



Cockroach (Animal)

Marion Copeland

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The cockroach could not have scuttled along, almost unchanged, for two hundred and fifty million years – some two hundred and forty-nine before man evolved – unless it was doing something right. It would be fascinating as well as instructive to have access to the cockroach's own record of its life on earth, to know its point of view on evolution and species domination over the millennia. Such chronicles would perhaps radically alter our perceptions of the dinosaur's span and importance – and that of our own development and significance. We might learn that throughout all these aeons, the dominant life form has been, if not the cockroach itself, then certainly the insect.

Attempts to chronicle the cockroach's intellectual and emotional life have been made only within the last century when a scientist titled his essay on the cockroach "The Intellectual and Emotional World of the Cockroach", and artists as radically different as Franz Kafka and Don Marquis created equally memorable cockroach protagonists.

At least since Classical Greece, authors have brought cockroach characters into the foreground to speak for the weak and downtrodden, the outsiders, those forced to survive on the underside of dominant human cultures. Cockroaches have become the subjects of songs (La Cucaracha), have competed in "roachraces" and have even ended up in recipes. In this accessible, sympathetic and often humorous book, Marion Copeland examines the natural history, symbolism and cultural significance of this poorly understood and much-maligned insect.

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