



DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE — STUDY GUIDE

1. Introduction

- **Author:** Robert Louis Stevenson
 - **Published:** 1886
 - **Genre:** Gothic Novella / Mystery / Psychological Horror
 - **Narrative Style:** Mixed — third-person limited through Utterson + confessional documents
 - **Setting:** Victorian London
 - **Premise:** Respectable scientist Dr Henry Jekyll creates a potion that allows him to transform into Edward Hyde, an embodiment of his immoral desires.
 - **Why it's studied:** Explores duality, repression, good vs evil, Victorian hypocrisy, identity, and scientific ethics.
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2. Plot Summary

Overview

The story unfolds through lawyer Mr Utterson's investigation into the link between Dr Jekyll and the sinister Mr Hyde, revealing a shocking scientific experiment that exposes the darker side of human nature.

Key Plot Points (with citations)

Opening Mystery

- Utterson hears from Enfield about a man called **Mr Hyde** who trampled a young girl and paid compensation with a cheque signed by Dr Jekyll. [litcharts.com]
- Utterson is troubled because Jekyll has recently changed his will to leave everything to Hyde. [americanliterature.com]

Growing Concern

- Utterson questions Dr Lanyon, who says he fell out with Jekyll over “unscientific” experiments. [litcharts.com]
- Utterson spies Hyde entering a laboratory attached to Jekyll's house. [sparknotes.com]

Hyde's Violence

- Hyde murders Sir Danvers Carew brutally and disappears. [\[americanliterature.com\]](#)
- Jekyll insists he is done with Hyde and shows a letter supposedly written by Hyde. Handwriting analysis suggests the letter is in Jekyll's own hand. [\[litcharts.com\]](#)

Shutting Himself Away

- Jekyll becomes a recluse. Lanyon dies of shock after an encounter connected to Jekyll. [\[sparknotes.com\]](#)
- Utterson and Enfield later see Jekyll's horror-stricken face at a window before he vanishes again. [\[sparknotes.com\]](#)

Final Discovery

- Poole believes something terrible has happened. He and Utterson break into the laboratory, finding Hyde dead wearing Jekyll's clothes. [\[americanliterature.com\]](#)

Jekyll's Confession

- In a written confession, Jekyll explains he created a potion to split his moral and immoral selves.
 - Hyde grew stronger and eventually took over involuntarily.
 - When Jekyll ran out of the original chemicals, he could no longer reverse the transformation.
 - Hyde killed himself, ending Jekyll's life too. [\[americanliterature.com\]](#)
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3. Setting & Context

Victorian London

- Respectability and reputation were essential; secrecy and repression common.
- Hyde's nighttime activities contrast with Jekyll's respectable façade.

Scientific Anxiety

- Reflects public fears about scientific experimentation and moral boundaries.

Urban Gothic Atmosphere

- Fog, darkness, narrow streets, and mysterious buildings enhance unease.
- Jekyll's house vs laboratory symbolises duality. [\[study.com\]](#)

4. Characters

Dr Henry Jekyll

- Respected doctor; charitable, sociable
- Fascinated by the dual nature of man
- Creates Hyde to indulge repressed impulses
- Ultimately loses control, becoming a tragic figure

Mr Edward Hyde

- Jekyll's alter ego
- Smaller, deformed, violent, impulsive
- Embodies Jekyll's darker desires
- Writes letters in a handwriting similar to Jekyll's — reinforcing identity link. [\[litcharts.com\]](https://litcharts.com)

Gabriel Utterson

- Lawyer, rational, loyal friend
- Acts as detective-figure, guiding reader through mystery

Dr Lanyon

- Once Jekyll's friend; rejects his "unscientific balderdash"
- The truth horrifies him so deeply he becomes fatally ill. [\[sparknotes.com\]](https://sparknotes.com)

Poole

- Loyal butler; brave and concerned
- Ultimately prompts the discovery of Hyde's death

Mr Enfield

- Provides initial story linking Hyde and Jekyll

5. Themes

Duality of Human Nature

Every person contains both good and evil — Jekyll creates Hyde to separate these aspects. Stevenson shows that evil grows when indulged. [\[americanliterature.com\]](#)

Repression & Victorian Respectability

Jekyll's desire to hide immoral impulses reflects social pressure to appear perfect. Utterson and others prioritise reputation over truth. [\[americanliterature.com\]](#)

Science & Ethics

Jekyll's experiment pushes moral boundaries and leads to disastrous consequences.

Good vs Evil

Hyde represents unrestrained evil, Jekyll the respectable façade — but both coexist in one man. Themes emphasised throughout analyses. [\[study.com\]](#)

Appearance vs Reality

Hyde seems physically deformed yet no one can say how; symbolism of evil within.

