

Discover the Destroyer Short Guide

Discover the Destroyer by K. A. Applegate

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

Discover the Destroyer Short Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Overview.....	3
About the Author.....	4
Setting.....	5
Social Sensitivity.....	6
Literary Qualities.....	7
Themes and Characters.....	8
Topics for Discussion.....	11
Ideas for Reports and Papers.....	12
For Further Reference.....	13
Related Titles.....	14
Copyright Information.....	15



Overview

Everworld is filled with wonders such as giant gods, knives that can cut through anything, and even, somewhere, a being so fearsome that he eats gods. Discover the Destroyer increases the wonder, displaying a land of greedy fairies, a dragon larger than a small town, and rubies that replace hearts. Applegate's achievement in Discover the Destroyer is occasionally astonishing, always entertaining, and often funny. Indeed, despite the chaos and destruction that seem to be permanent companions of David, Christopher, April, and Jalil, Discover the Destroyer may be the funniest novel of the "Everworld" series. In any case, the teenagers try to cope with finding jobs, studying for exams, and avoiding being eaten, burned, or fed to Ka Anor, the god eater, whose presence is closer than ever before.

About the Author

Katherine Alice Applegate is simultaneously one of America's most famous authors and one of America's most mysterious.

She guards her privacy, as does her publisher, Scholastic, which has brilliantly marketed her *Animorphs* and *Everworld* series with astounding success. Applegate was already a well-established writer of books for young readers, mostly romance novels, when she proposed the *Animorphs* series to Scholastic, where the proposal was met with enthusiasm. She wanted to write a series of books that showed how the world might look from the perspectives of different animals; the result has been a series of fascinating novellas for readers from late elementary school to junior high school.

After moving around the United States several times, the Michigan-born writer now resides in Minneapolis. Over a hundred of her books have been published, and she has written them at an amazing pace. Begun in 1996, her *Animorphs* series numbered over forty books plus several spin-offs by 2001. Her series intended for adolescents, *Everworld*, begun in 1999, numbered nine volumes by the end of 2000. Sally Lodge, in *Publishers Weekly*, quotes Applegate, "A series writer has to develop plotting and pacing that become a well-oiled machine. You don't have the luxury of spending a year on a book and absolutely cannot indulge in writer's block. Yet I knew I had to write in perfect language and choose just the right images, to make sure that my middle readers fell in love with the characters and returned again and again." The two hundred letters from young readers Applegate receives per week, as well as the one hundred emails she receives per day from youngsters, attest to the success she has had in reaching her intended audience. They love her characters.

In spite of the success of Applegate's writings, they have received scant attention in the press, perhaps because of a prevailing view that books written so quickly cannot be worth writing about, or perhaps because of the immense difficulty in keeping current with all the books Applegate publishes. In spite of the great pace at which Applegate has written her books, they tend to be of higher quality than other massmarket writings. In the *Animorphs* series the perspectives of characters as animals, whether fleas or birds, are artful and informative. The *Everworld* novels offer fine introductions to the mythologies of the world. In both series, the suspense is captivating and the characterizations are sharp but well-rounded; the books are pageturners, I-can't-go-to-bed-until-I-finish tales of adventure.

Applegate does not shy away from the tough questions about growing up and building sound, honest relationships with others. For instance, the nonseries title *Sharing Sam* deals with the prospect of a close friend dying and how to love in spite of the pain. In *Everworld*, the relationships among the principal characters are essential to the appeal of the novels. The art of characterization is one that Applegate has mastered, and it is perhaps the most important reason her rapidly-written works stand as good literature as well as entertaining reads.



Setting

The laws of gravity do not apply in Everworld as they do on earth. This bothers David to some degree; his is a calculating mind that balances his heroic impulses with good sense. For instance, he climbs onto Nidhoggr, a dragon so vast that David, a big guy, can crouch behind one eyebrow ridge and be completely hidden from sight: "And then, with wings at once so vast and tiny, he began to fly. Straight up. A blue whale flying directly vertical with only the leisurely flapping of wings that might, might on a good day have lifted my Buick." The four teens have coined an abbreviation for such things that defy logic: "WTE," which stands for "Welcome to Everworld."

