

# The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

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**The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** Robert Louis Stevenson

In this harrowing tale of good and evil, the mild-mannered Dr. Jekyll develops a potion that unleashes his secret, inner persona—the loathsome, twisted Mr. Hyde.

## The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Details


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## From Reader Review The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde for online ebook

**Jeffrey Keeten says**

**”It came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance rather of a leap of welcome.**

**This too, was myself.”**

**Richard Mansfield was mostly known for his dual role depicted in this double exposure. The stage adaptation opened in London in 1887, a year after the publication of the novella. (Picture 1895).**

Dr. Henry Jekyll is a brilliant man who in the course of trying to understand the human psyche has turned himself, with tragic results, into a guinea pig for his experiments. He has unleashed a power from within that is turning out to be too formidable to be properly contained. This book was released in 1886 and at first none of the bookshop wanted to carry the book because of the subject matter, but a positive review had people flocking to the stores to read this sinister tale of hubris overcoming reason.

**The American first edition is the true first edition because it preceded the London edition by three days**

The timing was perfect for releasing such a tale. The Victorian society was struggling with the morality that had been imposed upon them by the previous generation. They were embracing vice. Many men of means living in London now found themselves hearing the siren song of pleasures available on the East End. They could be as naughty as they wanted and safely leave their depravity on that side of town before they return to the respectable bosom of their family and careers. They were struggling with the dual natures of their existences. The thunder of the church and the faces of their sweet families made them feel guilty for their need to drink gin in decrepit pubs, smoke opiates in dens of inequity, consort with underage whores, and run the very real risk of being robbed by cutthroats. This walk on the wild side also allowed them the privilege of feeling completely superior to all those beings providing their means of entertainment.

Jekyll as it turns out is no different. He relishes the adventures of his other persona even as he feels the mounting horror of losing control of this other self he calls Mr. Edward Hyde.

Furthermore, his creation has no loyalty.

*”My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were most unequally shared between them. Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was **indifferent** to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit.”*

**Spencer Tracy plays Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in 1941.**

Unfortunately indifference becomes more personal, more brutal in nature, as Hyde becomes more and more a caged animal who does not want to have to embrace the pretenses of Jekyll's respectable position.

*"The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person; he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll had fallen, and he resented the dislike which he was himself regarded."*

The tincture that has so far allowed Jekyll to contain Hyde is needing to be doubled and tripled to give Jekyll some modicum of control over his deviant nature. Jekyll contacts every apothecary he knows trying to find more of the solution he needs only to discover that the original batch that he used to make his "grand discovery" with must have been tainted with a foreign substance unknown to any of the suppliers. This foreign substance, unfortunately, is the ingredient that made the emergence and the restraint of Hyde possible.

Dire circumstances indeed.

Men who normally did not read novels were buying this book. I believe they were looking for some insight into their own nature maybe even some sympathy for their own urges. They made a book that quite possibly could have been thought of as an entertaining gothic novel into an international best seller. New generations of readers are still finding this book essential reading. Even those that have never read this book know the plot and certainly know the names of Jekyll and Hyde. It has inspired numerous movies, mini-series, comic books, and plays. It could be argued that it is one of the most influential novels on the creative arts.

### **It was but a dream.**

Robert Louis Stevenson was stymied for a new idea. He was racking his brain hoping for inspiration.

*"He had his names for the agents of his dreams, his whimsical alter ego and writing self. Stevenson referred to these agents, it pains me to admit, as 'the little people' and the 'the Brownies.' His hope was that they would supply him with marketable tales."*

### **RLS**

It came to him in a nightmare that had him screaming loudly enough to wake the whole household.

### **It was a gift from the depths of his mind, maybe an acknowledgement of his own dark thoughts, his own darkest desires.**

He wrote the nightmare down on paper feverishly over ten days. When he read the final draft to his wife, Fanny, her reaction was not what he expected. She was cold to the tale, completely against publishing such a sensationalized piece of writing. They argued, thin skinned to any criticism as most writers are especially when it is a complete repudiation of a piece of writing he was particularly proud of; Stevenson, in a moment of rage, tossed the whole manuscript in the fireplace.

Be still my heart.

There is no arguing with success of this magnitude, but I can't help but wonder what was in that first draft. If there is a criticism of this novel it would be for the restrained nature in which it is presented. Did Stevenson just let it all go? Did he give us more elaborate details of Hyde's excursions? Was Jekyll's glee in Hyde's

adventures more fully explored?

