

Comparative analysis of the strange case of dr. jekyll and mr. hyde and the pictu...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was written by Louis Stevenson with the publication date of the fifth of January on the year of 1886.

Subsequently, the Picture of Dorian Gray authored by the famous writer Oscar Wilde was published on the day of the twentieth of June on the year of 1890. Both books share the same location and time period of publication, which was during the Victorian Era taking place in the streets of London.

The Victorian Era was the time between the years of 1819 to 1901 taking place in Great Britain, ruled by Queen Victoria and evidently named after her. Economic, medical, scientific, etc... development were the offsprings of this age, making it an upturning point to the country that has started to flourish and develop completely. However, social oppression was greatly present during that time; British people were victims of harsh prejudices by their surrounding society. This has led to the unleash of a lifestyle extraordinarily characterized by double standards. Therefore, Stevenson and Wilde authored the two books, which are considered social commentaries of the situation that took place during that time. As a result, having written both books during this specific time period has immensely altered the context, themes genres and the use of stylistic devices present in both texts. Even though both books were written differently with divergent plots, they convey the same message or hidden meaning that underlies both storylines. Both texts exhibit the eerie aspects of human nature through the use of stylistic devices, and the implementation of supernatural forces that illuminate the idea duality of human nature in leading a life characterized by double standards. The elements that are used to construct the main shared

idea of both texts will fully be explored and analyzed thoroughly and effectively throughout this essay.

Before exploring the texts, the two words that have a great significance to the analysis will need to be defined to give a proper insight on what will be emphasized throughout the essay. Intelligibly, one of the terminologies is dualism. Dualism - by definition - is "the division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided". Due to the social oppression that Victorians used to endure, they were not allowed to fully be themselves; their characteristics or actions - that weren't in agreement with what society believed in - were hidden. This has led individuals - back then - to commit illicit or inappropriate actions, because according to psychology: what is forbidden is often extremely attractive to an individual as it is something they have never experienced before. As a result, most Victorians - men in particular - used to indulge in their desires secretly not stopping until they are victims of society's prejudices. This social oppression has caused individuals to stop abiding by their conscience; instead, society's judgments is what drives their motives. Because dualism was something with immense significance in England during that time period, this characteristic has shaped and molded literature contextually, in ways which will be further discussed throughout.

Another prominent terminology is the literary genre of gothic fiction; both texts are considered to fall under this genre. Gothic Fiction was an element that was abundantly used during the Victorian Era; it is attributed to be "dark, gloomy or depressing". The depiction of terror, use of supernatural elements, presence of highly stereotyped characters, and attempt to display <https://assignbuster.com/comparative-analysis-of-the-strange-case-of-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde-and-the-picture-of-dorian-gray/>

techniques of literary suspense are all components of Gothic Fiction, and they are all present in both texts. On the one hand, In the Picture of Dorian Gray, the symbol of the portrait resembles the conscience of Dorian Gray and shows how his values have become more and more deteriorated over time, without his consensus. In fact, it acts as an antagonist to the protagonist Dorian Gray. In addition, it represents the situation that took place in the Victorian Era. As long as society did not know about a person's indulgences', they would commence with their doings. Just like the Victorian Era, the portrait has defeated any sense of conscience that was present in Dorian. In the beginning of the novel, Dorian Gray openly condemns and envies the situation to which his picture " will remain always young" and that " it will never be older than this particular day in June" (the day he sat with Lord Henry and Basil Halward), while he " shall grow old and horrible and dreadful" as time passes. Subsequently, the young who is still innocent - when his soul was still not severely touched by influences of Lord Henry - he makes the subtle wish yet very profound in meaning and significance to the whole novel. Gray begins to wonder, if roles were switched allowing him to be the one who remains young and beautiful with his physical attributes not influenced by the downsides of time, while the portrait is the one that ages as time passes, stating that " for that" he " would give everything" and that " there was nothing in the whole world" he " would not give"; sacrificing his soul for the wish to be granted. The moment the young inadvisable man makes that wish, a halt to the effect of aging was put. However, time wasn't the factor that deformed the picture and made it older; his soul was it. This represents how the Victorian society was like; people took every single word

and action said and done against individuals, acting upon them, victimizing people making them endure cruel prejudices.

