

How does Stevenson represent good and evil in the novel Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?

[Literature](#)



The novel *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was written by a man named Robert Louis Stevenson. The novel was first published in the 19th century and is set in Victorian London. One of the main genres in the novel is gothic horror however there are other genres that feature in the novel, such as crime/detective and science fiction. The main theme of *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is the duality of human nature. Duality means having two different sides. This means that something acts in two opposite ways for example good and evil. Duality can also be linked to a struggle between our good side and our evil side. This is represented in the novel by two characters Jekyll who symbolises good and Hyde who symbolises evil.

Stevenson was brought up and lived in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Stevenson lived in had two very different sides. One side was called New Town this was the respectable, conventional and deeply religious part of Edinburgh. On the other hand there was the much less Christian side to Edinburgh which had brothels, gambling and violence. As well as there being two different sides to Edinburgh also had dual sides to his personality. Stevenson preferred the less Christian side to Edinburgh so he would leave the respectable part of Edinburgh to indulge in gambling and alcohol. Stevenson began to think about the duality in Edinburgh this then made him think of the duality of human nature. This then influenced him to write the novel *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Stevenson had many different influences that helped him write *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* including Darwin's theory of human evolving from apes. Stevenson was intrigued by the fact that humans may have originated from animals.

However many other people in the 19th century lacked enthusiasm for <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-stevenson-represent-good-and-evil-in-the-novel-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde-essay-sample/>

Darwin's theory? They believed that God created humans. This is because this was a very religious time. Stevenson believed that if every human evolved from apes that we all must have "animal instincts" within us. He believed in the duality of human nature.

The novel *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is about a man named Dr Jekyll who is very rich and well respected in his home town. Although he is well respected there is something very sinister about him that the reader cannot work out. Dr Henry Jekyll is a scientist. Though he is well respected he wants to be able to do bad things without feeling and remorse or guilt. Therefore, he creates a chemical concoction so people are able to control the evil side within them. Then they will no longer feel the struggle between their evil side and their good side. However, something went wrong and Edward Hyde was created. Hyde is Jekyll's evil side of his split personality.

Stevenson uses the opening chapter to create a feeling of horror. He does this by using Enfield's story of the door. The story was about an extremely unpleasant man who trampled upon a little girl. The man who was Edward Hyde did not acknowledge the girl was hurt and carried on walking. "He wasn't like a man he was like a damned juggernaut". Stevenson uses a simile to describe how appalling Hyde's behavior was. This makes the reader interested and at the same time suggests Hyde is unstoppable like a "juggernaut". In addition by comparing Hyde to an object "juggernaut" this suggests to the reader that Hyde has no feelings such as guilt, remorse, sympathy etc. Stevenson uses words that link to hell to describe Hyde.

I know this because in the novel it says “hellish to see” and “Satan”. These descriptions are very effective because it makes the reader think Hyde is pure evil. This is because the description compares Hyde to Satan. Additionally, the description also uses the word “hellish”. Which the reader automatically relates to evil. These descriptions also show fear and mystery by using imagery. This helps the reader paint a mental picture in their heads. This helps them to visualise and understand the text better.

The reader is likely to expect violence and maybe loss of life from the rest of the novel. I know this because in the novel it says “I saw bones turn sick with the desire to kill him”. Stevenson uses descriptive language to explain the strong emotion the doctor felt. He was so disgusted by Hyde’s behavior and his actions he wanted to kill him. This is very effective as it makes the reader feel curious as to why a respectable and educated man would want to kill someone. The writer wants the reader to feel that there is something very sinister about Hyde.

In addition the writer is likely to aspect vital questions that were asked in the first chapter to be answered. Some of the questions includes why did Hyde have Jekyll check book? What is the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde? I know that questions will be answered because in the novel it says “If he shall be Mr. Hyde I shall be Mr. seek”. This quote is very effective because it makes the reader want to read on. It keeps them interested in the story. The quote does this because it suggests to the reader that Utterson will not give up until he finds the answers.

Enfield's description of events would have horrified people in Victorian London because many people believed in morals and being a good person. In addition, it wasn't common for a grown man to trample over a girl without stopping to help. Also, this was quite a new style of writing because it uses horror.

Physiognomy is the belief that if you look bad, you are bad. Stevenson uses physiognomy to describe the duality of human nature. Physiognomy can be linked to good and evil. In the novel, Utterson's description of Hyde relates to physiognomy and also evil. I know this because in the novel it says "and there came blackness about his eyes." This is very effective because it makes the reader think that there is something evil about Jekyll. This is because it uses the word "blackness." This is usually linked to evil as it is dark. The writer also uses other descriptive language that links to physiognomy such as "slyish cast". This makes the reader think that even though Jekyll is respectable, there is something evil about him. This is because the writer describes him as sly; this is usually linked to an evil person.

This is very effective because it makes the reader curious to find out what is so sinister about Jekyll. Which makes the reader more interested in the novel. Although these descriptions show the evil side to Jekyll's personality, Stevenson also uses descriptions that show the good side in Jekyll's personality. I know this because in the novel it says "Every mark of capacity and kindness". This shows the reader that there is a physical mark that shows he is a good person. "Well made." This quote shows us that Jekyll is a

respectable and well made man. All of these quotes link to physiognomy because they use Jekyll's physical appearance to judge whether he is a good/bad person.

In the novel *Jekyll and Hyde* good and evil is represented through duality. I know this because Jekyll writes "The man is not truly one but truly two". This quote is very effective because it gives the answers to some questions the reader may want to ask. Good and evil is also represented through Darwinism. Darwin's theory is that humans evolve from apes. In the novel *Jekyll and Hyde* it says "the animal within me". This quote shows us that Jekyll's evil side (Hyde) is the animal within him. "So recently chained down began to growl for license".

