

Frederick Abel Biography

Frederick Abel

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

Frederick Abel Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

A distinguished chemist and explosives specialist, Abel is remembered as one of the inventors of cordite, a smokeless gunpowder still used today. Born in Woolwich, near London, Abel studied under August Wilhelm von Hofmann (1818-1892), an enormously influential experimental and industrial scientist, at the Royal College of Chemistry. During a lengthy career he served as a researcher, scholar, and lecturer, and became the leading British authority on explosives. One of his most significant early discoveries was that guncotton could be chemically stabilized through thorough washing with water to remove all traces of acid and impurities.

His most important work, however, came after the British government's establishment in 1888 of an Explosives Commission, dedicated in particular to the military uses of new discoveries in the field. As a member of this Commission, Abel kept in close contact with Alfred Nobel, an acquaintance from previous years whose latest invention, ballistite, was received with skepticism due to the volatility of camphor as an ingredient. In 1889 Abel, together with James Dewar, invented cordite, a versatile smokeless powder which purportedly improved upon ballistite through the introduction of acetone and petroleum jelly.

Although Nobel contested the cordite patent, the English rights of which Abel and Dewar handed over to the government, his efforts were unsuccessful and widespread production of the propellant continued. Abel was knighted in 1891 for his invention and was made a baronet two years later.