

Language, structure and form

NAIL IT!



Read your extracts 'like a teacher'; slow your pace and look for key words and phrases that create effects upon the reader.

Language

Stevenson's language can be difficult for a modern reader. The vocabulary and tone are likely to be very different from your more familiar reading materials.

Stevenson uses a range of techniques to engage and influence the reader. We will look at some of them here. Using correct terminology for language features is important to your exam essays, but your personal response to the language is key.

DEFINE IT!



euphemism – an indirect or polite word or phrase used to be less harsh or offensive than a realistic word or expression

vicarious – experiencing the feelings or actions of an event as if you were the person taking part in it, although you are not

The unsaid

Stevenson leaves much unsaid because he could not write explicitly in his time – explicit description of gory or sexual crimes would have been considered indecent and unpublishable in materials for a middle-class readership.



Jekyll indirectly describes the misbehaviours of his early life as 'irregularities'. We can only guess at what this euphemism means but both homosexuality (illegal in England until 1967) and sex outside of marriage would have been condemned at the time. Later, he refers to the 'sins' carried out as Hyde, but the specifics are left unsaid.

“The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, **undignified**; I would scarce use a harsher term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn toward the **monstrous**. When I would come back from these **excursions**, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious **depravity**.”

DO IT!



- 1 'Undignified' becomes 'monstrous', which then becomes 'depravity': identify the pattern in the choice of words Stevenson uses to refer to the 'misbehaviours' in the extract. How does the choice of language used to describe Jekyll's pleasures echo what is happening to him?
- 2 Is the word 'excursions' a euphemism? Explain your opinion.