

## Advanced File 3 p. 200 • Nineteenth-century Britain

Victoria came to the throne during the early, frenetic phase of the world's first industrial revolution. Industrialisation brought with it new markets, a consumer boom and greater prosperity for most of the propertied classes.

It also brought rapid, and sometimes chaotic change as towns and cities expanded at a pace which precluded<sup>1</sup> orderly growth<sup>2</sup>.

Desperately poor housing conditions, long working hours, the ravages of infectious disease and premature death were the inevitable consequences.

The Victorians wrestled with this schizoid legacy of industrialism. The Victorian town symbolized Britain's progress and world pre-eminence, but it also witnessed some of the most deprived people, and depraved habits, in the civilised world.

Taming<sup>3</sup>, and then improving, Britain's teeming<sup>4</sup> cities presented a huge challenge. Mortality data revealed that, in the poorer quarters of Britain's larger cities, almost one child in five born alive in the 1830s and 1840s had died by the age of five. Polluted water and damp<sup>5</sup> housing were the main causes.

Death rates in Britain as a whole remained obstinately above 20 per thousand until the 1880s and only dropped to 17 by the end of Victoria's reign.

Life expectancy at birth, in the high 30s in 1837, had crept up to 48 by 1901. One of the great scourges of the age—tuberculosis—remained unconquered, claiming between 60,000 and 70,000 lives in each decade of Victoria's reign.

*bbc.co.uk, 2011*

1. stop, prevent

2. organised expansion

3. controlling

4. heavily populated

5. humid

## Advanced File 3 p. 202 • Discover “The Ghost Club”

If you were to travel back in time to ask a number of 19th-century people to name their topmost concerns, you’d likely find that not a few of them would discuss the problem of.... Ghosts.

Along with Abolitionism and Feminism, one of the most significant movements to emerge from the Victorian era was Spiritualism, and it was a serious business, in both an idiomatic and economic sense. Psychics and mediums preyed on credulous and grief-stricken<sup>1</sup> people hoping to reconnect with lost loved ones. Hoaxes<sup>2</sup> abounded, sceptics and true believers formed societies and published literature. You might say that for Victorians, “Spirits” had all the cultural power that UFOs<sup>3</sup> had for post-war Americans. So influential was Spiritualism that it inspired many of the leading intellectuals in England to found an exclusive club devoted to pursuing the paranormal.

Of course many people disapproved of such investigations, considering them heretical to religious, philosophical, or scientific doctrines. Therefore, the Ghost Club “kept scant<sup>4</sup> records of their meetings, so members were able to speak freely about their beliefs without fear of ridicule—sort of a ‘Spiritualists Anonymous.’”

*openculture.com, 2017*

1. extremely sad because of the death of sb

2. *canular*

3. *OVNI*

4. limited

8 May

I only slept a few hours when I went to bed, and feeling that I could not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my shaving glass<sup>1</sup> by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, "Good morning." I started<sup>2</sup>, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed, but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself.

This was startling<sup>3</sup>, and coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague feeling of uneasiness which I always have when the Count is near. But at the instant I saw that the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at<sup>4</sup> my throat. I drew away and his hand touched the string of beads<sup>5</sup> which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there. "Take care," he said, "take care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous that you think in this country."

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, 1897

1. mirror                      2. here, jump in surprise                      3. extremely surprising  
4. grabbed, caught                      5. *chapelet de perles*

## Advanced File 3 p. 204 • Frankenstein

Introduction: Victor Frankenstein is obsessed with the desire to discover the secret of life. After years of research, he spends months fashioning a creature out of dead body parts and finally, in the secrecy of his apartment, he brings his creation to life.

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils<sup>1</sup>.

With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes<sup>2</sup>, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion<sup>3</sup> and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had

finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, 1818

1. hard work

2. vitres

3. colour and condition of the skin

## Advanced File 3 p. 206 • The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Introduction: In this letter, the respectable Dr Jekyll explains how, seeking to separate his good side from his darker impulses, he discovered a way to transform himself periodically into a murderous monster free of conscience, Mr Hyde.

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy<sup>1</sup>, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue, and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance<sup>2</sup> of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal<sup>3</sup> side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself.

R.L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886

1. violent ability

2. face

3. deadly