

**Exam tip: you will stand out as a candidate if you write several points about the way the author structures the text and how this supports their purpose. You should also comment on whether or not this adheres to or deviates from the genre/literary style of the text.**

### **The Gothic setting:**

Gothic fiction is obsessed with old buildings as site human decay, it is a house of degeneration and decomposition.

How do gothic elements relate to Stevenson's purpose?

- Providing atmospheric effects (pathetic fallacy)
- In Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Stevenson invokes the malevolent pathetic fallacy provided by the typically gothic use of fog, the decaying building that represents the occupants disordered mental state and the use of prison-like architecture, however, he adapts and innovates within the conventional framework of Gothic fiction because he dispenses with the remote geographical setting of the conventional Gothic tale choosing to set the story in London.
  - Why set the story in London?
- Stevenson uses London as the psychological focus of the narrative. London is the home of the professional upper classes, the degradation, decay and disorder are situated in the heart of central London which suggests that the professional upper classes that live in the centre of London are also decaying and corrupt.

Robert Louis Stevenson's 'The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde' is set in an allegorical, symbolic version of London. Stevenson's setting is not written to describe the city but rather to reinforce the sense of confusion and mystery of his characters and reflect the protagonist's mental state.

### **The House:**

Jekyll's house is used as a symbol for Jekyll himself, here Stevenson is following in the Gothic novel tradition of associating the labyrinthine, decaying building with the body and mind of an outcast in society.

Reflecting Jekyll's desire to hide a part of himself, his house is arranged as a series of concentric spaces around a mysterious centre. The most carefully-guarded innermost part of Jekyll's house, the cabinet, symbolises the innermost part of his mind, with Hyde at its centre, the most primitive, instinctive or most hidden part. Body, mirror-reflections and texts all reflect back the image of the labyrinthine house, which in turn reflects back the larger labyrinthine city beyond.

Jekyll's house represents the gothic trope of the house of decay and degradation, it is isolated and far from recognisable landmarks, and Stevenson creates a threatening malevolent atmosphere through the decay of the back entrance, the flickering fire in the hall and the chaotic dissecting theatre. Though Jekyll's cabinet exemplifies the gothic trope of the prison as, Jekyll's cabinet has three dusty windows barred with iron, where Jekyll isolates himself and from which he looks out 'like some disconsolate prisoner'. In the Gothic tradition, the decay of the house, the sordid back door and seedy front square corresponds with the degeneration of its inhabitant: Jekyll cannot escape from Hyde, from his decaying body or from his decaying house.

embrace of his 'other' may be the reason that he is able to survive within a changing society whereas Jekyll and Lanyon had not. Ironically, unable to accommodate their own 'others' both Lanyon and Jekyll are driven to a very different 'other', to death itself.

Hyde is presented as an irrepressible and inevitable force that is the product of the repressive moral imperatives of the Church and Victorian standards of acceptability. Despite Hyde's irregularity and unpredictability both Jekyll, Utterson and Lanyon attempt to categorise Hyde within the existing social structures of medicine and law. Jekyll tries to define Hyde clearly and order his personality by creating two identities: two doors, two separate houses for them, yet both remain irredeemably mixed. Similarly, Utterson apparently creates a 'case' that is highly ordered: a story involving a series of opposed characters, divided into ten chapters, each one beginning with an adverbial of time, the text beginning iconically with a "Story of the Door" and ending clearly with the word 'end'. He intends to provide a sense of coherence and authenticity through the use of documents, however, the reader is given no assurance that these documents have been unedited, omitted or destroyed.

In a similar way, Jekyll aspires to create a personality that is stable and clearly ordered, but Hyde, the expression of what is "inorganic" and "amorphous" rebels against these legal, physical and textual structures, he defies the hierarchical structures imposed by Jekyll, Utterson and wider contemporary society. The chaos created by Hyde's may be derived from his own multiplicity. In Jekyll's final statement he realises Hyde's composition: 'he was the slime of the pit [that] seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no name'. The adjective 'formlessness,' associated here with 'evil' and 'death,' can be seen as part of his Jekyll's desire to impose fixed dualistic structures on experience. However, the descriptions of 'formlessness', being 'amorphous', like 'water', 'darkness', 'fog' and 'dust' implies that Hyde is an ever-changing and irrepressible force.

