

FOOD AND HUNGER IN LITERATURE: SYMBOLISM, SURVIVAL, AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Food and hunger are recurring motifs in literature, serving as both literal realities and symbolic devices. Writers across cultures and eras have used nourishment and deprivation to explore identity, morality, and social inequality. Food often represents abundance, community, and cultural heritage, while hunger embodies deprivation, alienation, and systemic injustice. From Shakespeare's depictions of food riots in Coriolanus to Knut Hamsun's existential portrayal of starvation in Hunger, literature reveals how sustenance and scarcity shape human experience. This paper examines food and hunger as literary tropes, analysing their role in cultural identity, social critique, and existential metaphor. By tracing examples from classical, modernist, and postcolonial texts, it highlights how literature transforms the everyday act of eating, or the absence of it, into a profound commentary on survival, desire, and power.

KEYWORDS: *Food in Literature; Hunger in Literature; Cultural Identity; Social Critique; Symbolism; Banquets; Starvation; Postcolonial Texts; Modernist Literature; Survival and Morality.*

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