

## **The Character of Dr Jekyll - Transcript**

**Narrator:** The smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below.'

**Presenter:** This is how author Robert Louis Stevenson describes Dr Jekyll when the respected scientist lets slip a hint of an evil, unnatural side fighting for control.

The author uses violent, horrifying language to tap into Victorian fears and anxieties about the potentially ungodly nature of science.

Characters at the opening of the novella describe a rather different version of Dr Jekyll - a man with 'every mark of capacity and kindness' who's respectable social standing is reinforced by the many academic titles shown after his name.

He hosts dinner parties for esteemed members of society - but his guests know nothing of the dark experiments that he conducts behind closed doors experiments which see him transform into Mr Hyde - his evil, unrepentant alter-ego, a transformation which represents the theme of nature vs the supernatural.

The author describes a switch in Jekyll's demeanour at the mention of Hyde, with his 'handsome face' turning 'pale to the very lips.'

Now, the Victorian era was a time in which scientific advances like Darwin's Theory of Evolution clashed with some religious beliefs.

So when Jekyll writes in his confession statement...

**Dr Jekyll:** 'my devil had long been caged, he came out roaring.'

**Presenter:** The author is playing upon Victorian anxieties, around scientific discoveries being seen as ungodly. Jekyll becomes increasingly erratic, isolated and unpredictable, as he tries to conceal and control Hyde.

**Dr Jekyll:** 'it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me.'

**Presenter:** But it's too late...

**Dr Jekyll:** 'That child of Hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred.'

**Presenter:** ...and, fully consumed by Hyde, the once-respected scientist meets a tragic end.

As well as Jekyll being used to consider Victorian views on science and religion, Stevenson also uses his character to explore human nature itself.

What do you think the author is saying, through Jekyll, about - as he puts it - the 'duality of man' and the human capacity for good and evil?