Donora, Pennsylvania Encyclopedia Article

Donora, Pennsylvania

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

Donora, Pennsylvania Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Donora, Pennsylvania.....3

Donora, Pennsylvania

The towns of Donora and Webster, Pennsylvania, along the Monongahela River southwest of Pittsburgh, were the site of a lethal air pollution disaster in late October 1948 that convinced members of the scientific and medical communities, as well as the public, that air pollution could kill people, as well as cause serious damage to health. The disaster took place over the course of five days, when weather conditions known as a **temperature inversion** trapped cooled coal smoke and pollution from a zinc smelter and steel mill beneath a layer of warm air over the river valley that enclosed the two towns and the surrounding farmland. Almost half of the area's 14,000 residents reported becoming ill and about two dozen deaths were attributed to the badly polluted air.

Noontime smog on a street in Donora, Pennsylvania, 1948. (© Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, all rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.)

After the disaster, fact-finding studies conducted by federal, state, and local government, as well as the steel industry and private investigators, never definitively identified the exact mix of pollutants that caused the deaths and illnesses. It is believed that a thick blanket of sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, and particulate literally smothered the towns. Donora is remembered as a key event that inspired federal air pollution legislation in the 1960s and 1970s and contributed indirectly to the establishment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. It helped mobilize public sentiment in favor of federal regulation rather than continued state and local jurisdiction over polluters.

Bibliography

Roueche, Berton (1950). "The Fog." In *The Medical Detectives,* Vol. 2, pp. 37–55. New York: Washington Square Press/Pocket Books.

Snyder, Lynne Page (1994). "'The Death-Dealing Smog Over Donora, Pennsylvania': Industrial Air Pollution, Public Health Policy, and the Politics of Expertise." *Environmental History Review* 18(1):117–139.

Internet Resource

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. "History of Donora." Available from http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep.