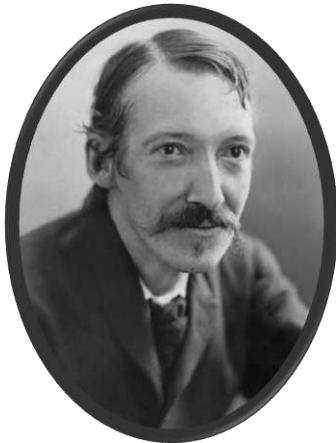




## Jekyll and Hyde – Robert Louis Stevenson

### Cultural notes



#### The author

Here is the author of *Jekyll and Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894). He was Scottish. He also wrote *Treasure Island*. In 1889, he and his wife went to live on the Pacific island of Samoa, where he died.

- What health problems did Stevenson suffer from all his life? Find the answer online.

#### The story

The full title of the story is actually *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. It was published in 1886 and is a novella, which means *short novel*. It is a Gothic story, which means it creates feelings of fear and supernatural events.

- What other Gothic stories do you know?

There is a phrase we use in English, which comes from this story. If we say that someone is ‘a real Jekyll and Hyde’, it means that they seem to have two different characters, one good and one bad.

- Do you know anyone who is real Jekyll and Hyde?

## The fog

The story often has a frightening atmosphere and this is partly because of the London fog, which is almost another character in the book! London had terrible, thick fogs in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. The cause was air pollution, from coal fires and factories. Stevenson uses this to make the setting sinister. The fog hides things like Hyde hides inside Jekyll, and like our bad characteristics hide inside us.

During this time of thick fogs, people would pay 'linklighters' to guide them home. They were poor children carrying homemade torches. Sometimes, however, instead of helping the man or woman who had paid them, the linklighters led him or her into a dark alley and stole from them!

The fog was so bad that it often filled people's houses, making people's furniture and clothes dirty and killing house plants.

The pollution gave the fog a yellow colour, like pea soup (at that time, pea soup was usually made from yellow peas, not green ones). For this reason, a bad fog was often called 'a pea-souper'.

## The places in the story

The story is set in London in the 1880s. We don't know for sure where Stevenson imagined Dr Jekyll's house to be, but many people think it is Leicester Square, which was a middle-class area at the time.

Mr Hyde lives in Soho, which is an area very near to Leicester Square. Soho was a poorer area, with some connections to criminality.

Dr Lanyon lives in Cavendish Square, which is in a rich part of London.

Mr Utterson lives in Gaunt Street in the story, but there was no Gaunt Street in London at that time. So Stevenson invented this place.

- Find Leicester Square, Soho and Cavendish Square on a map.
- Have you been to London? If so, which parts did you visit?