

Student Essay on Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson

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Essay

"Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde reflects the idea of good and evil in man and society. How does this show about his views on duality and society?"

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was written by Robert Louis Stevenson in 1886 and is set in 19th century London. Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850. He trained as a lawyer first before he first became a writer. In 1887 he left England for the South Seas and made his home on Samoa where he lived for the rest of his life.

The novel of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is the story of one man - Dr Jekyll who is a keen scientist and is working on creating a chemical potion that would get rid of all guilty feelings in a person and therefore make them happier. When Dr Jekyll initially believes he can change the world, he decided to experiment on himself and it doesn't go to plan and ends up going wrong and instead of getting rid of the guilt and bad inside of him, the solution begins to show all evil things and Dr Jekyll becomes and names himself "Mr Hyde" to represent all the hidden and repressed parts of his character.

When Dr Jekyll transforms into Mr Hyde, it only seems to happen at night when it's dark, showing that evil is most awake at night and good is overpowered because Jekyll tries to control the Hyde in him but Hyde is too strong.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the novel during his stay in Bournemouth and the setting is Victorian London. However it seems that Edinburgh is on his mind because of the split in society with the prosperous and respectable New Town and the poverty and desperation of the old town. A figure from Edinburgh called Deacon Brodie is like Jekyll and Hyde, a respectable person by day and a thief by night. This gave Stevenson the idea of different people in personality and actions but not in appearance.

Jekyll and Hyde are totally different in personality and attitude as one used the back door leading onto the poorer side of London, which could represent evil, but the other personality using the well-kept front door leading onto a respectable street of the rich area of London, this shows how the 2 sides of Dr Jekyll differ with society.