Hyde's multiplicity is recognised throughout and is expressed through the dichotomy between the subhuman and superhuman aspects of his character. The semantic field of Darwinism is used throughout; Hyde is 'troglydotic', 'ape-like', 'brutal', 'an animal' and 'primitive', even his stature and hair growth refers to ape-like physical characteristics. Yet simultaneously Hyde is associated with the superhuman, he is 'like Satan', 'pure evil' and seems to reside in each character he encounters. He has associations that are both subhuman, and superhuman and profoundly human.

To conclude, Stevenson presents his characters as composite beings that are unable to fully experience life whilst under the constraining influence of only religious and scientific institutions. Utterson is 'gaunt' and self 'mortifying', whereas Jekyll and Lanyon are unable to survive under the constraints of society. Therefore Stevenson may be calling for a more liberal society that reconciles morality with the freedom to act out repressed desires. He suggests that in doing a less hypocritical and repressive society will be formed and we will mitigate the intense and destructive effects of restrained impulses.

Full mark example essay:

In this extract, Mr Enfield and Utterson discuss the incident of the child being trampled. Explore the presentation of Hyde in this extract and other places in the novel.

(30 marks)

In the novella 'Jekyll and Hyde' Stevenson exemplifies the detrimental effects of rigid hierarchical structures on society, exploring the hypocrisy of Victorian society through modernist and gothic literature. Stevenson follows many of the literary conventions of the traditional gothic, however, its references to atavism are contained within the individual which is in turn located within London, enabling Stevenson to explore the duality present in all men. Though Mr Hyde is a distilled representation of the unsavoury repressed side of man, Stevenson explores the expression of this repressed 'other' present in all men.

In the extract, Enfield unconsciously associates with Hyde, calling him 'my gentleman', 'my man', 'my prisoner' and 'our friend'. The determiner 'my' implies a connection between Enfield and Hyde and connotes that Enfield has imposed a hierarchical structure on this relationship as Hyde is presented as the belonging of Enfield. Alternatively, the determiner 'my' serves to objectify Hyde. In this way, evil becomes a fixed and established object. This may suggest that the upper classes excuse or dissociate from their evil natures through presenting them as predetermined and original. We may view this as Stevenson's criticism of Christianity, which excuses immorality under the guise that it is innate to civilisation rather than the product of repressed desires and constraining social structures.

Furthermore, Stevenson presents Hyde as a symbol for the repressed desires of contemporary society, as such, descriptions of him are indeterminate. Enfield explains that he is unable to 'specify the point [...] of his deformity', there is 'nothing out of the way' yet he is 'extraordinary'. Hyde's appearance is both uncanny and ordinary; Hyde, the division of Jekyll, is further divided yet these divisions occupy parallel syntactic units. This is reinforced through the plosives 'downright detestable', the alliteration of the 'd' sounds creates a harsh sound, reflecting the disdain that Enfield directs at Hyde. However, the earlier associations with Hyde indicate that this disdain is a projection of Enfield's repression of his darker desires.

Similarly, Utterson's first meeting with Hyde involves a vast amount of interrogatives and fricatives, Hyde is a 'figure with no face'. This may demonstrate the feeling of anxiety and discomfort that the elite had around the 'criminal class'. The inability for other characters to recognise Mr Hyde's appearance further implies that he is the incarnation of their own unconscious desires and thoughts. This is strengthened by the fact that Hyde turns to Utterson 'as if upon some sudden reflection,' here Stevenson depicts the Hyde and Utterson in parallel as they staring fixedly at each other. Yet the noun 'reflection' may suggest one that Utterson is looking at himself in a mirror, Hyde is his dual side just as he is Jekyll's.