A mere wish has changed Dorian's life. After committing his first evil act of causing young Sabyil to commit suicide, the picture gets deformed. At first the lad was alarmed by the deformation and was scared society finds out about his marred soul. Consequently, he takes the portrait and hides it in a room that no one sets foot in. Having hidden the portrait from the eyes of the people and his wish becoming true, the " frees Dorian from his inhibitions" and facilitate him committing more wrong doings over time, knowing that his " physical splendor" will not change as a response to his malevolent actions. The portrait displays the indefinite idea on how fragile the Victorians were; they would take into their pleasures easily, affected by any influencing force due to their oppression by the surrounding society.

On the other hand, in the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the dual human nature of individuals is distinctly represented through the presence of two prominent characters in the novella: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. As explained in the book, Dr. Jekyll - a scientist - knew that he was a respectable man amongst his surrounding society, yet he was in full awareness about him coveting to indulge in his suppressed senses, causing him to not find peace with himself. However, he was unable to openly show depravity to the people around him, damaging his reputation. Therefore, he comes up with a potion in his laboratory - that when taken - makes him feel both enormous pleasures and wickedness, changing his physical attributes into a wholly different person disguising him from the eyes of society - Mr. Hyde. Mr. Hyde appears to be extremely unappealing, deformed, small and <https://assignbuster.com/comparative-analysis-of-the-strange-case-of-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde-and-the-picture-of-dorian-gray/>

shrunk; " he gave an impression of deformity without any namable malformation". While Dr. Jekyll appears to be sight friends, as perceived by their surrounding society. On the one hand, Dr. Jekyll has a respectable profession, having a high status in his society. On the other hand, Mr. Hyde was jobless, making him from the low social class amongst society. In addition, the name Hyde has a great significance to the novel; it means to be in disguise. Stevenson did not just randomly pick the name. This is exactly what Dr. Jekyll wanted to achieve: taking into his sinful desires to feel pleasure in disguise to the eyes of prejudices. This point brings the reader back to how the context was affected by the time period (Victorian era) the novella was written in.

The physical attributes of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, along with the situation of creating a potion to illuminate Dr. Jekyll's dark side secretly, without society's knowledge, represented what took place during that time.

Victorians extremely feared to expose their true selves to the eye of the public. Consequently, they would seek to satisfy their yearnings, because what is forbidden will be greatly desired. In the two examples displayed above in both books, the reader can see that for both characters - Dorian Gray and Dr. Jekyll - to take into their desires and be who they truly are, the use of supernatural forces was essential to demonstrate how hard this was like to achieve during the Victorian Era.

The significance of the importance of reputation is outlined when Stevenson and Wilde chose to implement supernatural forces to illuminate the dark sides of the characters. In addition, this represents the presence of a struggle that is great in size to the characters; they both want to be <https://assignbuster.com/comparative-analysis-of-the-strange-case-of-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde-and-the-picture-of-dorian-gray/>

themselves and openly show their imperfections to society without being severely judged. As a result, they resorted to the implementation of supernatural forces that allowed them to display their true identity to the public furtively. Due to the suppression of both characters, their evil sides overcome their good sides. This is evident through the presence of Mr. Hyde overcoming the presence of Dr. Jekyll and Dorian overcoming his conscience by constantly committing sinful acts. However, the idea of the importance of reputation during that time is immensely stressed in both books; this is shown when the characters' dark sides do not survive, and therefore society wins.

As the reader should know, the portrait of Dorian acts as an antagonist to the protagonist Dorian, constantly reminding him of his sins and waking up his conscience, just by the brief sight of its deteriorating features. Dorian did not appreciate the picture reminding him of his evil soul as it altered his peace of mind and happiness, so he consequently stabs it, not knowing that he is connected to his portrait and dies. As a result, when Dorian dies and so his sinful acts die with him too, the portrait becomes beautiful as it was again. Similarly, Mr. Hyde dies by killing himself. This leaves an impact on the reader that the idea of reputation always won during the Victorian Era; people who imprudently couldn't control their actions were subject to harsh criticism by their society as their inappropriate behaviors get disclosed. Both character - Dr. Jekyll and Dorian - were alive when they did not indulge in their senses. However, they both enjoyed committing acts condemned by their society, marring their reputations, yet hiding what their souls truly look like in front of society differently. Consequently, their good sides were

overcome by their dark sides and they both become wholly evil, which is not appreciated by society. Therefore they both die.