the drug is very believable, like in the last chapter when Dr. Jekyll writes about how it was an addiction to become Hyde, he couldnt get enough of it and he loved the feeling of being Hyde. Hyde could well be based on the changes that come over Stevenson when he used the drug.

There are many different techniques to create suspense in a gothic novel like Jekyll and Hyde, and all of them are done to the best standard by the author. In the particular chapter The Last Night suspense is created through the characters, the language, the setting and through the timing of the information we are given. However, I think that the method that stands out the most is his ability to withhold and delay information. All are optimal in their own way, but making the reader guess what will happen next seems to be the thing that keeps us on our toes. In conclusion, I think that Stevenson builds suspense efficiently in many ways but withholding information is the most noticeably effective in the chapter The Last Night.

Bibliography: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by R. L. Stevenson.