David and his companions find themselves with ruby hearts instead of real hearts, a gift from Nidhoggr, who says that the ruby hearts will burn them to death in six days if they do not recover the magical objects stolen from him by leprechauns: "Nidhoggr had been robbed. Four items had been taken from his treasure. A stone, a spear, a sword, and a cauldron were missing." Finding the stolen objects means journeying into the land of the fairies, a territory surrounded by high walls, with gates guarded by fairies who are willing to accept bribes to let people pass. Borrowing a little bit from Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Applegate creates a land in which some copper wire, wooden posts, and, to Christopher's delight, freemarket capitalism hold the answers to recovering Nidhoggr's stolen goods, and the teenagers' real hearts.

David is suspicious of Fairy Land. "Too pretty," he says. "That's what I kept thinking. Too neat, too orderly, too well kept."

The yellow bricks had even been cleaned of manure. They sparkled wet with a recent washing." It is as if Fairy Land were calculated to attract visitors with well-designed, squeaky-clean settings.

Social Sensitivity

The issue of child molestation is touched on briefly in chapter nine, but it is too murkily presented to be more than a hint at one of the bad memories David wishes to leave behind in the Old World. The chapter is such a marked departure from the tone and content of the rest of *Discover the Destroyer* that it may stand out as a special problem for some readers.

Of greater significance to *Discover the Destroyer* is the theme of greed. Christopher views the economy of Fairy Land as robustly capitalist, and talks confidently about the law of supply-and-demand with Ambrigar. But David also sees Fairy Land as phony, a fake place prettied up to attract people who have money to spend or have profitable business to take to Fairy Land.

David likens his impression to visiting the botanical gardens in Chicago, implying a place that is artificial.



Literary Qualities

David really is not a whiner, not down deep, but if there is a weakness in *Discover the Destroyer*, it is David's excessive indulgence in teenaged angst: "Pleasure fades, gets old, gets thrown out with last year's fad. Fear, guilt, all that stuff stays fresh."

Part of this is motivated by his bad memories of childhood. David's memories are nothing compared to what Jalil has to go through with his mental illness, and regrets over no longer getting a thrill out of skating down a parking ramp seem way too childish for the active, even exuberant personality of David.

On the other hand, Applegate's craftsmanship is evident in the construction of *Discover the Destroyer*. It begins with a life-or-death problem for the teenagers, the replacement of their hearts by rubies that will go bad in six days, then passes through one thrilling event after another, to end in a good cliffhanger: "We had entered the land of Ka Anor."

Perhaps what is most admirable about *Discover the Destroyer* is the mix of the characters. Because David is the narrator, each teenager is given a major role. In contrast, the reader notices that when Christopher narrates *The Land of Loss*, he tends to focus almost entirely on himself. In *Discover the Destroyer*, David shows off his leadership skills and finally stands up to Senna over an issue that is important to him—doing right by his companions, especially April, who has been betrayed by Senna. Jalil gets his due not only as the cynical manipulator but also as the scientifically minded member of the group; the success of the telegraph depends on his knowledge. Indeed, the very idea of building the telegraph depends on his being one of the teenagers.

Christopher's brightest moment so far in the "Everworld" series, including his own narrated novel, *Land of Loss*, comes when he wheels and deals with Fairy Land's entrepreneurs. His usually dispirited tone changes to one of excitement and pleasure when he dives into his salesmanship: "It's called a telegraph. And that's only the beginning, my brother, because, see, the same technology can warn you if bad weather is coming or tell you if there's an enemy army heading your way. It can be used to send messages to your people far away." It is good to see this happy side of Christopher, and it is this spirited tone that makes *Discover the Destroyer* a special, exciting novel.



Themes and Characters

David returns as the narrator for *Discover the Destroyer*, after narrating the first novel in the series, *Search for Senna*. Finding Senna has not been a great problem; she tends to show up wherever the quartet of teens are going. But finding her complicates matters, because she seems to be perpetually in trouble and she is treacherous, ready to sell out anyone to get what she wants. What does she want? She has suggested that she would like to rule Everworld, but is she serious? In any case, she betrays April and continues to have a mysterious magical hold on David's emotions, "[Senna] had that power, that I knew. The power to confuse men's minds and appear to be anything," he observes. His determination to save a friend, April, from Ka Anor finally motivates him to say no to her, resulting in Senna's screaming anger: "The shrieking, out-of-control rage was like nothing I'd ever seen," David says.

David has his own anger to deal with. At the start of *Discover the Destroyer*, he is outraged that Christopher, April, and Jalil distrust him: "How many times had I come through for them, for us all? How many times had I stood out from, not alone maybe but out on the line, out at the point where danger pressed closest?" This is part of a long rant about what he has managed to accomplish in Everworld, and he is hurt that he is distrusted.

The others have reasons for mistrusting David Levin. He notes that "Senna was never really a part of us [the quartet]. A part of me, yes." His insistence on playing the hero for Senna has made the others think that his judgment cannot be trusted where Senna is involved, and he knows his judgment favors Senna, a witch so distasteful that a ruby could not replace her hard heart—only a diamond would do, according to Nidhoggr. In *Discover the Destroyer*, David's already well-rounded characterization becomes even more complex. Not only does he realize that Senna has an influence on his desires, he realizes that Everworld has hold of his imagination: "How would I live now? How would I go through the motions, the school, the tests, the college, the jobs, the life, the alreadytired life that awaits me?" he asks of his life in the Old World, the Earth. The other teenagers may yearn for warm, comfortable beds and showers, but David relishes the challenges of Everworld. Nothing about the Old World interests him as much as the smallest details of Everworld. Besides, chapter nine of *Discover the Destroyer* suggests that he has horrors on earth to flee from that are more terrible to him than even Hel herself, something about a molestation when he was at camp that he tries to bury deep away from his thoughts.

A man of action, David is paradoxically pleased when Nidhoggr switches the teenagers' hearts for rubies and sets a six-day deadline. "At least a goal," he remarks, "a compelling need, a unifying, simplifying ambition." He should know better. Of the four narrators of the Everworld novels, David seems to have the most insight into what is going on, perhaps because he is open to Everworld's possibilities whereas the others resist and resent Everworld. For instance, he notes, "Cynicism is a weak force in Everworld. It was one of our very few advantages." This is a sharp, incisive thought and



one of the fundamentals about those who live in Everworld: they are hopeful, ever seeking to accomplish something.

This, David realizes, leaves them susceptible to exploitation by someone less hopeful but more practical.

Further, David has more insight into himself than the others have into themselves. In the next novel in the series, *Fear the Fantastic*, Christopher seems to fail to recognize how his ethnic and sexist jokes alienate others: he is defensive about their reactions to him. On the other hand, David is ruthless in his self-analysis. Not only does he realize that Senna has an unusual influence over his behavior, but he notices that he has other limitations. He tells Jalil, "I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I'm in the middle of a tornado here." At the same time, he berates Jalil: "You want me to lead, then when it hits the fan you bail out on me." Even though Jalil, Christopher, and April tend to oversimplify David and David's emotions—portraying him as a gung-ho adventurer—David's narration reveals that he is a complicated young man whose heroism is born amid much selfdoubt and the realization that he is often in over his head. "If I was a leader I was doing a piss-poor job," he says after one of the group's many disagreements. "We were fragmented," he adds, "disunited. And I was just one of the fragments. We seemed incapable of working together. Each of us was a unit, none of us part of a team." He is capable of a deep understanding of the motivations of others, and he realizes that to survive, he and the others need to work together. Much of *Everworld* is devoted to the theme of leadership, and the theme is complex because of the depiction of David, who is ruthless in his self-analysis as well as insightful into the problems he faces as a leader.

An important theme for *Discover the Destroyer* is greed. Jalil recognizes its power for the fairies, and he is cynical enough to take advantage of that power. "I mean," he says, "that's the thing about greed. Enough is never enough. Even too much isn't enough."

Nidhoggr has already shown the hold greed has on him: even when buried in tons of riches, he cries over the loss of four stolen items. In *Fairy Land*, desire for wealth overrides other concerns. "You had to admire Jalil's mind," David says, showing his own tendency to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of others. "There wasn't a lot of sentimentality getting in the way." Further, David notes that "Jalil has a good, sharp eye for self-interest."

Like Jalil, Christopher recognizes the possibilities in the greed of the fairies, but where Jalil's analytical mind just sees the greed as something to be dispassionately exploited, Christopher revels in the give-and-take of bargaining and relishes the dynamics of the business of trade. He seems at home among the merchants.