This quote shows us that Jekyll does not want his evil side to be free so he chains it down. However Jekyll is finding it difficult to control his evil side. The more he tries to control it the angrier and stronger it becomes as it begins to "growl for license". This relates to Darwinism because animals are chained down and growl. This quote also shows us how people treat their evil side. This is because like Jekyll people do not want their evil side to be free, so they struggle to keep control of their evil sides.

Stevenson also uses similes to represent evil. I know this because in the novel *Jekyll and Hyde* it says "Ape like fury". This is very effective because it relates to Darwinism. This is because Stevenson is saying Hyde's actions are similar to one of an animal. The difference between humans and animals is that humans have self control. When Stevenson uses this he is saying that Hyde has no self control. This

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is very effective as it makes the readers think of their own self control.

In the Novel Jekyll and Hyde evil is represented as a mystery. I know this because in the novel it says “ If he shall be Mr. Hyde I shall be Mr. seek”. This is very effective because it creates a Mystery. This is because Utterson is saying he wants to find the answers and solve the mystery. In addition evil is also represented as a Mystery because of Hyde. This is because at the beginning of the novel the reader doesn't know anything about Hyde. This creates a mood of mystery as the reader is trying to work out who Hyde is.

Stevenson uses the settings to reflect the main theme of horror. He does this by using strong adjectives in his writing. When Stevenson describes the door he says “ sinister block of building”. This shows the reader that the buildings are scary and evil. This quote is very effective as it sets the atmosphere. He also describes the building as a “ prolonged and sauded negligence”. This shows the reader the buildings have been abandoned. This is effective as it is very descriptive which help the readers paint a picture in their heads.

These descriptions seem scary, which create a mood of horror. In addition he also uses the weather to reflect the main theme of horror. This is because he uses descriptive language to create a frightening atmosphere. I know this because he says “ black winter morning”. This is very effective as it instantly creates a mood of horror. This is very effective because “ black” is usually associated with evil. Stevenson uses this quote because he wants the reader to paint a mental picture, this will help them understand and feel apart of the novel.

Stevenson uses duality to represent good and evil. However he also uses the two doors. One door represents Jekyll and the other represents Hyde. The door that represents Hyde is at the back and leads to the lab. The door is described as “blistered”, “distained and does not have a knocker. This shows that Hyde’s personality which is unwelcoming. In addition the door is located at the back of the house. This shows Hyde’s personality as this quote implies he likes to be a lone. On the other hand the other door which represents Dr Jekyll is described completely opposite. It is the entrance to the house. This shows that it is welcoming. Stevenson describes it as “a great air of wealth and comfort. This shows Jekyll personality which is good. In addition to show that Jekyll is not completely good Stevenson describes the door as being “plunged with darkness”. This shows the evil side to Jekyll personality. As well as the two doors being opposite Jekyll and Hyde are also opposites. These descriptions show the duality in both their personalities.

In the last chapter of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde it gives a biographical description about Jekyll. “I was born in year 18”. This quote shows that the last chapter is written in first person. This is very effective as it shows the reader that it is written as if Jekyll is talking. This then will make the reader curious to find out if this chapter holds all the answers the reader may have, Such as how does Dr Jekyll linked to Mr. Hyde?

In the last chapter Stevenson reveals that Jekyll and Hyde is the same person. I know this because it says “the man is not truly one but truly two”. This shows the reader the Jekyll has two split personalities. He also gives the reader a detailed description of how Jekyll created Hyde. Once he had

created Hyde Jekyll found it difficult to control him. I know this because in the novel it says “so recently chained down began to growl for license”. This shows the reader that Hyde is stronger than Jekyll. It also shows the reader that the more Jekyll tries to control Hyde the angrier Hyde becomes. When Jekyll says: “my devil had been longed caged”. He is describing how he felt before he made Hyde. This quote can link to secrecy because when he says “caged” it can also mean that his evil side had been hidden away.

The structure of the novel keeps the reader interested because all the questions are answered at the end. This is very effective because it keeps the reader intrigued throughout the whole novel. This makes the reader feel relieved as all their questions have been answered. The last chapter fits into a detective/mystery genre. This is because like all traditional detective/mystery novels the questions are answered at the end.

Conclusion

There are many different things that have changed in society during the years including reputation. Nowadays reputation is still very important however it is not the same type of reputation that was in Victorian London. In Victorian London having a good reputation was all about what sort of person you are and the job you had. However nowadays reputation is all about the material goods you have such as a nice car, clothes, mobile phone etc. In addition the belief in physiognomy has also changed in the 21 century. This is because we do not judge people on their physical appearance as much. However there is still racism which can be linked to physiognomy. I think duality in some level has changes. This because many people believe that it

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is your choice of you want to be good/evil. However there is still a struggle between good and evil and many people try to hide their evil side.

Horror as a genre has also changed. This is because there is more level of violence nowadays than in Victorian London. This is because we have become desensitised to violence. This means that it takes a lot more to scare us. This means that books, TV shows and movies have to be more graphic and horrific. Duality in books, TV shows and movies are very common and also we see a lot of good vs. evil. There are many different examples of this in the 21st century including Spiderman, Heroes, and Superman. I think that the description of setting is the same. This is because in the average horror description is dark, storm, abandoned etc and that has not changed.

I think the moral to the novel Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is never give into your evil side. This is because the novel gives detailed descriptions of exactly what happened to Jekyll when he gave into evil. It shows how he became addicted to evil. The novel also says that we should always keep control of our evil side. I also think we should not take silly risks when it comes to our lives.