



Character Notes: Lanyon

The scientist who disagrees with Jekyll. The only character to witness the Hyde/Jekyll transformation. His letter (Chapter 9) reveals to the reader for the first time that Jekyll and Hyde are one person.

BBC Bitesize

Dr Hastie Lanyon

- Lanyon is, like Jekyll, a doctor.
 - He and Jekyll were once close friends and went to medical school together.
 - Lanyon is respectable and conventional. He follows all the rules and obeys the law.
 - He believes in science and the world of real, material things.
- He is a big contrast with Jekyll, who likes to live dangerously and experiment with the paranormal (what Jekyll calls 'transcendental medicine').
 - He disagrees with Jekyll's ideas and calls them 'scientific balderdash'. In Chapter 2, Lanyon has not seen Jekyll since he started to become 'too fanciful' and 'wrong in mind'.
 - Dr Jekyll, on the other hand, regards him as 'hidebound' (conventional and unadventurous) in his attitude to medical science.
 - Lanyon is the only person to actually see Hyde transforming into Jekyll, something that does not fit the laws of science. When he sees the change, he cannot cope with the fight between his common-sense view of the world and what Jekyll's experiments reveal. "I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots." Not long after he becomes mentally and physically ill, and dies.

Spark Notes

Dr. Hastie Lanyon

Lanyon plays only a minor role in the novel's plot, but his thematic significance extends beyond his brief appearances. When we first encounter him, he speaks dismissively of Jekyll's experiments, referring to them as "**unscientific balderdash**." His scientific scepticism renders him, to an even greater extent than Utterson, an embodiment of rationalism and a proponent of materialist explanations. As such, he functions as a kind of foil for Jekyll. Both men are doctors, well respected and successful, but they have chosen divergent paths. From Lanyon's early remarks, we learn that Jekyll shared some of his research with Lanyon, and one may even imagine that they were partners at one point. But Lanyon chooses to engage in rational, materialist science, while Jekyll prefers to pursue what might be called mystical or metaphysical science.

It is appropriate, then, that Lanyon is the first person to see Jekyll enact his transformations—the great advocate of material causes is witness to undeniable proof of a metaphysical, physically impossible phenomenon. Having spent his life as a rationalist and a sceptic, Lanyon cannot deal with the world that Jekyll's experiments have revealed. Deep within himself, Lanyon prefers to die rather than go on living in a universe that, from his point of view, has been turned upside down. After his cataclysmic experience, Lanyon, who has spent his life pursuing knowledge, explicitly rejects the latest knowledge he has gained. "**I sometimes think if we knew all,**" he tells Utterson, "**we should be more glad to get away**" [*i.e. die*]. With these words, Lanyon departs from the novel, his uncompromising rationalism giving way to the inexplicable reality of Jekyll.

Cliff's Notes

Dr Lanyon

In contrast to Jekyll, the "metaphysical" scientist and his interest in knowledge that goes beyond the physical world, Lanyon is a "traditional" scientist — completely uninterested in "the other world." Once, Lanyon and Jekyll were fast friends, but when Jekyll became too fascinated with delving into the darker aspects of science, Lanyon broke off their friendship — about ten years before the novel begins.

Lanyon is questioned keenly by Utterson about Jekyll, but Lanyon will say nothing definite, just that Jekyll is interested in the perverse aspects of science, and for that reason, he is no longer friends with him.

Finally, Jekyll/Hyde decide to take their revenge on Lanyon for his prudish denunciations of Jekyll; Hyde arranges a metamorphosis to occur before the good doctor Lanyon. Lanyon is so horrified that Jekyll has been successful in releasing his own evil that Lanyon cannot face the thought that there resides a similar Edward Hyde within him; three weeks after Hyde's contrived baiting of Lanyon's curiosity, the meek doctor is dead of shock.

Dr Hastie Lanyon

Dr. Lanyon is a chummy, dapper, lively guy. You can't dislike Dr. Lanyon—he's half-Santa Claus and half-that one awesome high school chemistry teacher who really liked to create explosions:

"O, I know he's a good fellow—you needn't frown—an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him [...]" (Ch 3)

But he's also gentleman of equal social stature to Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll—in fact, the three of them have been friends since childhood. He and Dr. Jekyll, however, had a massive scientific argument about ten years before the events of the book take place and their friendship is more civil than friendly. At one point Dr. Jekyll refers to Mr. Lanyon as ***"a hide-bound pedant"*** (Ch3)—from which we can deduce that he's more rational, scientific, and systematic than his former friend.

In fact, Lanyon has a thing or two to say on that subject:

"...[I]t is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake, as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash," added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple," would have estranged Damon and Pythias." (Ch 2)

So what's up with his death? Well, having just said all that stuff about Lanyon being a man of science and a firm believer in logic, you can imagine it would be pretty shocking for such a gentleman to watch his best friend undergo a supernatural switcheroo from decent and God-fearing to evil-oozing. Such a sight would be difficult for Lanyon to believe. But he doesn't just witness the transformation, Jekyll tells him the whole shocking story (which the reader doesn't find out until Chapter 10.) So, rather than believe it, he dies. What Jekyll reveals to Lanyon is that there is pure evil in all of us.

Lanyon's timeline

- Mr. Utterson visits Dr. Lanyon to ask about Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.
- Dr. Lanyon admits that his relationship with Dr. Jekyll is no longer a close one.
- Dr. Lanyon has never heard of Mr. Hyde.
- After the death of Sir Danvers, Mr. Utterson and Dr. Lanyon dine at Dr. Jekyll's house, and all seems well.
- Several days later, Dr. Lanyon is near death. He looks much older and paler and seems terrified.
- Two weeks later, he dies and leaves a narrative with Mr. Utterson.
- The narrative details his witnessing the transformation from Mr. Hyde to Dr. Jekyll and hearing Jekyll's story.
- Most likely, the disturbing scene of watching Hyde become Jekyll and then hearing the truth of from Jekyll was too much to bear, causing the death of poor Dr. Lanyon.

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