

Study Guide for Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon

About the Book

The Maltese Falcon is a classic hard-boiled detective novel by Dashiell Hammett. Published in 1930, it is considered one of the most influential works in the genre. The novel follows the story of Sam Spade, a private detective who is hired to find a missing statue of a black bird, the Maltese Falcon. Spade's investigation leads him into a world of deception, violence, and murder. The novel has been adapted into several films, including a 1941 classic film starring Humphrey Bogart.



Study Guide for Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon (Course Hero Study Guides) by Course Hero

★★★★★ 5 out of 5
Language : English
File size : 979 KB
Screen Reader: Supported
Print length : 39 pages
Lending : Enabled
Paperback : 56 pages
Item Weight : 7 ounces
Dimensions : 8.5 x 0.13 x 11 inches



Characters

- **Sam Spade:** The protagonist of the novel, Spade is a private detective who is hired to find the missing Maltese Falcon. He is a tough and cynical man, but he is also intelligent and resourceful.

- **Briggid O'Shaughnessy:** The woman who hires Spade to find the Maltese Falcon. She is a beautiful and mysterious woman, and Spade quickly becomes suspicious of her.
- **Joel Cairo:** A man who is also interested in finding the Maltese Falcon. He is a ruthless and dangerous criminal.
- **Wilmer Cook:** Cairo's partner. He is a smaller and less intelligent man than Cairo, but he is just as ruthless.
- **Effie Perine:** Spade's secretary. She is a loyal and efficient employee, but she is also in love with Spade.

Plot

The novel begins when Spade is hired by Briggid O'Shaughnessy to find her missing sister. Spade soon discovers that O'Shaughnessy is not who she claims to be, and that she is involved in a criminal conspiracy. Spade's investigation leads him into a dangerous world of deception and violence. He is pursued by Cairo and Cook, and he must use all of his skills to stay alive. In the end, Spade solves the mystery and finds the Maltese Falcon. However, his victory is bittersweet, as he has lost everything he loved in the process.

Themes

The Maltese Falcon is a complex and multi-layered novel. It explores a number of themes, including:

- **The nature of good and evil:** The Maltese Falcon is a world of moral ambiguity. There are no clear-cut heroes or villains, and everyone is

capable of both good and evil. Spade himself is a complex character who is both sympathetic and flawed.

- **The destructive power of greed:** The Maltese Falcon is a powerful symbol of greed. It is a treasure that everyone wants, and it brings out the worst in people. Spade's investigation reveals the lengths to which people will go to get what they want.
- **The importance of loyalty:** Spade is a loyal man, and he values loyalty above all else. He is willing to go to great lengths to protect his friends and loved ones. However, he also learns that loyalty can be a double-edged sword.

Legacy

The Maltese Falcon is a classic work of American literature. It is a well-written and suspenseful novel that explores complex themes. The novel has been adapted into several films, and it continues to be read and enjoyed by readers around the world.

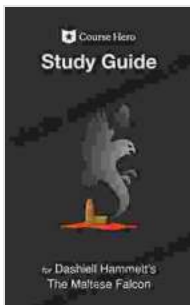
Study Questions

1. Who is Sam Spade, and what is his role in the novel?
2. Who is Brigid O'Shaughnessy, and what does she want from Spade?
3. Who is Joel Cairo, and what is his interest in the Maltese Falcon?
4. What is the Maltese Falcon, and what is its significance?
5. What are the main themes of the novel?
6. How does the novel explore the nature of good and evil?
7. What is the role of loyalty in the novel?

8. What is the significance of the ending of the novel?

Further Reading

- Course Hero Study Guide for The Maltese Falcon
- LitCharts Study Guide for The Maltese Falcon
- SparkNotes Study Guide for The Maltese Falcon



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