I understand Stevenson was a fiery Scot given to flights of temper that could only be doused with something as dramatic as throwing 60,000 words into the fire, but how about flinging the pages about the room, and storming away followed by the proper slamming of a door to punctuate displeasure. In my mind's eye I can see his stepson, Lloyd Osborne, carefully gathering the pages, scaring himself reading them in the middle of the night, and keeping them for all posterity between the leaves of a writing journal.

### **In 1920 John Barrymore played Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.**

Stevenson was obsessed with the concept of good and evil. We all have a side to our personality that we prefer to keep hidden. We all wear masks. For now our inner thoughts are still our own, but don't be surprised if the NSA has figured out how to tap in and tape those as well. Sometimes wearing the mask becomes arduous. Another entity fights to be allowed to roam free. We want to be impulsive, self-gratifying, slutty, sometimes brutal, but most importantly unfettered by our reputations. I wouldn't necessarily call that evil, but there are people who do have true viciousness barely contained and we have to hope they continue to restrain it.

The Victorians identified with Jekyll/Hyde and maybe to know that others are also struggling with doing right without doing wrong certainly made them feel less like an aberration when they next felt the itch for the East End. I'm sure this book was the source of many fine conversations as they drank their gin and smelled the musky hair of the doxie on their laps.

**The author with his wife and their household in Vailima, Samoa, c. 1892 Photograph of Robert Louis Stevenson and family, Vailima, on the island of Upolu in Samoa. Left to right: Mary Carter, maid to Stevenson's mother, Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson's stepson, Margaret Balfour, Stevenson's mother, Isobel Strong, Stevenson's stepdaughter, Robert Louis Stevenson, Austin Strong, the Strong's son, Stevenson's wife Fanny Stevenson, and Joseph Dwight Strong, Isobel's husband.**

The word that most of his friends and acquaintances used to describe Stevenson (RLS as I often think of him) was captivating. He was sorely missed when he made the decision to move to Samoa taking himself a long way from supportive friends and his fans. He was searching for a healthy environment that would restore his always ailing health. Unfortunately the new climate was found too late, he died at the age of 44 from a brain aneurysm leaving his last novel, the Weir of Hermiston, unfinished. Many believe that he was on the verge of writing his greatest novel.

Oddly enough, F. Scott Fitzgerald a very different writer from RLS, but also a favorite of mine died at 44 as well. Critics also believe that The Last Tycoon would have been his best novel if he'd had time to finish it. It does make me wonder about the wonderful stories that were left forever trapped in the now long silent pens of RLS and FSF, but they both left lasting monuments to literature. Even those that don't appreciate their writing the way I do still have to admit that their impact was undeniable.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>  
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

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**Ahmad Sharabiani says**

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is a gothic novella by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson first published in 1886. The work is also known as The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, or simply Jekyll & Hyde. It is about a London lawyer named Gabriel John Utterson who investigates strange occurrences between his old friend, Dr Henry Jekyll, and the evil Edward Hyde. The novella's impact is such that it has become a part of the language, with the very phrase "Jekyll and Hyde" coming to mean a person who is vastly different in moral character from one situation to the next.

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Raeleen Lemay says

IF ONLY the revelation halfway through this had been unknown to me before reading it, I probably would have enjoyed this book more. It was good, but knowing what the twist is can really bring a story down for me.

This book is also very simple and to-the-point, which isn't always my favourite style of writing. I would have enjoyed for the story to be more drawn out, preferably with an addition of at least another hundred pages.

Fabian says

The appearances/superficiality motif appears as early on as the first sentence in this tense, tight, but ultimately convoluted smear of a novella. Count on countenance for good & sturdy bones in a story of detection...

& yet...

Plus there are really nice framing devices on display here, a check-mark always in my book, like the letters within letters narrative, a nifty exercise, which is mighty cool. (Here, my favorite sentence from the Robert Louis Stevenson classic: "Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference." [85] Super neat!)

Yet...





nature of man', the good versus the evil sides, but what fascinated me about the book was that despite being drawn in such lines, it did not strike me as a tale of one side of man versus another. Indeed, it is the virtuous side who seeks out a way to become destructive, showing that his virtuosity is a mere sham.

