

# The Hunter Short Guide

## The Hunter by Donald E. Westlake

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">The Hunter Short Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Social Concerns/Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Techniques.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Adaptations.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Literary Precedents.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Related Titles.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Copyright Information.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>

# Characters

Parker is the epitome of the hero as pure will, whose Nietzschean drive to exert power cannot be stopped by merely human forces. His mastery of the violent arts is, however, complemented by a thorough knowledge of how the world really works, and it is this that differentiates him from most of the heroes of hard-boiled fiction. A character such as Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer simply wades into a situation and keeps punching and shooting until the bad guys are vanquished; and even Raymond Chandler's much more intellectually-inclined Philip Marlowe sees himself as a gadfly who stirs up trouble without necessarily being able to control the consequences. Parker, on the other hand, knows the right buttons to push and the right people to threaten in order to achieve the desired result, which may help to explain why this series of novels has earned both respectful critical attention and substantial mass-market sales.



## Social Concerns/Themes

The Hunter (also published as Point Blank!) and several others about the exploits of an armed-robbery specialist were reissued under the series title "The Violent World of Parker," which sets exactly the right tone for a discussion of their distinctive attributes.

Parker's world is not merely characterized by violence, it is founded upon violence: To an extent seldom found in even the hardest-boiled thrillers, it is the willingness as well as the ability to kill that separates the quick from the dead in these volumes.

In The Hunter, violence is used to force Parker's loving wife to attempt to murder her husband, which establishes the relative priorities of force and sentiment for the remainder of the series.

Subsequent books often place Parker in situations where love or trust is a tempting possibility, but his memory of his wife's treachery is always invoked as a warning against emotional involvement. There is usually a doublecross or a sell-out in the offing where Parker is concerned, and it is only his profound awareness of human fallibility that ensures his continued survival.

Westlake has little faith in either the integrity or the competence of established social institutions. In the comic entertainments written under his own name, this is played for laughs; in the Parker novels written as "Richard Stark," it is presented with a brutal directness that both shocks and fascinates the reader. If Parker wants something, he takes it; if he wants to change an organization's policy, as is the case in The Hunter, he kills so many of their personnel that it becomes imperative for them to meet his demands. It is almost as if Westlake were indulging the manic and depressive poles of a split personality/with Donald Westlake writing as the bemused cynic and "Richard Stark" writing as the paranoid pessimist. Whether or not this is a conscious division of labor on Westlake's part, one cannot help but speculate that these two very different aspects of his literary work reflect his ambivalence regarding the prospects of a society in which selfish motives predominate over altruistic ones.

## Techniques

The Parker books are "no frills" thrillers, tightly and economically told with the bare minimum of descriptive scene-setting. If this has been in a sense required by the more than a-book-a-year pace with which they have been produced (while Westlake has at the same time been very active under his own and other names), it is also a perfectly appropriate and highly satisfying method of narration: Since Parker's interests in people and places evaporate when he has achieved what he wants, there's no reason for either him or readers to dwell upon the transitory phenomena of day-to-day existence. In reducing the hard-boiled thriller to its essential elements, Westlake's Parker novels offer a bracing dash of stimulant to a readership all too often sapped by purplishly-overwritten prose and tedious psychological speculation.

# Adaptations

The Hunter was made into the motion picture Point Blank, which was released in 1967. Director John Boorman translates the violence of the novel effectively onto the screen. In the leading role, Lee Marvin gives one of his best performances as a very violent and vengeful man. He is ably supported by Angie Dickinson, Lloyd Bochner, Keenan Wynn, Carroll O'Connor, and John Vernon. Point Blank is one of the best examples of hard-boiled detective fiction translated to the big screen, but its uncompromising violence may put off some viewers.

## Literary Precedents

Although Parker is a compellingly individualized example of the thriller hero, he is clearly a product of the Black Mask-Hammett-Chandler line of hard-boiled detectives. Parker is of course on the other side of the law, but like the typical "private dick," he is well aware of the fine and easily crossable line that separates the good guys from the bad guys; and Parker also shares the conviction that stirring up action produces far better results than does armchair detection. Parker's aversion to sentimental feeling, which is carried to a point dangerously near self-parody in later novels in the series, is the final link in a chain which firmly connects him to such archetypal hardboiled heroes as Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe.



## Related Titles

The sequels to *The Hunter* include *The Man With the Getaway Face*, 1963 (reissued as *The Steel Hit*, 1971); *The Outfit*, 1963; *The Mourner*, 1963; *The Score*, 1964 (reissued as *Killtown*, 1971); *The Jugger*, 1965; *The Seventh*, 1966 (reissued as *The Split*, 1969); *The Handle*, 1966 (reissued as *Run Lethal*, 1972); *The Rare Coin Score*, 1967; *The Damsel*, 1967; *The Green Eagle Score*, 1967; *The Black Ice Score*, 1968; *The Dame*, 1969; *The Sour Lemon Score*, 1969; *The Blackbird*, 1969; *Deadly Edge*, 1971; *Slayground*, 1971; *Lemons Never Lie*, 1971; *Plunder Squad*, 1972; and *Butcher's Moon*, 1974.





# Copyright Information

## Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress  
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994