

# [An analysis of eliot's adam bede](https://assignbuster.com/an-analysis-of-eliots-adam-bede/)

“ Adam Bede”- George Eliot

Summary:

Dinah Morris is a Methodist preacher who arrives in Hayslope, a small village in England, during the late 18 th century (1799). Dinah resides with her aunt and uncle named Mr. and Mrs. Poyser, however, she hopes to return to where she normally lives in Snowfield. Seth Bede, who is a local carpenter, loves Dinah and is still adjusting to her rejection of his marriage proposal. Seth’s brother, Adam Bede, also resides in Hayslope and works as the foreman at the local carpentry shop where he and his brother both work. Adam is smitten with a young girl of seventeen named Hetty Sorrel who lives in the village. Hetty is Mr. Poyser’s niece and lives with the Poysers’ where she helps with the chores.

Thias Bede is the father of Seth and Adam. He drowns in the river near their house after he had gone on a drinking binge. Seth and Adam’s mother, Lisbeth, is distraught by this and so Dinah goes to comfort Lisbeth where she is able to soothe her where no one else can. Lisbeth also wishes for Dinah to become her daughter-in-law.

Squire Donnithorne is the local landlord who governs the parish very strictly. His grandson and heir, Captain Donnithorne is a member of the regimental army and lives with the Squire. The local villagers all respect and adore Captain Donnithorne, who considers himself a man of great chivalry. Captain Donnithorne flirts secretively with Hetty after first meeting her at the Poyser’s residence. He asks Hetty when she will be visiting the Squire’s residence again and arranges to meet her unaccompanied in the woods when she passes through.

When Captain Donnithorne meets up with Hetty in the woods this is the first time that they have been alone and are both bashful. Captain Donnithorne teases Hetty about her many suitors which makes her cry. He then puts his arms around her to comfort her but then he immediately panics at the inappropriateness of his advances and leaves Hetty alone in the woods. Later Captain Donnithorne meditates on what he has done and resolves that he needs to approach Hetty as to clear up what had happened. He meets her on her way back through the woods where they kiss. This encounter marks the beginning of a summer-long affair which ends when Captain Donnithorne leaves to rejoin his regiment once again. Hetty believes that Captain Donnithorne will join in matrimony and that he will make her into the great socialite she dreams of being. Although Hetty does not exactly love him she loves the wealth and privilege that he represents.

Captain Donnithorne hosts a party for himself to which he invites all the members in the parish. Everyone attends and has a wonderful time with a feast, dancing and games that were provided. Adam notices that Hetty is wearing a locket that Captain Donnithorne had given her and becomes suspicious that she might have a secret lover, however, he concludes that it would not be possible for her to conceal such a thing from the Poysers.

On the last night that Captain Donnithorne is in town, Adam surprises the guilty pair in the woods and forces Arthur to fight, Adam wins this fight. Captain Donnithorne lied to Adam and said that the affair was no more than a little flirtation. Adam responded by telling him that he must write a letter to Hetty letting her know that the affair is over. Captain Donnithorne obeys Adam and Adam delivers the letter. Hetty is heart broken by this news but after some time she resolves to marry Adam as a way out of her current life. When Adam proposed Hetty accepted. When Captain Donnithorne is due for departure, Hetty is pregnant, unknown to either of them. She resolves to go out and find Captain Donnithorne because she cannot tolerate to have those who know her discover her shame. She believes that Captain Donnithorne will help her even though she senses that he can never remove her shame.

Hetty sets out to find Captain Donnithorne and at the end of an arduous journey Hetty learns that he has gone to Ireland. She then decides to head in the direction of home with the intention of visiting Dinah, who Hetty believes will help her without judging her. During this trip Dinah gives birth to her child. Distraught by this she takes the child into the woods and buries it under a tree. Hetty leaves the child there but she cannot escape the sound of the child’s cry. She returns to where she left the baby where a farm laborer and the Stoniton constable discover her and the take her into custody for the murder of her child.