Likewise, neither Jekyll nor Hyde seem to have any real motivation to be either 'good' or 'evil', it is more that they are victims of some disorder which compels them to be as they are--that causal Victorian psychology which, in the end, robs anyone involved of premeditation for what they do. Dracula kills to survive, Frankenstein does so because he is the product of the ultimate broken home and Hyde does it as a self-destructive compulsion despite the fact that he loves life above all else, yet is unable to protect himself well enough to retain it.

This is not the evil of Milton's Satan, or of Moriarty, who know precisely what they do and do it because of the way they see the world before them, but that of the phrenologist, who measures a man's head with calipers and declares him evil based upon the values so garnered, independent of any understanding, motivation, or reason.

And yet this is not an unbelievable evil--indeed, Stevenson uses it as an analysis of addiction and other self-destructive behaviors, where the pure chemical rush of the thing becomes its own cause, despite the fact that the addict will tell you he wishes nothing more than to be rid of it, to be normal again, never to have tasted the stuff in the first place. It is a place a man might fall into through ignorance and carelessness, never realizing how hard it could be, in the end, to escape.

And that's something we can all relate to, far more than the sociopathy of Moriarty, which requires that you have complete understanding but just a completely different set of emotional reactions to the world around you. It is much easier for most people to say that there is some part inside them that they do not like, that makes them uncomfortable, some thoughts and desires which rise unbidden from their brain, and which they must fight off. And it is the fact that they are strong enough to need to be fought off that unsettles us and gives us pause, for we do not like to think that such incomprehensible forces might always be there, working, just beneath the surface, and which might come out not due to some dark desire or motivation, but due to simple, thoughtless error.

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## Bookdragon Sean says

Robert Louis Stevenson was a man who knew how to play his audience. Utterson, the primary point of view character for this novel, is a classic Victorian gentleman; he is honest, noble and trustworthy; he is the last reputable acquaintance of down going men like Henry Jekyll. So, by having a character who evokes the classic feelings of Victorian realism narrate the abnormal encounterings, it gives it credibility; it gives it believability; thus, the story is scarier because if a man such as Utterson is seeing this strange case, then it must be real.

Indeed, this gothic novella was considered very scary at the time. I think this was emphasised because Stevenson pushed the boundaries of the gothic genre. One of the tenants of the style rests upon the inclusion of a doppelgänger. Instead of using this classic idea Stevenson transgressed it with having his doppelgängers relationship reside in the same character. Jekyll/Hyde is the same person, and at the same time one and another's counterpart. I think this is a masterful technique because the relationship between the two is more psychologically complex and fear inducing, than, for example, the relationship between Frankenstein and his Monster. It breaks the boundaries of the normal role and establishes a doppelgänger relationship that is

stronger than any others.

This all happened because one day a Victorian chemist decided to see if he could separate the two states of human nature. The result was a successful disaster. Utterson has to try and piece together the scraps of the strange situation. He is perplexed at the idea of the paranormal because logic dictates that this shouldn't be happening, therefore, it isn't real, but only it is so, again, it becomes more scary. The incident at the window is demonstrative of this. Utterson witnesses Jekyll's transgressive shift into Hyde and a shift between the doppelgangers. The blood of the Victorian gentleman is frozen by what he beholds.

*"I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both."*

I love the gothic genre and I love this novella. I think so much can be taken from it because the number of interpretations that have been made of it are huge. It is told in my favourite style of narration: epistolary. There are a number of narrators, including Jekyll himself. Consequently, the interpretive value is increased significantly. I've spoken a lot about Utterson, but there is also the strong possibility of Jekyll being an unreliable narrator as he has deluded himself almost completely. One could also compare the work to Stevenson's own life and his self-imposed exile as he wrote this gothic master piece. In addition to this, Hyde can be seen as the personification of having the so called exact physical characteristics of a criminal in the Victorian age, and the homosexual undertones are also very implicit in the text. There is just so much going on in here.

The literary value of this is, of course, incredibly high. But, it is also incredibly entertaining to read. I've written essays about this novella for university; thus, I could praise this book all day and night. This is, certainly, the best novella I've read to date. I had to buy a Folio Society edition of it, I just had to.

