

Alcohol Encyclopedia Article

Alcohol

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

Alcohol Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
Alcohol.....	3

Alcohol

Alcohol is a term applied to a large group of hydroxyl derivatives of paraffin hydrocarbons. They contain a hydroxyl (OH) group in place of one of the hydrocarbon's hydrogens. Examples of common alcohols include methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, butanol, vinyl, cetyl, amyl, and lauryl alcohol. Although many of the alcohols have important commercial or industrial applications, most biological interest is focused on ethanol, a product of biological fermentation. Ethanol is sometimes called ethyl alcohol, grain alcohol, or simply alcohol. It is the intoxicating agent found in wine, beer, and other fermented and distilled liquors and has the molecular formula C_2H_5OH . It has been produced for millennia, mostly by fermentation of fruit juices. Primitive humans discovered that the fermented juice could be stored in seal containers for extended periods of time, and provide a safe drink when other fluids were not readily available. Grapes and many other natural products can provide the sugars and starches needed for the production of alcohol beverages, although much of the present day industry depends on grains such as corn, wheat, rye, and barley. Ethanol production from grains involves conversion of grain starches to sugars that are then converted to ethanol with a complex of enzymes called zymase. The ethanol content of fermented beverages is limited to about 12% by the inability of the biological fermenting system to tolerate higher concentrations of alcohol. Distillation processes are used to further concentrate ethanol in beverages such as brandy, whiskey, and liquors.