Adam is distraught when he cannot find Hetty and concludes that Captain Donnithorne must have lured her away from their impending marriage. Before traveling to Ireland to find him Adam goes to Mr. Irwine to tell him of his plan. Mr. Irwine tells Adam that Hetty is in jail for murder. Even though the situation distresses him Adam attends her trial. Dinah arrives and is able to convince Hetty that she must repent to save her soul. Hetty is then convicted and sentenced to die.

At the last possible moment Captain Donnithorne arrives with a stay of execution. Hetty is sent away from England for her crimes and dies just before she is set to return to Hayslope. Captain Donnithorne leaves for a while because of the shame he has brought upon the Poysers’ and also Adam. Adam recognizes that he is in love with Dinah so he proposes to her but she rejects him until she comes to realize that it is God’s will that she marry Adam. They are married and have two children. Seth lives with them and does not marry. Captain Donnithorne eventually returns to Hayslope where he and Adam meet one last time at the conclusion of the novel. They are both able to stay friends despite all that has come between them.

Narrative style:

The narrator speaks primarily in the third person, centering on characters one at a time and revealing their thoughts and feelings in turn. At times the narrator breaks through to comment on the actions and feelings of the character in the first person. The narrator in Adam Bede butts into the story to offer ironic and often sarcastic commentary on the characters and the reader’s impression of them by the use of satire. The satire keeps the narrative sharp and the tone light. The narrator uses humor where a big part of that humor is in the sarcasm.

Character analysis:

Adam Bede-An intelligent and fairly well educated man for a peasant. He is industrious and loyal, as well as kind-hearted and a man of good morals and values. Adam is multi-faceted because his character develops throughout the novel. In the beginning Adam is a proud man and is judgmental, especially towards his father and his situation, however, at the end of the novel Adam’s pride is largely humbled and he is less judgmental towards others because of Hetty’s crimes where he is mellowed by the experience.

Dinah Morris-A Methodist preacher who seeks to bring God’s love to all those around her. Dinah’s gentle manner and selflessness bring comfort to others. She is a woman of simplicity who lives to help others. Dinah is multifaceted because her character develops throughout the novel. In the beginning she feels compelled to help those in greatest need even when it results in the denial of her own happiness but eventually she comes to believe that her own happiness and God’s Will are not necessarily incompatible when she falls in love with Adam and marries him.

Language and diction:

Eliot’s language and diction that he uses is befitting of the time period in which this novel was written (late 1850s) and so the language is very formal and polished with a refined tone. Extensive descriptions are followed by dialogue. The descriptions set the scene to which the characters are subject to and the dialogue follows by elaborating on what is happening in the description. Vast uses of figures of speech assist the descriptions in being successful. The dialogue allows for the reader to get to know the characters better and to understand the relationships between one another.

Imagery:

By the extensive use of adjectives and figures of speech all the senses were met. Eliot describes the countryside effectively with a predominant use of such metaphors and personification in: “ High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north”, here my sense of sight was met most. I was also able to hear the sounds of Chad “ beating the stick against the milk can by way of musical accompaniment” that appealed to my sense of hearing. The sense of touch was achieved when Mr Irwine went to Anne’s bedside and kissed her “ delicate hands” to which he felt the “ slight pressure from the small fingers”. Eliot uses “ Fresh fragrance of new-pressed cheese, of firm butter, of wooden vessels perpetually bathed in pure water” to achieve the sense of smell as he describes the hot and dusty streets. Whilst the Bede family and Dinah were in the kitchen having breakfast: “ warm porridge and toasted oat-cake” appealed to my sense of taste as I could feel my mouth watering for the scrumptious breakfast about to be devoured. The most evident sense in Adam Bede , like most novels, was the sense of sight, however, all my senses where felt in this novel which made it a sensual experience.

