

Snowman Discussion Questions

by Jo Nesbo

Author Bio: (<http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/8870-snowman-nesbo?start=1>)

Jo Nesbo is an Edgar Award nominated Norwegian author and musician. As of September 2008 more than one and a half million copies of his novels have been sold in Norway, and his work has been translated into over forty languages.

Nesbo was born and lives in Oslo but grew up in Molde. He graduated from the Norwegian School of Economics with a degree in Economics and Business Administration. Nesbo is primarily famous for his crime novels about Detective Harry Hole, but he is also the main vocalist and songwriter for the Norwegian rock band Di Derre.

Even though Snowman is the seventh book in the Harry Hole series, it was the first one translated into English.

Characters:

- **Harry Hole** – Inspector in the Oslo Crime Squad; former alcoholic.
- **Katrine Bratt** – New officer in Harry's squad.
- **Rakel Fauke**– Harry's ex-girlfriend.
- **Oleg Fauke** – Rakel's son.
- **Mathias** – Rakel's current fiancé; doctor.
- **Mangus Skarre** – Officer in the Crime Squad. Looking up missing persons cases.
- **POB Gunner Hagen** – Harry's boss. Head of the Crime Squad.
- **Bjorn Holm** – Officer on Harry's team; from the forensic unit.
- **Jonas Becker** – 10-year old boy who mom (Birte) disappeared. Lives with his father Filip.
- **Gert (Iron) Rafto** – inspector. Was a rising star in office until a police brutality charge. Received message from Laila Aasen's killer.
- **Eespen Lepsvik** – Police officer. Experienced in leading large task forces.
- **Dr. Idar Vetlesen** – Plastic surgeon.
- **Borghild** – Dr Vettleesen's receptionist.
- **Camilla Lossous** – Husband Eric; interacted in garage with Filip Baker
- **Arve Stop** – Journalist and newspaper owner.
- **Asbjorn Treschow** – (Tresko) – Old acquaintance of Harry's. Poker player.
- **Beate Lonn** – Wife of Harry's late partner, Halvorsen. Police officer; head of the forensics unit.
- **Bosse Egan** – TV host of *Bosse*, a talk show.

- **Oda Paulsen** – Talent scout; finds guests for Bosse.
- **Stale Aune** – Crime Squad’s psychologist; sick and in the hospital.

Timeline

- November 5, 1980
 - The first snowman
- November 4, 1992
 - Laila Aasen murdered
 - Chopped to pieces
 - Husband is Bastian. Onny Heland is friend.
 - Gert Rafto investigates.
- November 2, 2004
 - Birdie Becker disappears
 - Son is Jonas. Husband is Filip.
 - Sylvia Ottersen is murdered.
 - Daughters are Emma and Olga. Husband is Rolf.
 - Head is attached to a snowman
 - Eli Kvale disappears
 - Andreas is husband. Son is Trygave

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. Did the Norwegian/Oslo setting affect the story? Did it make it easier or harder to read? Why does Nesbo reference American elections in a book set in Norway?
3. Jo Nesbo was able to take a snowman, a much loved, innocent object, and make it ominous. Did you think this added to the eeriness of the novel? Will you look differently at snowmen from now on?
4. “Too many people have disappeared.” How does one make a case for criminal activity if there are no hard facts?
5. Rakel, Skarre, and Hagen offer succinct descriptions of Harry and what motivates him. Can Harry’s “anger and the desire for revenge” and his history of alcoholism be attributed to his experiences as a police detective or are they personal flaws?
6. Do you agree with Hagen’s comparison between Harry and military leaders and his assertion that “There’s a strong social urge in man to be needed.... You want this case to be special. You want it so much that you can see the blackest of the black”?
7. Why does Harry take Oleg to the Slipknot concert (even though he is no longer seeing Rakel, Oleg’s mother)?
8. Why did the Snowman choose Harry to “compete” with?
9. Why did the killer turn Rafto into a snowman?

10. Was destroying the neighbor kid's snowman outside of Harry's apartment a normal reaction or a sign of something else? Would you have destroyed it?
11. Why do you think Harry announced (on the talk show) that the Snowman was not caught after his superiors specifically told him not to?
12. Why do you think Harry did not suspect Katrine's motives earlier?
13. There were a large number of suspects in this investigation and the name of the serial killer was wrongly announced a couple of times. Did you find the number of people confusing or did it spice up the suspense of the storyline? Why?
14. What did you think of the way the "missing" women's bodies were hidden?
15. After the killer is revealed you are given a glimpse of how his life began and the event in his young life that pushed him over the edge. Do you think if that event had not happened, he would never have become a killer? Or was he inherently evil?
16. Why did Mathias plan to end his life the way he did? What do you think of that decision?
17. Did you figure out who the Snowman was? Did you ever have doubts?
18. Why was Katrine Bratt walking around with an empty revolver? What does that say about her?
19. What do you think of the statement, "The more aged I become, the more I tend to view that evil is evil, mental illness or no. We're all more or less disposed to evil actions, but our disposition cannot exonerate us. For heaven's sake, we're all sick with personality disorders. And it's our actions that define how sick we are."
20. Did Harry make the right decision in regards to Rakel? In regards to Mathias?
21. Toward the end of the book Aune says, "What is worse? Taking the life of a person who wants to live or taking death from a person who wants to die?" What do you think?
22. Jo Nesbo is one of several Scandinavian crime fiction authors who are increasingly popular in this country. In what ways does The Snowman, well as works by Stieg Larsson, Henning Mankell, and Maj Sjowall, differ from American thrillers? What qualities, if any, distinguish Harry and his colleagues from the detectives depicted in American books, television shows, and movies?
23. This is book 7 in the series. Will you read other books in the Harry Hole series?

References:

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