Hyde's influence over the external world can be seen during 'The Search For Mr Hyde'. Utterson's dream ends with the "wider labyrinths of lamp-light city". The lack of the determiner 'a' in front of 'lamp-light city' suggests that London is an uncountable, amorphous place with no fixed identity or clear beginning and end; like Hyde, the city is reminiscent of 'water' or 'darkness'. The noun 'labyrinth' connotes the inextricable, unknowable topography of London which repeatedly leads the explorer back to the same place, Jekyll's cabinet. Like a 'labyrinth' or 'maze', any indicator of location is kept deliberately vague, he encounters 'a man [...] a child [...] a room [...] a house [...] a figure' yet any identifiable features are withheld in order to perpetuate Utterson's sense of confusion. Stevenson accentuates such chaos through the manipulation of

time, with increasingly fast action and greater spatial disorder ("more stealthily [...] more swiftly and still the more swiftly [...] dizziness [...] wider labyrinths [...] at every corner"). Both space and time lack in linearity, regularity, predictability, creating a chaotic external world that corresponds to Utterson and civilisation's undefined fear of the 'faceless' figure of Hyde.

Despite Hyde's irregularity and unpredictability both Jekyll, Utterson and Lanyon attempt to categorise, diagnose and segregate Hyde. They categorise Hyde within the existing social structures of medicine and law. Jekyll tries to define Hyde clearly and order his personality by creating two identities: two doors, two separate houses for them, yet both remain irredeemably mixed. Utterson apparently creates a 'case' that is highly ordered: a story involving a series of opposed characters, divided into ten chapters, each one beginning with an adverbial of time, the text beginning iconically with a "Story of the Door" and ending clearly with the word 'end'. He intends to provide a sense of coherence and authenticity through the use of documents, however, the reader is given no assurance that these documents have been unedited, omitted or destroyed.

Hyde is unable to be constrained.

In a similar way, Jekyll the protagonist aspires to create a personality that is stable and clearly ordered, but Hyde, the expression of what is "inorganic" and "amorphous", makes increasingly chaotic eruptions and finally establishes himself permanently. Hyde rebels against these legal, physical and textual structures, he defies the hierarchical structures imposed by Jekyll, Utterson and wider contemporary society. Hyde rejects established authority, burning letters, 'writing blasphemies in Jekyll's name' and destroying the portrait of Jekyll's father. The murder of the MP Sir Danvers Carew may be viewed as a rebellion against order and governance, the foundation of civilisation.

The chaos created by Hyde's may be derived from his own duality. In Jekyll's final statement he realises Hyde's composition: 'he was the slime of the pit [that] seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape'. The adjective 'formlessness,' associated here with 'evil' and 'death,' can be seen as part of his Jekyll's desire to impose fixed dualistic structures on experience. However, the descriptions of 'formlessness', being 'amorphous', like 'water', 'darkness', 'fog' and 'dust' implies that Hyde is an ever-changing and irrepressible force.

Hyde's multiplicity is recognised throughout and is expressed through the dichotomy between the subhuman and superhuman aspects of his character. The semantic field of Darwinism is used throughout, Hyde is 'troglodytic', 'ape-like', 'brutal', 'an animal' and 'primitive', even his stature and hair growth refers to ape-like physical characteristics. Yet simultaneously Hyde is associated with the superhuman, he is 'like Satan', 'pure evil' and seems to reside in each character he encounters. He has associations that are both subhuman, and superhuman and profoundly human.

Utterson's 'story' reaches a climax during 'The Last Night'. Stevenson constructs the revelation is that Utterson's break into the laboratory is a reflection of the Carew murder. The violence of Utterson's command to break down the laboratory door is emphasised by repetition ('the axe [...] the axe'; 'the blow [...] the blow'; 'again [...] again'). The alliteration creates a relentless and forceful tone, reflecting the desperation and violence of the action whilst the assonance and concentrations of stressed syllables ('four times the blow fell') creates a drawn-out sound similar to the pains of death and the ensuing 'cries' and 'screams'.

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Stevenson's criticism of Christianity extends to other respectable figures within the novella. Enfield unconsciously associates with Hyde, calling him 'my gentleman', 'my man', 'my prisoner' and 'our friend'. The determiner 'my' implies a connection between Enfield and Hyde and connotes that Enfield has imposed a hierarchical structure on this relationship as Hyde is presented as the belonging of Enfield. Alternatively, the determiner 'my' serves to objectify Hyde. In this way, evil becomes a fixed and established object. This may suggest that the upper classes excuse or dissociate from their evil natures through presenting them as predetermined and original. We may view this as Stevenson's criticism of Christianity, which excuses immorality under the guise that it is innate to civilisation rather than the product of repressed desires and constraining social structures.

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