

St. Thomas Aquinas Biography

St. Thomas Aquinas

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

St. Thomas Aquinas Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

St. Thomas Aquinas was an Italian theologian and philosopher of the Dominican Order of the Catholic Church. He was educated or taught at Monte Cassino, the Universities of Naples and Paris, and the Theological School at Cologne. Aquinas wrote more than 60 works, some of which were massive in length. He is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential thinkers of the Catholic Church. He had an important influence on the intellectual awakening that occurred in western Europe during and after his lifetime. Previous to this time, from about 200-1200 C.E. (most of this period, from 500-1000 C.E., is now known as the Dark Ages), almost no important scientific advances had occurred in Europe or North Africa.

A central tenet of Aquinas' thinking and philosophy was that a omniscient (i.e., all-knowing), omnipotent (i.e., all-powerful) God had created the universe "out of nothing" (or *ex nihilo*). One of his major contributions to the development of scientific thought and methodology was advocacy of the idea that truth (or understanding) could be discovered through rational investigation of the natural world. As such, truth was not only the "word of God," as could be revealed by a literal interpretation of the Bible, which was commonly believed during those times. In other words, much could be learned about by the natural world by directly investigating organisms and phenomena. This so-called "rationalistic" approach to knowledge was crucial in the subsequent development of science as a way of understanding the natural world. It also fostered the development of a separation of scientific knowledge and speculation from the uncritical acceptance of the dogma of theology and the writings of such ancient natural philosophers as Aristotle.