Detritus Encyclopedia Article

Detritus

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

Detritus Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Detritus.....3

Detritus

Detritus is dead and decaying matter including the wastes of organisms. It is composed of organic material resulting from the fragmentation and **decomposition** of plants and animals after they die. Detritus is decomposed by bacterial activity, which can help cycle nutrients back into the food chain. In aquatic environments, detritus may make up a substantial percentage of the **particulate** organic **carbon** (POC) that is suspended in the water column. Animals that consume detritus are called "detritivores". Although detritus is available in large quantities in most ecosystems, it is usually not a very high quality food, and may be lacking in essential **nitrogen** or carbon compounds. **Detritivores** generally must expend a larger amount of energy to assimilate carbon and nutrients from detritus than from sources of food based on living plant or animal material. Some detritivores harbor beneficial bacteria or **fungi** in their guts to aid in the digestion of compounds that are difficult to degrade.