In *Discover the Destroyer*, David's relationship with April presents special problems. He likes to think in terms of being part of a team, and in spite of his recognition that the four teenagers often function as separate units, he thinks of them as jointly his responsibility. This is where Senna miscalculates. She has managed to persuade David to protect her from heart-eating gods, from the queen of hell, and even from a huge dragon, but when



she declares that April is the "witch," and not herself, she defies something essential to David's nature. She has betrayed a team member. He has already noticed that "April hates Senna.

Hates. And hate isn't an emotion that comes lightly or easily to April." He does not know why April hates Senna, but Senna's blunt betrayal of her half-sister may hold a clue. In any case, in an awkward scene, David punches Senna, knocking her out, enabling him to get her out of his way while he contrives to free April from the dungeon of the King and Queen of Fairy Land, who have sold her to the Hetwan, the servants of Ka Anor.

Fairy Land has many wonders, including a castle whose towers are actually missiles designed to shoot down a dragon, but its people are the greatest wonders. Take, for example, the nymph Idalia: She was green. Not a little green, a lot green. I could see the color because she glowed like a paper candle lantern. Like she was filled with neon gas. She glowed the green of a spring leaf. Her skin, her face. Her hair was a darker green, like the same leaf in late summer. Her eyes, I didn't see them at first, couldn't because they darted this way and that, but when they paused for a microsecond they were yellow. Sunflower yellow.

She is youthful, "But a definite young woman, not a girl." In spite of her beauty, David insists, "I wasn't attracted to Idalia.

More like I was embarrassed."

More menacing is the Hetwan who purchase April from the King and Queen of Fairy Land: "He was taller than the fairies but just as slightly built. His eyes were those of an exceedingly large fly. He had wings folded against his back. His mouth was ringed by three small, jointed arms that never seemed to stop reaching for and grasping invisible food from the air."

Yet, more important than the Hetwan, more important than the nymph, even more important than the Queen, who actually rules Fairy Land, is a fairy named Ambrigar, a fellow who spends his days in the marketplace buying and selling goods, including copper wire. It is fun to watch Christopher launch into his sales pitch about the telegraph and to watch Ambrigar slowly realize what he can do with a telegraph. Perhaps Fairy Land, maybe all of Everworld, will become linked by telegraph, like King Arthur's Britain in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Another impressive character is Nidhoggr, the enormous dragon who lives under hell.

The Hetwan wish to get him out of the way so that they can invade hell, in order to capture Hel and other immortals to feed to Ka Anor. Nidhoggr may be greedy and too sentimental about his treasure, but he is not stupid, and he is not a willing victim. Still, greed is his weakness. For instance, he says to David, "Witches are never anything but trouble. Their hearts are hard. I'd have had to use a diamond to exchange for [Senna's] heart." David finds this amusing, realizing that the only reason Senna was spared from having her heart taken from her was that the old dragon was too cheap to use a diamond.



Topics for Discussion

1. Would you have bargained with Nidhoggr for Senna? Why or why not?
2. How well do David, Christopher, April, and Jalil work together in Discover the Destroyer? Are they a team?
3. Why does David insist on saving April from the Hetwan?
4. What does David's punching Senna say about his personal development in the Everworld series?
5. How dangerous does Senna seem at the end of Discover the Destroyer?
6. Why does Nidhoggr live up to his side of the bargain he makes with David at the end of Discover the Destroyer?
7. Are there dreamlike passages in Discover the Destroyer? What do they reveal about the characters?
8. How does David overcome his selfdoubts?
9. Will Ambrigar make a success of his telegraph business?
10. How good a salesman is Christopher? 11. Why does Applegate make Fairy Land seem artificial?
- Discover the Destroyer 12. Why would David admire Jalil's cynicism?
13. What does David's illness tell about what can happen in Everworld?
14. What special qualities does David bring to his narration of Discoverthe Destroyer? How do they color his account of events and his descriptions of places and characters?
15. By the end of Discover the Destroyer, what have the Everworld novels revealed about the Hetwan? What does this suggest about what the teenagers will discover in the land of Ka Anor?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. What characteristics does Nidhoggr have in common with the dragons of medieval European folklore? Or in common with the dragon in Beowulf? Or in common with dragons in Norse mythology?
2. What is rationalism? What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses?
3. Compare the narratives of Discover the Destroyer, Realm of the Reaper, Enter the Enchanted, Land of Loss, and Search for Senna. Are there notable differences in how the stories are told? Are there notable similarities? What does this tell you about Applegate's artistic achievement in Discover the Destroyer?
4. Draw a map of the city in Fairy Land, showing where every place is, including the palace and the market.
5. Draw or paint a picture of the marketplace, paying special attention to how its layout would encourage business dealings.
6. Compare the introduction of the telegraph to King Arthur's Britain in Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court with the introduction of the telegraph to Fairy Land in Discover the Destroyer. What is Twain's purpose in his novel? Is it similar to or different from Applegate's purpose in Discover the Destroyer?
7. What is the law of supply-and-demand?
How does it apply to the fairy society in Discover the Destroyer?
8. Christopher calls the fairy economy capitalist. Is it really capitalist? Why or why not?