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## Jeff says

### *What I learned reading Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?*

By Jeff

- 1) Some things are better left unsaid. Really? Who knows how Hyde indulged himself? Hookers? Pirating? Running an orphan sweat shop? Booze? Opium? Ripping the "Do Not Remove under Penalty of Law" labels from mattresses?
- 2) Never have a nosy lawyer as a best friend. Who the hell hangs out with lawyers?
- 3) My evil Hyde would not be a top hat wearing, monkey-like Juggernaut. Sorry, he would be more Dean Martin-esque, a la "The Nutty Professor."
- 4) How in need Victorian England was for body waxing and/or Nair.

5) As long as my evil twin was a different size - stretchy spandex material for those embarrassing and untimely changes.

6) This has no business being a musical. An episode of Scooby Doo, sure. (I would have “worked” my way through the entire brothel, if it wasn’t for you meddling kids!) Stage musical, no!

7) Possible Hyde potion flavors: Salted Caramel, Lime Mint, White Chocolate Almond, Tangerine Mango

8) Evil housekeeper-good, evil hideout attached to regular pad-just stupid. Note to self: make Evil me smarter and even more cunning.

9) Some adaptations over the years: In Abbot and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Costello, playing Tubby, is transformed into a big mouse. Huh? In Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde, the movie poster warned: “The sexual transformation of a man into a woman will actually take place before your very eyes!” “Acting! Brilliant! Thank you!”

10) At around one hundred pages, this book (novella?) was the perfect length. Any longer and Stevenson’s leaden prose style would have transformed me into grumpy, whiney, sleepy reader.

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## Stephen says

**KUDOS, KUDOS** and more **KUDOS** to you, Mr. Stevenson!! First, for bringing me more happy than a **Slip N Slide** on a scorching summer day by providing Warner Bros with the inspiration for one of my favorite cartoons, *Hyde and Go Tweet*:

...I mean who didn't love giant, cat-eating Tweety Hyde.

Second, and more seriously, when I tardily returned to your classic gothic novella as an adult, you once again red-lined my joy meter with the strength and eloquence of your story craft. Your story is the gift that keeps on giving.

In both structure and content, this narrative is a work of art. From a technical perspective, it can be admired for its superb mingling of different literary devices. More importantly (for me at least), the story itself is a powerful depiction of some very important ideas about humanity and what we sometimes hide behind the veneer of civilization.

Structurally, the novella crams, stuffs and presses a complete, fully-fleshed story in its scant 88 pages by using a brilliant combo of point of view changes, dialogue, flashback and epistolary components. In lesser hands, the amount of information and story contained in this tale would have required a lot more paper. In addition to being a model of conciseness, the change in style, in my opinion, added to the enjoyment of the story by allowing the reader to be more “present” during the narrative.

Content-wise, Stevenson really knocks the cover off the ball. Despite being written in 1886, this tale still stands as the quintessential fictional examination of the duality of man’s nature and the very human struggle between the civilized and primal aspects of our beings. The constrained, repressive society of the Victorian Period in which the story takes place provides the perfect back drop for the model of outward English propriety, Dr. Henry Jekyll, to battle (metaphorically and literally) the darker, baser but still very human desires personified in the person of Edward Hyde. What a perfect allegory between the face people wear in

public and the one they take out only in private.

*Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me, and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life.*

Stevenson's prose is engaging and I found myself pulled into the narrative from the beginning. I particularly enjoyed when Stevenson wrote of his characters' reactions to being in the presence of Mr. Hyde and the palpable, pervasive, but non-pinpointable, sense of evil and dread that radiated from him. For example:

*'There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable...'*

*... '[Hyde's features] were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul.'*

*'The last I think; for, O poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend.'*

I was also impressed with Henry Jekyll's description of his growing realization that man not homogenous inside his own skin but a conglomerate of competing personalities and aspects.

*With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to the truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two... I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens*

Overall, this is one of those classics that lives up to its name and rightfully belongs among the highlights of gothic fiction. I am very, very pleased that I decided to revisit this story as I found that I loved as an adult what I could only "try to appreciate" as a child.

4.0 stars. HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!!!

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## Anne says

[For the love of all that's good and holy, please don't "correct" me in the comments. Hello? Joking!  
It's obvious that Mr. Stevenson's *real* inspira

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## Ariel says

OH BOY, OH BOY, PEOPLE I HAVE A NEW FAVOURITE!

