

# [Hannibal, freud and rogers essay](https://assignbuster.com/hannibal-freud-and-rogers-essay/)

Perhaps the most famous evil character in the history of literature and film is Hannibal “ The Cannibal” Lecter, Thomas’ Harris fictional character in his famous trilogy — Red Dragon, Silence of the Lambs and Hannibal. Hannibal’s personality seems to spur the curiosity of many who had the opportunity to read the novels and watch the movies. To the world, he is the epitome of evil — intelligent, cunning and ruthless. But since it is only a fictional character, few has studied the psychology of the most famous and intelligent cannibal ever.

Thus, this paper aims to study his personality, thoughts and emotions, as viewed through two psychological perspectives — Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and Roger’s phenomenological theory. Hannibal “ The Cannibal” Lecter Hannibal Lecter is considered to be the most famous evil character in the history of literature and film. He hunts for victims and eats them without feeling any kind of remorse. In the novels, Hannibal’s background was not mentioned into details until more than one thousand pages in Harris’ third installment of the trilogy Hannibal.

In this part, it was Dr. Doemling, the psychologist Lecter had managed to reduce into tears in Silence of the Lambs, who is telling the a few details about the orphaned Lecter: Hannibal Lecter was born in Lithuania. His father was a count, title dating from the tenth century, his mother a high-born Italian, a Visconti. During the German retreat from Russia some passing Nazi panzers called their estate near Vilnius from the high road and killed both parents and most of the servants. The children disappeared. There were two of them.

Hannibal and the sister. (Harris, 1999, p. 267-268). Later in the novel, Harris describes how Hannibal’s parents and servants were ruthlessly killed during the war and he was left with his sister, Mischa. The children were soon captured by a band of roving deserters. They were locked up in a barn where soon the deserters felt their hunger and turned on the children. Hannibal was the first to be examined but later on, Mischa was chosen to be slaughtered and eaten. Hannibal prayed but the sound of the axe drowned his mind off from his prayer.

In the movies, Hannibal Lecter is first introduced in the film Silence of the Lambs (1991) (although this comes second in the novel trilogy) as the imprisoned serial killer known for his deep knowledge in the forensics. He is first seen during inspector Clarice Starling’s visit in his prison cell to ask him for an advice on Buffalo Bill, another ruthless serial killer known to skin his victims alive. Hannibal is standing impeccably behind a glass wall when Starling first met him. And then, in the course of their discussion, he suddenly verbally attacks Starling savagely:

Do you know what you look like to me with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. A well-scrubbed, hustling rube with little taste . . . . But you’re not more than one generation removed from poor white trash. (Harris, 1989) Hannibal’s cunning and brilliance is evident in how he takes his enemies by surprise with bold tactics and imaginative tricks. In Silence of the Lambs, he killed a police officer by tearing off his face. He then disguised himself as the same police officer by placing the torn-off face over his own making the ambulance crew believe that he is the victim.

His ruthless tactics can be seen in how he remorselessly killed the police officer just to get out of jail. Another evidence of his coldblooded nature is shown in the way he attacked a nurse, who was giving him an electrocardiodiagram, by viciously biting off the nurse’s eyes and tongue and breaking her jaw using his teeth. The surgeons who attended to the injuries of the nurse were only able to save one of her eyes. In Red Dragon (1981), the first in the trilogy but installed last in the films, he was at first portrayed as a rich and influential man.

He was first seen at a theater watching an orchestra playing. He was seen intently listening to the beautiful music when suddenly he notices a man who seems to be struggling with the notes making the beautiful piece seem “ tainted”. During a dinner with some influential guests, we learn that the same man struggling with the music is missing. A woman comments on the food Hannibal has served and asks him what it was. To this Hannibal responds, “…If you know, you probably won’t even try it. ” This tells that Hannibal has already gone and killed the man and then served him to his guests.

Seeing Hannibal through Freud’s Eyes Throughout the trilogy, we learn more and more of Hannibal’s character — how he is cunning, brilliant and ruthless. In this section, a more in-depth analysis of his character is studied through Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory has provided a new radical approach in studying adult “ abnormal” psychology. Psychoanalysis concerns with the views of an individual and of society. Freud explains a kind of energy that flows, gets sidetracked, or becomes dammed up (Pervin, Cervone, & John, 2005).

This energy is limited, and thus, if it is used in some way, there is much less to be used in another way. He further explains that the goal of all behavior is pleasure, that is, the reduction of tension or the release of energy. Hannibal’s coldblooded and ruthless nature is analyzed through this theory. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory includes three personality structures: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id represents the source of all drive energy. The energy for a person’s functioning originally resides in the life and death, or sexual and aggressive instincts, which are part of the id.