For Further Reference

"Applegate, Katherine (Alice)." In *Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, vol. 37.

Detroit: Gale, 2000. A biographical essay with comments on Applegate's life and work.

"Applegate, Katherine (Alice)." In *Something about the Author*, vol. 109. Detroit: Gale, 2000. An essay that includes biographical information about Applegate and information about her writing.

"NYC Radio Station Celebrates the Season." *Publishers Weekly* January 17,2000): 26. Mentions the marketing of the "Everworld" series.

Review of *Search for Senna*. *Publishers Weekly* (June 21, 1999): 69. In this review the critic says, "With her blend of accessible story and mythological cast of characters, Applegate is sure to attract a host of new fans."

"Scholastic's Animorphs Series Has Legs," *Publishers Weekly* 244, 45 (November 3, 1997): 36-37.



Related Titles

Applegate likes to experiment, and her novels tend to be lively exercises in ideas and techniques. In the case of *Everworld*, she creates a place where the world's ancient mythologies coexist, and she has fun creating adventures that involve mixing the mythologies. For the "Everworld" series, she creates four adventurers who are snatched from fairly ordinary teenaged American lives, although Jalil's psychological problems are somewhat out of the ordinary. Through these characters, she experiments with techniques of narration by having each one narrate a novel. David narrates *Search for Senna*, which introduces Vikings, Loki, and Norse mythology. Jalil's *Realm of the Reaper* delves more deeply into Norse myths about life and death and the underworld than *Search for Senna* does. It also tells of hell and where Thor is to be found. Christopher's *Land of Loss* focuses more on Aztec mythology than Norse mythology and introduces the Coo-Hatch, aliens from yet another world. April's *Enter the Enchanted* tells of the survival of Arthurian culture in *Everworld* and shows that the various cultures and their gods know about each other and mix with one another.

In *Discover the Destroyer*, David returns as the narrator, showing much more insight into what is happening in *Everworld* than the other narrators have.

The personality of each narrator shows through in the telling of each book, and David explains how each teenager brings useful personal attributes to their adventures in *Everworld*. The shifting of narrators allows *Everworld* to be described through David's love of action and interest in logistics, through Christopher's acidic humor and tendency to see below the surface of events to find what is really going on, through April's good sense and practicality, and through Jalil's analytical mind that finds the logic linking events.

The novels also continue to introduce mythologies, and in the process, Applegate creates a new mythology of her own. Here, human endeavors are placed in a vast cosmic scheme in which everyone is important, even though in any individual novel they may seem like pawns. Once the youngsters meet Merlin in *Land of Loss*, the grand contest of universe-shaking powers begins to reveal itself, and dreams really do seem more real than real life. *Discover the Destroyer* advances the unifying plot of the "Everworld" series by showing how the Hetwan are insinuating themselves into the politics of Fairy Land, as well as revealing how tough David, Christopher, April, and Jalil have become.



Copyright Information

Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Editor

Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design

Amanda Mott

Cover Art is "Pierrot," 1947, by William Baziotès Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 36 Donated by the Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund, ©, 1996 Reproduced with Permission from the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)

ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)

ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature—Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction—19th century—Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction—20th century—Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3—dc20 96-20771 CIP

Copyright ©, 1996, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 830, Osprey, FL 34229-0830

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996