

6. Starting with this extract, write about how Stevenson presents Hyde as an evil character in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Stevenson presents Hyde as an evil character through the phrase: “evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of...”. The adverbs “broadly and plainly” suggest that the differences in the “countenance” of Henry Jekyll and Mr Hyde were obvious and this portrays them as direct opposites. The adverb “plainly” also suggests that - despite his name - Hyde has nothing to conceal and that, to Dr Jekyll at least, his misdemeanours are blatantly evil.

Earlier on in the novel, Utterson remarks that “if I ever read Satan’s signature upon a face, it is on that of your friend Mr Hyde”. This portrays Hyde as the embodiment of evil and plays on the Victorians’ fear of Hell and the Devil. The sibilance of “Satan’s signature” also reinforces the disgust felt by those who ever saw Mr Hyde as: “none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh”. This implies that Hyde’s appearance caused people to have a physical reaction towards him, for example becoming unwell. Additionally, the “hissing” sound could mirror the sound Hyde makes when he first meets Utterson. This reaction could foreshadow or hint at the atrocities that Hyde commits, for example the brutal murder of Sir Danvers Carew (a respected MP).

The description of Hyde, in this extract, of being the “lethal side of man” also highlights Jekyll’s own beliefs that “man is not truly one, but truly two”. He suggested that man has both a good side and an evil side (which for most people never surfaces). However Hyde’s ability to embody the repulsive Victorian man’s worst fears, suggests that he is otherworldly and hints at his manipulative nature. It also suggests the power of science and many scientists’ fascinations at “transcendental” medicine (and Hyde being an example of the consequences of it goes wrong). This imagery of Hyde also plays to current affairs - at Stevenson’s time of writing - as the Theory of Evolution was being debated, alongside the idea that man descended from primates. The idea of degeneration was deeply feared by many Victorians, and certain people were seen to be closer to primates than others (for example those who were of a different race or were disabled).

The earlier description of Hyde as “ape-like” portrays him as not only evil, but also less than human. This bestial image implies that he cannot control himself or his actions, which makes him seem even scarier to the reader. It also gives the reader an impression of his physical appearance and perhaps why those who look upon him feel so disgusted. Apes are also often seen as violent and unpredictable creatures, heightening Hyde’s ability to terrorise those around him.

The phrase “an imprint of deformity and decay” also reinforces how different Hyde is to the “smoothed-faced” Henry Jekyll. Whilst Jekyll is a well-respected man who can “smooth” over his problems with a mask, Hyde is unable to escape from his “evil” persona. The word “imprint” suggests a permanency, like a tattoo or “signature”, and could also reflect how those who see Hyde are left with a permanent image of him in their minds. Not only that, but as Hyde is seen to be like a monkey, the word “imprint” conjures up images of footprints and reflects how Hyde stomps around London, brutally killing anything that gets in his way. The harsh consonance