

# Positional Goods Encyclopedia Article

## Positional Goods

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

<a href="#">Positional Goods Encyclopedia Article.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Positional Goods.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>

## Positional Goods

A concept coined by English economist Fred Hirsch (1931–1978) to describe goods or activities whose value depends on their exclusivity. For example, fame is considered a positional good since by definition only a few people can be famous and thus enjoy this "privilege." If everyone were famous, no one would be. Similarly, solitude on a mountain peak or in the **wilderness** would qualify as a positional good, since if one shared the peak or the wilderness with many other people, one could not experience solitude. Ironically, a positional good tends to diminish its own value because of the high demand it creates: as more people enjoy positional goods, they no longer become exclusive or valued. For instance, automobiles were once a positional good in America, but as more and more people began owning cars, they were no longer such a status symbol. A number of concerned environmentalists contend that access to wilderness areas should be restricted or limited to prevent the destruction of this positional good.