This edition came with two stories, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and "The Bottle Imp," and they were both awesome let's talk about them. I'm so excited I can't contain myself.

Jekyll:

- So. Well. Crafted. From beginning to end the story was engaging and the themes were quite straightforward, but I really love that in writing (see: George Orwell is my favourite author). I like it when authors aren't bogging their messages down in unneeded subtleties.
- Some of these sentences, I swear to god! One of my favourite ones: "I slept after the prostration of the day, with a stringent and profound slumber which not even the nightmares that wrung me could avail to break." The context doesn't even matter. It's solid gold.
- My only distress with this story comes not from anything Stevenson did, but from the fact that it's so famous (\*spoiler alert\*): I wish I didn't know Jekyll and Hyde are the same person! Gosh darn it. The story is solid enough that it doesn't matter if you know or not, (which is important: if one spoiler can ruin your story you don't have a very good story), but it would have been so wickedly fun not to know. Stevenson did such a good job of hiding it!
- The ideas of evil vs good in humans were great. And the idea that Jekyll didn't hate Hyde.. GOSH DARNIT THIS WAS GREAT.
- That ending though. That ending. THAT ENDING, JESUS.

Bottle:

- I had no idea what the heck this was, which made it so much fun. What a story! Stevenson has an awesome imagination. To avoid spoilers I'll keep this brief.
- This story was so stressful. Oh man I felt legitimate anxiety. My heart, it was not happy. WHICH IS GREAT. It's amazing when a piece of writing can make you feel real dread.
- Why was it set in Hawaii? When talking to a friend (who is Scottish. and so is Stevenson. so I trust her on this subject) she explained to me that Stevenson was known for being a world traveller, so maybe he just wanted to explore something new. It was interesting, I'd like to look more into the significance of the Hawaii setting.. definitely something to do with being an island?
- I wanted this to end more sadly. Gosh it was so set up for a sad ending, and I was dreading dreading dreading that it would end badly but sometimes these things can't end well! I think, ultimately, the ending didn't feel too bad. It could have been done worse, I think the "saviour" situation that happened had legitimate merit, but still. I think this would have been better if it had ended horribly.

Go read this, seriously people.

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## Manny says

[They didn't. (hide spoiler)]

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## Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

It seems like I've been familiar with the "good" Dr. Jekyll and the "evil" Mr. Hyde all my life, but the thing that most struck me, once I finally got around to actually reading this classic, is--other than their outward appearance--how alike these two aspects of the same man actually are.

Dr. Jekyll has always been aware of the duality in his character: he admits to some apparently fairly serious youthful indiscretions, and even when he consciously puts his vices behind him for a time, he always feels the yearning to give into them again. When he creates the potion that transforms him into Hyde, he's not leaving only his virtues with Jekyll and putting all his evil aspects into Hyde:

... although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the

other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly toward the worse.

So Henry Jekyll still has all of his original hidden vices, and Hyde seems to me to be just a way for him to let the evil side of himself loose without (Jekyll thinks) fear of repercussions. But Hyde isn't purely evil either--there seems to be more of Jekyll's character in Hyde than the good doctor is willing to admit, or Hyde wouldn't always have been so anxious to turn himself back into Jekyll, like when he writes the frantic letter to his friend for help. I think our doctor is a bit of an unreliable narrator.

It's interesting to think about the symbolism of the names here: the "good" doctor carries the name "Jekyll" (French for "I" kill), and the evil Hyde is the part of Jekyll himself that he was always trying to hide.

Most of the other characters also seem to have their hidden vices. There's a lot of discussion and symbolism in the book about dual natures: the city itself, and even Jekyll's home, have a proper/degenerate dichotomy, with good and bad co-existing side by side. Certainly this was a major issue in Victorian times, when people in society wanted to appear very proper, but there was some major hidden sleaziness and vice.

I'm not sure, in the end, what the book is trying to say is the cure for this problem. Repression doesn't appear to work very well, but at the same time, Jekyll's woes and eventual death come from his caving in to his evil desires, hidden or not. Maybe there are no easy answers.

Actor Richard Mansfield portrayed Jekyll and Hyde in a theater production in the 1880's (so well that he was suspected of being Jack the Ripper!)

Buddy read with Jeff, Anne, Holly, Stepheny, Delee and Dustin. A big thanks to Anne for hosting our party! Sorry if we trashed your house!

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