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Reflections: A Student Response Journal

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Robert Louis Stevenson

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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection–that is, stopping to think about what you are reading–that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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Story of the Door

1. Though the author of this novel, Robert Louis Stevenson, was born and grew up in Scotland, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is set in England. Draw a small map of the island on which Scotland, Wales, and England are located. Also label the map with the names of the following bodies of water which surround the island:

   A. The Atlantic Ocean
   B. The Irish Sea
   C. The English Channel
   D. The North Sea

2. Fiction is the designation given to writing that is not fact based, but is a work of the author's imagination. Fiction books are categorized according to the general subject matter of the fiction, and sometimes also according to the period of time when they were written. These categories are called "genres." *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* would fall under the genre category of Gothic mystery. Write down the titles of six novels that you have either studied or know about. Beside each, write the name of the author and the year it was published. Then list the type of "genre" you think that novel would fall under. (Some of the genres are: Horror, Science Fiction, Historical, Coming-of-Age, Action/Adventure, Spy, and Sea novels.)

3. When Mr. Utterson and his cousin, Mr. Enfield, go for a walk in the city of London one day, Mr. Enfield tells him of an event which happened to him on this street one dark night. Write a summary of what happened that night in eight sentences or fewer. You could begin your summary with the words, "It was three o'clock in the morning as Mr. Enfield walked down the empty..."

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Search for Mr. Hyde

7. Mr. Utterson, as we know, is a lawyer. Years ago, he drew up a strange will for Dr. Jekyll, but its terms continue to bother him. Mr. Hyde, whom Mr. Utterson does not know, is to be the recipient of Dr. Jekyll's estate. Mr. Utterson decides to stake out Dr. Jekyll's house and finally meets Mr. Hyde. Write a thumbnail sketch about each of the four Englishmen in the story by referring to what has been written about them. In your sketch, write about: their ages, physical appearances, professions, and personalities.

8. This novel is written in the third person, which means a "narrator" tells the story. If a novel were written in the first person, the narrator would be the person relating the story. Look back through the first two chapters and record a paragraph that is written in the third person. Find another that is written in the first person. Copy down each sentence that makes you certain of which person (first or third) the section is.

9. We finally meet Mr. Hyde. After he and Mr. Utterson talk for a bit, Mr. Hyde allows the lawyer to see his full face. Mr. Utterson says, "Oh my poor old Henry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend." Suppose a friend of yours had never heard of "Satan." Write the conversation you would have which would explain Satan to that friend. Also explain why you think Mr. Utterson says that "Satan's signature" is on Mr. Hyde's face. It might begin like this:

   Your Friend: What is this *Satan* thing?

   You: Ever hear of The Devil? Well, …

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The Carew Murder Case

16. This chapter takes place a year later. There has been a brutal killing, which is described in detail, having been seen by a maid-servant looking down from her window at about eleven o'clock at night. The description is written, as is the entire novel, in flowery, nineteenth century language. Suppose you are a present day police officer and have been told to write a report of the murder from the details provided by the maid-servant. Write your report in modern day language and in complete sentences.

17. Mr. Hyde was recognized as the murderer of Sir Danvers Carew, who had been on his way to mail a letter to Mr. Utterson. When shown the murder weapon, a walking stick, by the police, Mr. Utterson knows its owner; he had given it to Dr. Jekyll as a gift. He does not, however, mention this to the police. Remembering that Mr. Utterson is a lawyer, write a paragraph about your feelings concerning whether, legally and morally, he should have told the police whose walking stick he knew it to be.

18. This chapter has many words and phrases that make one think of colors. Re-read the chapter. When you finish, make a list of eight words or phrases that would conjure up a color. List a colorful adjective to go with it. One example would be "full moon," which could be changed to golden moon or lemon-colored moon.

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Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

43. As was previously stated, novels are works of fiction, and reflect the imagination of the author. Some works of fiction are more highly imaginary than others. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, we are reading a highly imaginative novel. Yet, there is something realistic in Dr. Jekyll's desire, as he states in his confessional statement, to separate the dark side of his nature from the good side. We know that all human beings have a twin nature, but most adjust in a normal fashion. Dr. Jekyll chose to try to manipulate his nature in a careless manner, and he paid the price in pain and death. Write an article for your school newspaper about anyone who misuses chemicals and the resulting changes in that person.

44. There is a good deal of violence in this novel. Write a paragraph explaining what you think about the portrayal of violence in the present day.

45. Dr. Jekyll writes that he "had come to the fatal cross roads." What he means is that he could then have decided never again to use the drugs which tampered with his nature, and which caused him to turn into the evil Mr. Hyde. Most people, at some times in their lives, face that time when they are at an important cross-roads. Write about a time when you or someone you know has had to make a life-changing decision. Describe the situation and tell what choosing one action would mean as opposed to choosing the opposite action. No real names should be used this activity. Explain what the final decision was.

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