The id functions by seeking the release of excitation, tension, and energy. In simple words, the id pursues pleasure and avoids pain. The id is reflected in Hannibal’s avoidance to remember his sister’s slaughter. In order to avoid this kind of pain, he stalks, kills and eats the internal organs of his victims to feel pleasure. Perhaps this makes him think that he feels the same pleasure the deserters had when they were eating his sister or, perhaps this is own way to seek vengeance in the slaughter of his sister.

Whereas the id is demanding, impulsive, blind, irrational, asocial, selfish, and pleasure-loving, so is Hannibal. The superego is the contrast of the id. The superego represents the moral rules of the external, social world. It functions to control behavior in accord with these rules, offering rewards for “ good” behavior and punishments for “ bad” behavior. Hannibal’s killing and eating spree may stem from this level. By killing and eating the internal organs of his victims, he thinks that he has avenged the death of his sister.

Moreover, he may feel guilty because he thinks he let his sister died without him helping her. Thus, he may feel not only that he has avenged his sister’s death but also that he compensates for what he has done (or not done) by doing the same thing the deserters had done to his beloved sister. Freud explains another part of an individual’s personality, the ego. The ego acts as the decision-maker of personality. Whereas the id seeks pleasure and the superego seeks perfection, the ego seeks reality. However, Freud explains that the ego was weaker compared to the other two.

That is, the ego is like a rider on a wild horse, the id. The id provides all the energy while the ego tries to direct it. However, the more powerful may end up doing whatever it wants. In Hannibal’s character, the id is more powerful in him. He does whatever he wants and fantasizes without thinking the consequences. Hannibal in Roger’s View After studying Hannibal’s personality through Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, we now look at how another theory strikingly different from Freud’s can explain Hannibal’s character.

In this section, Carl Rogers’ phenomenological theory is used to analyze Hannibal’s character. Rogers agree that Freud’s perspective had important insights into human nature. However, he disagree with many of Freudian theories views such as its depiction of humans as controlled by unconscious forces and its assertion that personality is determined, in a fixed manner by early experiences in life. Rogers’ view puts greater emphasis on people’s conscious perceptions of the present, on the role of interpersonal experiences across the course of life, and on people’s capacity to grow toward psychological maturity.

According to Rogers’ phenomenological position (1951), each individual perceives the world in a unique way. The key structural concept in Rogers’ theory is the self. Rogers explains that an individual perceives external objects and experiences and attaches meanings to them. In this sense, Hannibal’s character can be explained. When he heard the sounds of the axe, he perceived that the deserters were slaughtering his sister although he did not directly witness the scene. He then attached the meaning of life, death, cruelty and torture to the things he heard.

A related structural concept is the ideal self. The ideal self is the self-concept an individual would most like to possess. This includes the perceptions and meanings that potentially are relevant to the self and that are valued highly by the individual. Hannibal’s entire life and perspective were molded through that one traumatic incident in his life when his sister was killed. Thus, in attaching meaning to this incident, he became as ruthless and cruel as his captors were. He slaughters and eats people without feeling any kind of remorse.

Hannibal may or may not be conscious of the fact that he had become that thing he so hated in his early life but this may be a way for him to avoid what he feared of as a child — to be slaughtered and eaten just like his sister. Conclusion Hannibal Lecter’s evil and uncanny personality has spurred the curiosity of many who had the opportunity to read the novels and watch the films. Shaw describes his character as one that is “ unmatched in the history of Hollywood. ” His popularity stems from his evilness yet so charismatic personality.

He is ruthless and cruel yet very intelligent and charming. Graham, the nurse, the police officers and others that were victimized by him all know of this cunning personality and yet, something in him drew their attention to him to discover eventually that they were lured to the cage of a hungry lion. Both Freud’s and Rogers’ theories were able to explain his character a little deeper. Freud’s notion of how powerful an individual’s id (drives) can be over his ego (reality) explains why Hannibal slaughters people without the slight remorse or thought on the possible consequences of his actions.

Rogers’ notion of self and ideal self explains why Hannibal chooses to slaughter people to be congruent to what he feels and what he experienced. In the whole, Hannibal’s urge to kill and eat people stems from the traumatic incident he experienced as a child. He witnessed how his whole family died and this has left a distinctive mark on him. Auden best describes the terrible trauma that Hannibal’s childhood experiences have done to him: “ Those to whom evil is done, do evil in return. ”