



Book club 23: Crime & guilt

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde
by Robert Louis Stevenson

Rules

In this book club you will discuss *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson in a group of 4-6 readers. The book club opens with a brief introduction that one of you reads out loud. The book club then continues in four rounds:

- 1 Round 1 consists of 5 questions about the plot. One of the group members acts as the quiz master who reads each question out loud, after which everyone (including the quiz master) writes down their answer. The correct answers will appear on the screen after you have turned over the final question card. You may then check your answers and calculate your scores.
- 2 Round 2 consists of asking and answering questions each of you have about the book/story: in turn, the players say what they did not understand about the book and try to find an answer together. When the biggest confusions are solved, round 3 starts.
- 3 Round 3 consists of discussion questions. The person with the most correct answers to the quiz questions from round 1 gets to be the first to turn over a card and respond to the question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas. Take turns until all cards are flipped.
- 4 Round 4 is when you get to review the text. How many stars would you give the text and why? Discuss this together until you have reached a shared verdict. Use the text box to explain your choice.

This book club was developed by the editors of LitLab, a digital laboratory for high school literature research. For more teaching materials, visit www.litlab.nl. A teacher's guide and a didactic justification of this teaching method are available at www.litlab.nl/docenten.



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A close-up image of a person's face, showing their teeth and eyes, which serves as the background for the book title.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Introduction

'It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature.'

Strange events lead Mr Utterson, a lawyer, to worry about his old friend Dr Jekyll. Jekyll seems to be under the influence of Mr Hyde, a mysterious man who fills people with fear and unease, but who is very difficult to describe. What hold does he have over Dr Jekyll? As we follow Mr Utterson on his investigations through dark lonely streets and foggy parts of the city, the story takes a bizarre and deeply disturbing turn. This novella is often considered a classic piece of gothic horror, but it also includes features of early science fiction, a detective story, and a psychological thriller. At the centre of the story lies the question of duality: can good and evil be separated, or does trying to do so cause even more danger? In this book club you are invited to discuss questions like these.

Round 1: Quiz

Turn over the 5 cards with quiz questions one by one. Write down the answer on a piece of paper.

Round 2: Initial questions

What questions popped into your head while reading *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*? Were there any parts that left you confused or wondering? Take turns sharing your questions about the story and try to come up with answers together. Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.

Round 3: Discussion

The player with the most correct answers to the quiz questions gets to turn over a card first from one of the two piles of discussion questions. Once they have answered the question, the other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas.

Round 4: Review

Review *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by rating the novel on a scale of one to five stars, and then provide an explanation for your choice. Discuss what aspects you enjoyed and what aspects you didn't, and provide reasons for your opinions. Reflect on whether the discussion influenced your individual perspective, and if so, how. Incorporate examples and arguments from your responses to the discussion questions to support your review.



Question 1

How do we first hear about Mr Hyde in the story?

Question 2

Which three characters have been friends since they were students?

Question 3

What events lead to the murder of Sir Danvers Carew?

Question 4

The first part of the book is written from Mr Utterson's perspective. From which two other perspectives is the final part of the novella told?

Question 5

What is Mr Hyde's living situation?

Answers

1. Richard Enfield tells Mr Utterson that he saw Mr Hyde trample a little girl.
2. Mr Utterson, Dr Jekyll, and Dr Lanyon
3. Jekyll hasn't taken the potion for two months, and when he finally does, Hyde becomes especially violent.
4. Dr Lanyon and Dr Jekyll
5. He rents rooms from a landlady in a dingy part of town, in Soho.



Question

3

Question

2

Question

1

Answers

Question

5

Question

4



Personal connections? 1

'The more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask.' Mr Utterson stays loyal to his friend Jekyll, even when things start to seem suspicious. Can friendship sometimes make it harder to see clearly or act wisely? Have you ever been in a situation where your relationship with someone influenced your judgement?

Personal connections? 2

Imagine you are in Dr Jekyll's situation, and you can turn into a version of yourself that can do things without them being traced back to you. What would you do as your own version of Hyde?

Personal connections? 3

Although Utterson and Enfield both describe themselves as the type to mind their own business, they go out of their way to help others. Do you think people today would respond like Enfield did when Hyde trampled the girl? Why or why not? What does this say about being a 'gentleman' then, in the Victorian age, versus now?

Personal connections? 4

If you could ask Robert Louis Stevenson, the writer, two questions about the novella, what would you like to ask him and why?

Personal connections? 5

Do you think Jekyll is responsible for what Hyde does, even though he loses control when he transforms? Think about real-life situations, like people doing things under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Does this comparison change how you see Jekyll's actions? Why or why not?

Personal connections? 6

Jekyll tries to hide the parts of himself he finds shameful by turning into Hyde. Can you think of a better way to deal with your own bad habits, mistakes, or impulses? What helps you stay in control?

Personal connections? 7

The story is mostly told from Utterson's perspective, not Jekyll's. How does this influence the way you understand the mystery? Would you rather experience the whole story from inside Jekyll's mind? What would be the pros and cons of this version?

Personal connections? 8

In Jekyll's time, people had to follow strict rules about how to behave in public. Jekyll responded by hiding part of himself through Hyde. Are there still rules or expectations today about how people should behave in public? In what kinds of situations do you think people still feel the need to hide certain sides of themselves?



Personal connections?

3

Personal connections?

2

Personal connections?

1

Personal connections?

6

Personal connections?

5

Personal connections?

4

Personal connections?

8

Personal connections?

7



Food for thought? 1

'(...) 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.' Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is often referred to as a story about the split between good and evil in human nature. Does the quote support or challenge that idea? How?

Food for thought? 2

'He, I say – I cannot say, I. That child of hell had nothing human.' Compartmentalisation is a psychological defence mechanism in which thoughts and feelings are kept separated from each other to avoid mental discomfort caused by conflicting emotions or beliefs. How does the idea of compartmentalisation help us understand Jekyll's relationship with Hyde?

Food for thought? 3

Descriptions of Hyde often seem to include contradictions between seemingly opposite characteristics, as in the quotes below. What effect do these contradictions have on your understanding or image of Hyde throughout the story? 'a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness' 'his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution'.

Food for thought? 4

London plays an important role in the novella as its setting. What do the descriptions of London's empty, foggy streets at night contribute to the story and its mood?

Food for thought? 5

Jekyll says the direction of his scientific studies 'led wholly towards the mystic and transcendental'. Why do you think Lanyon is so opposed to Jekyll's approach to science? Use examples from the text and consider how science was viewed in the Victorian period.

Food for thought? 6

'If he be Mr Hyde, I will be Mr Seek.' Mr Utterson tries to uncover the truth in a calm and logical way. Do you think his method helps or delays the discovery of what's really going on? Would the mystery have been solved faster with a different kind of character in his place?

Food for thought? 7

The novella is often described as both gothic horror and early science fiction. Do you think *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is more of a gothic horror story or more of a science fiction story? Explain your view using examples from the text.

Food for thought? 8

Mr Hyde uses the old dissecting room entrance, while Dr Jekyll lives in a respectable-looking house on a different street. Can these two buildings symbolise the split between public and private identity, or between Jekyll and Hyde themselves? Explain.



Food for thought?

3

Food for thought?

2

Food for thought?

1

Food for thought?

6

Food for thought?

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Food for thought?

4

Food for thought?

8

Food for thought?

7