Themes:

Inner and outer beauty –Eliot contrasts inner and outer beauty throughout the novel to express the idea that external and internal authenticities do not always correspond. Although Hetty is more physically attractive than Dinah she is cold and ugly inside- this is the opposite of Dinah. Dinah’s inner beauty matches that of Hetty’s outer beauty. Hetty’s outer beauty masks her inner unattractiveness, especially to Captain Donnithorne and Adam. Even when Hetty cries or is angry she continues to appear as being charming to both men. Adam is blinded by Hetty’s appearance which causes him to misinterpret her tears and delight as love for him. Hetty’s outer beauty also blinds and shades Captain Donnithorne judgement such that he loses control when she cries and thus kisses her. Unlike Hetty, Dinah has a deep inner beauty because she helps and cares for those around her. Dinah comforts Lisbeth through the mourning of her deceased husband. Adam does not think Dinah is as physically attractive as Hetty but he is drawn to her love and mission to aid the people surrounding her. His feelings for Dinah change after he witnesses Dinah consoling Hetty as he begins to realize that Dinah is outwardly beautiful.

The consequences of bad behavior-Bad behavior and misconduct have consequences that extend far beyond the person doing wrong and even relatively small transgressions can have considerable collateral effects, this is seen in Adam Bede . The fundamental lesson from Hetty’s experience with Captain Donnithorne is that doing the right thing is more important because doing the wrong thing may hurt others in ways that cannot be controlled and measured. Although Captain Donnithorne is not inherently wicked he provokes bad behavior in Hetty because he does not make himself available to her when she seeks for his help once she learns that she is pregnant. Hetty is ashamed and selfish when she commits her crime. As Hetty awaits the trial, she does not think about how her bad behavior has affected anyone else as she does not consider the shame she has brought upon the Poysers’ or the effect that her crime has on Adam. Hetty feels no remorse for her sins and only wishes to not be reminded of any wrong she has done. In the end she apologizes to Adam and asks God for forgiveness but the moral of the story is that actions of bad behavior, evil, and wrongdoing cannot be undone or changed.

Setting:

The novel is set in a small village in England called Hayslope which is quaint and reflects the character of Hetty in the beginning of the novel as well as all the innocence in the other characters. The setting is cyclic which represents the life of the villagers as they do their day to day errands. The fact that the setting is a small village assists in also creating a sense of loneliness, which is something experienced by Hetty later on in the novel. The village setting is therefore accompanied by more forests and vegetation than the large city. Nature is seen to play a role in romance and love, in Hayslope there is this nature setting which accompanies and facilitates various forms of love in the novel.

Genre:

This novel is a fictional novel because the plot did not actually take place but was rather formulated from Eliot’s imagination. Adam Bede is also a romantic drama: the romance is seen between the webbed relationships of Adam & Hetty, Hetty & Arthur and Dinah & Adam. The drama is portrayed in the actions of the characters: Lisabeth’s husband dying, Hetty and Arthur’s flirtation whilst Adam had proposed to her previously, Hetty’s pregnancy and how she dealt with it (killing her baby) and eventually the concluding matrimony of Dinah and Adam. The drama is seen through such trials and tribulations in the novel.

Aspects I liked:

For a novel of this time which was first published in 1859 I did not expect such a dramatic storyline with a drastic twist towards the end where Hetty murdered her baby, however, it was refreshing and something new, I enjoyed this aspect because one can truly never judge a book by its cover. I enjoyed the extensive descriptions of Eliot’s, however, at times it can be overpowering in the sense that it is unnecessarily long. The enjoyment of these descriptions comes from the vast use of figures of speech used by Eliot. I have not read a novel that uses as many figures of speech and so this was interesting for me. The dialogue which usually followed the descriptions was also thorough in that there was a lot of dialogue. This enabled me to understand the characters better and their relationships with one another, which in turn made me understand and follow the plot better.

Recommendations:

I would recommend this novel to people who are not lazy readers and those who enjoy thorough descriptions in novels. This novel would also appeal to people who do not enjoy novels with a ‘ typical’ storyline as it contains a twist due to bad decisions. I would recommend this novel because of the moral of the story which is relevant in our day and age: bad behavior has consequences so think twice before taking action. I would not recommend this novel to people who are sensitive about religion as this novel speaks about this in its dialogue quite often and to people who do not enjoy dramatic novels.