

How does Stevenson represent Victorian society in his novella 'Dr Jekyll and Mr H...'

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Robert Louis Stevenson implies what Victorian society is like in his novella “the strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde”, by providing the reader with facts and metaphors and using language to indicate that no-one is ordinary and everyone has a different side, or dark side, the difference between illusion and reality, implying to us everyone has a Mr Hyde side. What he tells the reader in his novella can be interpreted by the reader to be a microcosm of the Victorian era and an insight into how ordinary people who lived in London saw and did.

Stevenson’s descriptions of London are often dull and dreary, describing it as old and as if it has untold secrets, “ bore in every feature the mask of a prolonged and sordid negligence” suggests that there is so much lying and deceit in London that people have just expected and aren’t trying to fix it, it also suggest that the city is run-down and no-one cares. In his novella Stevenson doesn’t mention much of outside Britain and in turn this can be interpreted that he uses London as a microcosm of Britain and indeed the British Empire and its colonies.

He describes it with so much passion against London leaving hidden and subtle hints that it is falling apart and that everyone is hiding their true feelings and ambitions. He also hints that he believe London is a dying city “ once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent” is Stevenson’s description of the labatory in his novella. This can be interpreted by the reader to mean that the pace and passion of which London used to work at, the scientific findings being discovered and the theories being put forward have stopped and the life is slowly being sucked out of London.

Stevenson's descriptions of the settings in his novella are not very clear unlike other novellas by authors. Stevenson doesn't use a lot of imagery of his settings but this can be interpreted by the reader that the homes there themselves have a lot of things to hide and a lot of untold stories. What he does tell us though sounds very dingy and dark, "which with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained" which is another example of lack of care in London and also can be interpreted by the reader as the characters in the novella are so much hidden by their own mask that no-one really knows them and no-one can get in and find out the real them.

Stevenson uses character and sentiment in his novella to imply what really happens in Victorian society, Victorian society always had the class system working class worked for upper class middle class had an authoritative job i.e. manager and upper class was always some kind of gentlemen a doctor or a politician, with this in mind the upper class had a kind of code to conduct themselves because they did not want to be looked down upon by the other upper class, what Stevenson implies is that this however is all a charade and that upper class aren't always whiter than white. He implies in his book that Mr Utterson and Mr Enfield are homosexual; this in Victorian society was frowned upon and even had a law passed so as to stop homosexuality.

In this I think Stevenson is trying to tell us that although they look down on the classes they too are not perfect and it is all a mask because if they were to be found out what they were or had been doing there would be outcry from politicians and other members of the first class. He also refers to the second class in his novella those regarded as respectable but not leaders or

public figures, i. e. he refers to the policeman “ whose eyes lighted up with professional ambition” this implies that it is not why the murder was carried out but who did it because Sir Danvers Carew was a leading politician in London but as he was found brutally murdered implies that even politicians have secrets.

I think that Stevenson’s novella illustrates how the upper class could of worked , it is certainly implied, but Stevenson himself was a well to do man born in Edinburgh would have known or realise what really happened. I think he represents Victorian England or indeed London in a different light his novella providing a microcosm of Victorian society and perhaps the Victorian era was not as nice as the history books may make out.