

# Human characteristics

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Humans and animals share many characteristics, but are still categorized differently. Animals are looked more of being vicious, barbaric, uncivilized, and cruel. Animals do not have a higher conscience; they will do anything to survive in their habitat. Humans are looked at on a different level than animals, they are put on a higher level because humans have evolved to become civilized and have the ability to reason. Animals run on instinct and don't have the ability to reason like humans, but when human's minds get corrupted, they start to reason less so they switch over and start inhabiting more animalistic traits. In the novel *La Bête Humaine*, by Emile Zola, not only is the main character, Jacques Lantier, displayed as a 'human beast' but every character is deep down a human beast as well. The characters selfishly resort to killing other people, thinking that it will benefit them, but in the long run it did nothing. Every human being has an inner beast within, but society has tamed them, making the animals hidden. What makes people civilized is being able to hold that animal trait inside them, but every day is a continual fight to not become that animal within. Murder to some people seems to be a problem solver. Some individuals think that their problem in front of them can be solved by simply taking someone off the face of the earth by killing. In the Novel, Roubaud suspects that Séverine has had an affair some years earlier, with Grandmorin one of the directors of the railway company, he thinks that killing the man she cheated with will somehow solve their dilemma. He obviously didn't put any mental reasoning into this because it happened in the past and there was nothing he could do to change what happened. He just wanted to seek revenge and he thought it would help his relationship because he would feel better after the other man

was out of the picture. " But that was just how things were, he would just have to get used to it; especially as he had to make a real mental effort to put himself back in the frame of mind which had led him, in the wake of her confession, to consider the murder necessary to his own Survival. It had not seemed to him that, had he not killed this man, he could not have gone on living (Zola 161). " The occurrence of the cheating caused Roubaud's mind to twist and shift into his primitive mind set. He became selfish and all he cared about was that his problem went away, so his physical emotions took over and his reasoning left his mind, leading him to kill Grandmorin. Many people have control over their inner beast because they do something productive in their life and it takes their mind off their animal ways of living. In the novel, Jacques Lantier has a big problem with women because every time he sees their flesh he has the urge to stab and kill them. The way he controls his problem is in his job. He runs the train and this job he has makes it possible to control his crazy killing of women. Running the train gives him a false sense of control. " He, for his part had a sharp, unfettered intelligence, indeed he was honest, and in love with his job, intoxicated with the omnipotence which made of him, as he sat there in his judge's chambers, the absolute master over other people's freedom. His self-interest alone curbed his passion; he had such an overriding desire to obtain some decoration and be transferred to Paris that, having allowed himself on his first day as an examining magistrate to be carried away by his love of the truth, he now proceeded always with extreme caution at every stage desiring pitfalls in which his future prospects might be swallowed up (Zola 91). " When he runs the train he thinks that he has total control of

everything. This is one trait that humans have. They think they have the ability to control nature and this characteristic keeps some people civilized and away from their inner beast. It is unnatural to have a spouse that at one point was old enough to be one's father. Human beings are attracted to others that are the same age normally, and this is why Séverine keeps cheating on her husband Roubaud. Her instincts are making her go out and trying to find someone new. This is how she met Jacques Lantier and started an affair with him. She was unable to stay civilized and keep her relationship with Roubaud alive. Séverine was too selfish to keep her relationship with Roubaud strong; she caved into her animal traits and tried to seek another lover, which ironically led to her death. Jealousy can affect people in many different ways, In the novel the character Flore became jealous of Jacques and Séverine's affair, so she thought it would be easier on her if she killed them both. " She didn't reason it out logically, she was simply following the primitive instinct to destroy. When she got a thorn in her flesh, she tore it out; she'd have cut her finger off if she'd had to. She would kill them, kill them the next time they passed; (Zola 278). " With both Jacques and Séverine dead, Flore wouldn't have to feel the pain in not being with Jacques, even though they never had a relationship to begin with. She didn't take time to reason this issue out, and her selfish decision led her to commit suicide. This is the reason Roubaud murdered Grandmorin; he thought that the death would take away his pain that he felt inside himself. Flore and Roubaud shared this common trait of selfishness, leading them to kill, believing that it would take away their sorrows. In this novel Jacques's character illustrates a perfect picture of how it is nearly impossible to tame

an animal once it has become a beast. " Ah, yes, it's a fine invention, there's no denying. People go fast now, they know more... But wild beasts are still wild beasts, and they can go on building bigger and better machines for as long as they like, there'll still be wild beasts underneath there somewhere (Zola 41). " In the beginning of the novel he had an obsession in killing women, which made him a beast to start from. The relationship he has with Séverine and his train, prolong his savage killing. In the end of the novel Jacques is absent from his train " la Lison", therefore his mania returns and he murders Séverine just as he murdered the other women. His false sense of control was not strong enough to keep his inner beast tamed.