

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde – Utterson's Dream

Analysing a graphic novel



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In this extract from chapter one, Mr Utterson has a troubled night after hearing Mr Enfield’s tale about his encounter with Mr Hyde. In this activity, you will analyse how various aspects of the page help to convey Utterson’s “toiling mind”.

Page Layout

- How do the panels establish situation and then develop a narrative?
- Why is the design of the four central panels effective?
- What is the effect of the bleed at the bottom of the page?

Art Style

How do the following affect the impact of the page?

- Choice of image
- Colour
- Light and shade
- Level of detail – realistic? Impressionistic?

Text

- Why are captions used, rather than speech balloons?
- What does the text add to our understanding of the images?
- Which words and phrases do you find most effective? Can you comment on the use of metaphor?

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- Which words are lettered in bold, and why?

Overall, how effectively do you feel Grant & Kennedy have brought the scene to life and created the anxious, troubled mood of Utterson's dream?

Notes for Teachers

These notes are here to help teachers facilitate pupils' analysis of the page. They're by no means exhaustive or authoritative! The three categories for analysis are taken from the great resource on graphic novels and visual literacy which Duke University have made available online at <http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio/documents/comics.pdf>.

Page layout

First quarter-page panel establishes situation (long shot of Utterson's bedroom, Utterson asleep) – central panels develop narrative of his dream by presenting four images from his dream in sequence, final panel gives emphasis (graphic weight) to figure of Hyde.

Central panels' overlapping, circular layout suggests Utterson's mind locked in a cycle – no escape from these thoughts and images...

Final 'bleed' – borderless panel sees Hyde's shadowy form extending beyond page – an imminent and threatening image, perhaps suggesting how Hyde envelops Utterson's mind...

Art Style

Colour – background transition from blue (cold, nocturnal) to red and its connotations of danger, blood etc. Blue/black palette in central images to evoke 'nocturnal city'.

Light and shadow – black shadow associated with Hyde – mysterious, sinister, threatening etc. Adds to text...'The figure had NO FACE!'

Impressionistic style of lamplight, Hyde's figure – evocative of dream but also of intangible fears, lurking danger...

Something bat-like in Hyde's figure?

Text

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Captions used for narration, as opposed to speech balloons for dialogue

Text adds to image in terms of detail of situation and event, sound (girl's screams) and imagery – scroll of lighted pictures; great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; human juggernaut...