

The Botany of Desire

**Study Guide**

Introduction

The Human Bumblebee

Pre-reading:

- 1) How do bumblebees nourish themselves (eat)? What role do they play in nature?  
Describe the relationship between bees and plants.
- 2) Which species is more highly developed – plants or humans? (xix)
- 3) Explain Darwin’s theory of natural selection. What is evolution?

Comprehension (*Answer six*):

- 1) After reading the Introduction, what have you learned about the author, Michael Pollan?
- 2) Explain, in your own words, what Pollan means by a “coevolutionary relationship” (p.xiv). What other examples of this kind of relationship can you think of?
- 3) Paraphrase the paragraph at the top of page xvi (“This book attempts to ....”)
- 4) This book will examine four plants (apple, tulip, cannabis, potato), as well as four desires. What are the four desires that will be explored?
- 5) On p.xxiv Pollan writes, “My wager [my bet, or my guess] is that .... and ambiguity.” Paraphrase this by completing the following: Pollan thinks that we humans should try to  
.....  
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- 6) On p.xxv, what is the false premise Pollan mentions?
- 7) Pollan’s premise (the one he agrees with) is the opposite of this. Pollan believes that ....
- 8) After reading the introduction, freewrite between one half to one full page. You might include ideas that interested you, or that confused you, and you might also make some predictions about the rest of the book. What expectations do you now have about the remainder of the book?