



Reading Between The Lions

The Art Institute's Book Club

www.artic.edu/bookclub

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Hunger by Knut Hamsun

Please note that the questions below may contain plot spoilers.

1. How does the author present the passage of time? Why does the author occasionally change tenses (see page 73)?
Does Munch indicate the passage of time in any of his works?
2. What do you think the title of the book refers to? What is the main character hungry for?
3. Is the main character insane? If so, what does his insanity stem from? Is he in control of himself?
4. Is everything in the book an accurate representation of reality?
To what to what extent does Munch address the real and the surreal?
5. Do you feel compassion for the main character? Do you empathize with his situation?
6. What do you think of the main character's sense of morals and ideals? Why does he give away money? Do his actions conflict with our understanding of luck and opportunity?
7. Do you think the ending is a happy one?
8. The book, which is semi-autobiographical, was the first to win its author fame and recognition, eventually leading him to a Nobel Prize in Literature. How does this successful novel compare to the less successful works of the main character?
9. What is the importance of names and nicknames in the story? Why do we never learn the main character's name?
Munch sometimes uses the name of his subjects in his painting titles and sometimes doesn't. For instance, a painting of his sister Inger beside a lake is entitled Summer Night: Inger on the Beach. However, a painting of another sister Laura in a similar outdoor setting is simply titled Evening. What is the effect of each of these choices?
10. How does alcohol affect the main character and the people around him?
11. How do anguish and suffering influence the main character's creative process?
How does Munch depict suffering and despair?