

How does Stevenson present Hyde as a frightening outsider in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*?

Exemplar Essay

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The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886)
by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Read the following extract from Chapter 2 and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract Mr Utterson has just met Mr Hyde for the first time.

5	'We have common friends,' said Mr. Utterson. 'Common friends,' echoed Mr. Hyde, a little hoarsely. 'Who are they?' 'Jekyll, for instance,' said the lawyer. 'He never told you,' cried Mr. Hyde, with a flush of anger. 'I did not think you would have lied.'
10	'Come,' said Mr. Utterson, 'that is not fitting language.' The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house. The lawyer stood awhile when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude.
15	Then he began slowly to mount the street, pausing every step or two and putting his hand to his brow like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked, was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. 'There must be something else,' said the perplexed gentleman. 'There is something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the
20	man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think; for, O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend.'

Starting with this extract, how does Stevenson present Mr Hyde as a frightening outsider?

Write about:

- how Stevenson presents Mr Hyde as a frightening outsider in this extract;
- how Stevenson presents Mr Hyde as a frightening outsider in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Starting with this extract, how does Stevenson present Mr Hyde as a frightening outsider?

Essay Framework

Introduction: In *Hyde*, Stevenson has created a character who represents everything his Victorian readers feared and loathed.

My Notes:

Paragraph One: Stevenson shows Hyde as a frightening outsider through his trampling of the young girl in Chapter One, 'Story of the Door'.

My Notes:

Paragraph Two: Stevenson describes Utterson's reaction to Hyde in the extract. Like all of the characters in the novel, he finds him repulsive.

My Notes:

Paragraph Three: Stevenson further emphasises Hyde's terrifying personality through the murder of Sir Danvers Carew.

My Notes:

Paragraph Four: The strongest proof of Hyde's position as a frightening outsider is the way in which Jekyll himself rejects his own *alter ego*.

My Notes:

Conclusion: What is most frightening about Hyde is that he is not, in fact, an outsider - the greatest enemy is the enemy within.

My Notes:

Starting with this extract, how does Stevenson present Mr Hyde as a frightening outsider?

Robert Louis Stevenson's Gothic novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* reveals the darker side of an apparently respectable Victorian gentleman, Dr Henry Jekyll. Jekyll wishes to maintain his public reputation, and thus hides his immoral behaviour, describing himself as 'committed to a profound duplicity of life' even before he makes the discovery which destroys him: the discovery of how to transform himself into Edward Hyde, his other self, who is 'pure evil'. Hyde is everything which Stevenson's Victorian readers feared and loathed: he is immoral, ugly and repulsive in every way. And yet he is the *alter ego* of a respectable, tall and handsome man. Through this sharp contrast between the two sides of Jekyll's life, Stevenson undermines the complacent respectability of polite Victorian society, and suggests that evil can hide (or Hyde) even beneath the most respectable appearances. Unlike other Gothic novels, which typically tell tales of fantastical events, Stevenson is asking his readers to look in the mirror, as Jekyll does after first transforming into Hyde, and to say 'this too [is] myself'. The ultimate outsider, the evil, dark and sinister Hyde, is actually on the inside - the animal, or the devil, which lurks within.

We first encounter Hyde in Chapter One, 'Story of the Door', where Richard Enfield describes the horrific event which he witnessed, of Hyde trampling a young girl and leaving her screaming, while Hyde marched on 'like some damned Juggernaut', completely unconcerned about the pain he had inflicted on the helpless child. Immediately the reader, like Enfield, perceives Hyde as utterly evil and repulsive. A 'Juggernaut' is a large chariot which bears a pagan god, linking him to a world outside of Western civilisation, and implying that he is savage and barbaric. This frightening impression is built further when Enfield describes his reaction to Hyde. Enfield describes how he, as well as a 'cut and dry apothecary', who would not normally be emotionally affected, felt 'sick and white with desire to kill' Hyde. This violent, emotional, physical reaction to Hyde marks him out as a horrifying creature. Enfield describes him as being 'like Satan' and as giving a 'strong impression of deformity'. Both of these terms add to the idea that Hyde is not fully part of the human race. If he is 'like Satan', then he is like the most evil person in the universe, a being, according to Christian belief, who is cast out eternally from all goodness and happiness.

Similarly, in the extract, Utterson finds Hyde repulsive, and like Enfield, he struggles to understand why. Stevenson lists all of the aspects of Hyde's appearance that could cause disgust, such as his 'dwarfish' stature and his 'displeasing smile', but all of these together cannot account in Utterson's mind for the way in which he reacts to him. Again, Stevenson uses diabolical imagery to describe him - he has 'Satan's signature' on his face - and this once again marks Hyde out as a being cast out from all goodness. But there is a further development in the extract, as Utterson meditates on what it is which could have caused him to react with such loathing to Hyde. Utterson thinks that his reaction must have moral roots, that it is the 'radiance' of Hyde's 'foul soul' which causes those who meet him to react with such fear, disgust and loathing.

Hyde's next appearance in the novel further establishes him as a terrifying creature who is utterly evil, and also puts him more outside any hope of redemption, and thus more satanic. In Chapter Four, 'The Carew Murder Case', Stevenson describes Hyde's senseless murder of a polite old gentleman, Sir Danvers Carew. Stevenson horrifies the reader with his graphic description of how the 'bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway' as Hyde rains down furious blows upon Carew, for no reason whatsoever. Stevenson also employs another method in this episode which places Hyde outside the human race. He describes Hyde's 'fury' as 'ape-like', thus playing on the fears of his Victorian readers that had been inspired by Charles Darwin's 1859 *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin had proposed that human beings were descended from animals, and Hyde's behaviour suggests that they could revert to the state of their ancestors. This is also evident

in the extract, where Stevenson uses the word 'snarled', suggestive of a fierce predator, to describe Hyde's 'savage laugh'.

Finally, Hyde's position as a frightening outsider is confirmed by the attitude of Jekyll himself to his *alter ego*. At first Jekyll acknowledges Hyde as being part of himself: 'this, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human'. But after the murder of Carew, Jekyll distances himself increasingly from his double, until finally he tries to separate himself entirely from Hyde, using the third person for him in Chapter Ten: 'He, I say—I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human'. As Hyde comes to dominate and Jekyll transforms into him involuntarily, Jekyll becomes increasingly revolted by the monster he has created, and wants to claim that it is completely separate from him. According to Christian belief, hell is the ultimate outside - cast out eternally from all goodness, all hope, all happiness, and it is to hell that Jekyll consigns Hyde.

But of course, Hyde cannot be an 'outsider' to Jekyll, because he is contained within him. Stevenson's ultimate message is that the enemy is not outside, but inside - he is part of ourselves, the 'brute' that sleeps 'within' even the most respectable person, and is only waiting for us to give into temptation to leap out, as Hyde does, coming out 'roaring' after Jekyll had tried to cage him, and even more furious for the time he has spent imprisoned. Stevenson's is a stern moral tale on the importance of self-control, and the disastrous consequences that flow from indulging our worst instincts.