6. Form, Structure & Language

Form

- Gothic novella with detective elements
- Mixed structure: narrative + letters + final confession

Structure

- Gradual revelation of truth
- Shifts perspectives: Utterson → Lanyon's narrative → Jekyll's confession
- Climactic reversal: identity of Hyde revealed at the end
[\[americanliterature.com\]](#)

Language

- Dark, atmospheric description of streets and fog
 - Symbolic contrasts: light vs shadow, façade vs hidden spaces
 - Hyde described using animalistic, dehumanising language
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7. Key Quotations

Duality

- “Man is not truly one, but truly two.”
→ Jekyll’s philosophical belief. [[americanliterature.com](#)]

Repression

- Utterson is described as someone who “drank gin when he was alone,” symbolising hidden desires.

Hyde’s Evil

- Hyde “trampled calmly” — horrifying indifference. [[litcharts.com](#)]

Transformation

- Lanyon: “I have had a shock and I shall never recover.”
→ Horror at Jekyll’s secret. [[sparknotes.com](#)]

Final Tragedy

- Hyde’s death reveals the annihilation of Jekyll.
(Full statement describes Hyde ultimately “consuming” Jekyll.) [[study.com](#)]
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8. Symbolism & Motifs

Jekyll’s House & Laboratory

- House front: respectable; back door: where Hyde enters → duality.
[[study.com](#)]

Fog & Darkness

- Symbolise confusion, secrecy, moral obscurity.

Potion

- Unleashes repressed desires; symbol of dangerous scientific ambition.

Hyde's Appearance

- Vague deformity mirrors moral deformity.
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9. Important Scenes

- Enfield's story of Hyde trampling the girl
- Utterson confronting Hyde
- Carew's murder
- Jekyll's withdrawal; window scene
- Breaking down the laboratory door
- Reading Lanyon's and Jekyll's statements

Each scene reveals more about Jekyll's hidden nature until the full truth emerges.

10. Writer's Purpose

Stevenson aims to:

- Expose the conflict between societal expectation and inner desires
 - Criticise Victorian repression
 - Explore psychological complexity of good and evil
 - Warn of dangers when ambition and secrecy override morality
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11. Sample Essay Questions

- **Theme:** How does Stevenson explore the duality of human nature?
 - **Character:** Analyse Jekyll as a tragic figure.
 - **Setting:** How does Stevenson use London to reflect themes of secrecy and danger?
 - **Symbolism:** Discuss how the laboratory symbolises Jekyll's hidden self.
 - **Turning Point:** Why is Carew's murder significant within the novella?
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12. Model PEA Paragraph

Point: Stevenson uses Hyde to symbolise the consequences of repressing immoral desires.

Evidence: Hyde “trampled calmly over the child’s body,” showing disturbing lack of emotion.

Analysis: The adverb *calmly* reveals that Hyde feels no guilt, highlighting the danger of giving physical form to the darkest parts of Jekyll’s personality. Hyde embodies impulses that Victorian society forces men like Jekyll to hide, making him a manifestation of repressed evil. [\[litcharts.com\]](https://litcharts.com)

13. Quick-Revision Checklist

- **Themes:** duality, repression, science, good vs evil
- **Symbols:** house/lab, potion, fog
- **Characters:** Jekyll, Hyde, Utterson, Lanyon, Poole
- **Key quotes:**
 - “Man is not truly one, but truly two.”
 - “Trampled calmly.”
 - Lanyon’s shock
- **Turning points:** Carew’s murder, Jekyll withdrawing, lab door broken down

MINI-ESSAYS

Character: Hyde as the Monster Within

Hyde is not a separate being but the physical expression of Jekyll’s repressed desires. Stevenson uses Hyde to explore Victorian anxieties around respectability and the duality of human nature. Hyde’s appearance—“troglodytic,” deformed—reflects moral disgust rather than literal physiology. His violence is impulsive, unpredictable, and motivated by pleasure, suggesting what emerges when restraint is removed. Jekyll’s confession reveals that he created Hyde to indulge guiltlessly, but instead becomes enslaved by the freedom he sought. Hyde embodies temptation, addiction, and the danger of dividing the self into “good” and “evil.” Stevenson warns that attempting to purify identity creates monstrosity rather than virtue. Hyde is terrifying not because he is alien, but because he is familiar—Jekyll’s own shadow, given form.

Turning Point

A. Turning Point: The Letter & Final Confession

Utterson's investigation culminates in Jekyll's narrative, revealing the failed experiment to partition the self. The confession reframes earlier incidents (tramplings, murder) as consequences of moral hubris. The turning point moves the text from mystery to moral parable: repression generates monstrosity.

B. Symbolism: Doorways, Potion, Handwriting

- **Doorways:** thresholds between personas; respectable façade vs sordid entry.
- **Potion:** technology as self-deception; licence masquerading as liberation.
- **Handwriting:** sameness behind disguise—identity leaves traces.

C. Setting Analysis

Fog-shrouded London mirrors ambiguity; Soho's "otherness" externalises Jekyll's banned desires. Respectable squares back onto squalid alleys—topography as psychology.
