

# Example of literature review on knut hamsun, hunger

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Hunger, a popular novel by Knut Hamsun, is indeed unwittingly about hunger. What made it controversial were the idiosyncrasies, thoughts that are often one-sided, and the abandonment and depreciation of the author on some of the basic ideologies that other authors in his era so loved, among others. There are simply a lot of things about Hamsun's Hunger that one cannot afford to miss, not just because of its peculiarity or extraordinary characteristics, if not weird at all, but also because of the moving and entertaining features.

Perhaps from some readers' point of view, the story in itself can be considered as a combination of mystery and tragedy. For starters, the story revolves around an unnamed vagabond who frequently travels within the city. The main characteristics of the protagonist include his self-destructive behavior, and his tendencies to cling to the ideas of pride and shame. The objective of this paper is to conduct a literary analysis of Hamsun's Hunger, focusing on the economic and social contexts, aspects, and concepts that he may have touched in the story.

One would most likely have an idea about the topic's central theme just by seeing the way how the author crafted the title of the story; but readers who are not naïve would most likely think twice before drawing conclusions on its central theme. Indeed, it is about hunger. Hamsun in the story tells about a man's quest for nourishment. In the story, the protagonist who was by the way portrayed in the story by Hamsun using the first person point of view met a whole bunch of mysterious people in his peculiar adventures, again in his challenging pursuit of nourishment.

What is extraordinary and somewhat rather strange about this vagrant in the

story (i. e. the protagonist) is the fact that his behavior is different from that of other vagrants; his were on a whole different dimension. A case in point would be his preferred course of action whenever he discovers himself stealing, asking food and money from people in the city, giving foods and clothes to the needy elderly, children, and other vagrants instead of using and consuming such things for himself. Collectively, it would see that his body is not really fit for survival.

It may also be argued that he simply lacks the survival instinct that is normally built in on humans regardless of their culture, race, social status, or their inclination towards vagrancy or whatnot. Most vagrants who would be put in a situation similar to that of the protagonist that Hamsun described in history would behave the opposite way; they would most likely keep on stealing from the commoners and even from the beggars, elderly, children, and other vagrants in the city just to survive.

There are a lot of other evidences in the story that reveal the self-destructive qualities of the protagonist that Hamsun developed in the story. It would in fact be understandable at least to some extent if the character background he used for the protagonist is that of a rich and a well-off man financially, but clearly he was thinking of the opposite. This may have something to do with the prevalent perception of society and of its members about realism, being poor and being rich, and the concept of having a self-destructive behavior during his time; in fact some of these concepts and ideologies are still present today.

Basically, society, for so many years, has brainwashed people to only subscribe to the idea that only the rich and the famous are the ones who

have the right, capacity, and at some point the benefit of the doubt to do the kinds of self-destructive behaviors that Hamsun's vagrant protagonist in the story had. Clearly, that was not the case for Hamsun.

Now, turning slightly away the literary analysis spotlight from the story's main character and towards the person who created and spelled everything in the story, Hamsun is an author who became popular not just because of the complexity of his works but also because of his skepticism, and inclination to rather unpopular social and political ideologies during his time. Some of the most notable of which would be his insistence that the peculiarities and intricacies of the human behavior and of the human mind never fails to fascinate the minds of the readers and critics and that this is the main reason why stories with extraordinary and uncommon milieus tend to dominate the ones that have typical and highly common plots.

Based on the author of this paper's personal interpretation of Hamsun's works, he is a contrarian, even an anti-social person. So at some point, there would be some logic and sense in saying that Hamsun's work on Hunger described a social condition or state that he believed a lot of people during his time were in, but were just being ignored by the government or the members of the press.

Being a contrarian is a common sign among people with an anti-social personality disorder. People with ASPD tend to become reckless and self-destructive thinkers. They tend to think of themselves as the greatest person in the universe, as the most noble, chivalrous, and even significant in the entire surface of the planet. This may be mistakenly identified as egocentrism or narcissism. Indeed these three medically associated

psychosocial conditions have some striking similarities making it hard for even modern day mental health professionals (e. g. psychologists) to determine which is which and what is what, and perhaps most importantly, to answer the questions how and why in relation to a person with these qualities' actions, behaviors, and way of thinking.

Having read the story itself, for quite a number of times actually, plus a number of other authors' review and analysis of the social and economic implications and symbolisms that Hamsun may have used in the case, I can definitely say that this was truly an unpolished masterpiece, except that its being unpolished is not in any way Hamsun's fault but of the readers' because it would certainly take time, effort, and a big open mind to identify the different complex things that Hamsun was trying to convey in his story. Hamsun also touched the topic of personal finance and economics when he was narrating using the first person point of view the story of the protagonist in the story. It can be recalled that prior to being a vagrant, the protagonist in Hunger worked as a writer, one whose works and personality as a literary author was not high enough to make him earn a decent wage for living in the city of Christiania. All that he was ever able to do was to write simple articles on newspapers; obtain little money from it and then struggle to feed himself. In the end, the protagonist still ends up with no money to feed himself and so he was forced to sell all of his belongings to pawnshop brokers for prices that one may not even consider to be decent. Needless to say and from an economic context of perspective, he was literally on the brink of bankruptcy. The time he first considered himself a vagrant, at least unconsciously and non-verbally, was the time when he was already experiencing hunger (how

ironic is it that this was also the title of the story). So in a way, this teaches a lesson on personal finance. This story may be implying that a man must learn how to single-handedly manage his own finances or he would eventually end up being in a situation similar to that of this man in Hamsun's Hunger. In terms of the general economy, on the other hand, there is enough reason to believe that Hamsun may have described the financial and economic situation that most commoners were in during his time; that a lot of people were struggling with their finances even though the government officials continue on insisting that there was nothing wrong with the economy and that the side who is lacking in terms of effort was the side that of the people, although clearly based on Hamsun's sense of reality, that was not really the case but the other way around.

And lastly, the most important central theme that Hamsun showed in Hunger, one that may have a social context, would be the sense of pride and shame. Pride was clearly the cause of the protagonist in the story's self-destructive behavior. He did not want to ask for food even though he knew he was already extremely hungry because of pride.

This feeling and sense of pride, in turn, is also related to shame because although he still had pride, he was at the same time ashamed of his situation. But why is the protagonist feeling shame after all? One possible theory based on my personal literary analysis is that the protagonist knows that he was good at writing and yet he managed to lead and lure himself in that miserable a situation.

All in all, Hamsun's Hunt offers a good combination of social and economic contexts and issues such as pride and shame, personal finance, economics,

self-destructiveness, being a contrarian, among others. This is indeed an unpolished gem, one that requires a liberal and open mind in order to understand.

## **Works Cited**

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