

## Topic Page: [Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde](#)

Definition: **Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Dr** from *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*

Two contrasting or opposed aspects of one person. Jekyll is the 'good man', Hyde is 'the evil that is present'. The phrase comes from R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). In this, Dr Jekyll is a physician who is conscious of the duality, the mixture of good and evil, in his own person, and he becomes fascinated by the possibility of what would happen if the two sides could be embodied in different personalities. He succeeds by means of a drug, and is taken over by the evil personality of Mr Hyde. The result for both is disaster.

Summary Article: **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Strange Case of**  
from *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*

A novel by Robert Louis Stevenson, published in 1886. Apart from *Treasure Island*, it is probably his best-known work.

The mystery of Jekyll and Hyde is gradually revealed to the reader through the disparate narratives of Mr Enfield, Mr Utterson, Dr Lanyon and Poole, the butler at Jekyll's house. The respectable Dr Jekyll wants to separate the good and evil aspects of his nature. By means of a transforming drug he has secretly developed in his laboratory, he succeeds in freeing his evil propensities into the repulsive form of Mr Hyde. Initially he finds it easy to return to the personality of Jekyll, but in time this becomes more difficult and he finds himself slipping involuntarily into being Hyde. Eventually his supplies of the drug run out and he cannot manage to reduplicate the chemical formula. Hyde is now wanted for murder, and Jekyll kills himself. The body discovered in his sanctum is that of Hyde, but the confession Jekyll leaves behind establishes that the two men were versions of the same person.

The story has attracted much commentary, being read as a version of the Scottish Arminianism of James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, a variant of the *Doppelgänger* myth, and a pre-Freudian study of ego and libido. G.K. Chesterton noted, however, that Hyde is not a diabolic *alter ego* but a diminished part of Jekyll's whole personality, pure evil where Jekyll is a mixture of good and evil. Jekyll's deluded belief that, because man is dual rather than whole, the good in him can hence be separated from the evil, provides a study in degeneration and ultimate human responsibility.

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Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the strange case of. (2000). In I. Ousby (Ed.), *The Cambridge guide to literature in English* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/strange\\_case\\_of\\_dr\\_jekyll\\_and\\_mr\\_hyde](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/strange_case_of_dr_jekyll_and_mr_hyde)

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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