Kingdom of Dust

**Earth may even owe its current array of animals to dust. According to one theory, 65 million years ago a speeding asteroid the size of Manhattan smacked into Earth, throwing up a dust cloud that plunged the planet into decades of darkness and chill. Dinosaurs perished, allowing the flourishing of mammals. The rest, you might say, was prehistory. *(Richard H. Schneider, in Reader’s Digest)***

**“Is it true, Mother, that we came from dust and that we return to dust?” “Yes, dear, that’s what the Bible says.” “Well,” the cherubic child said, “I just looked under the bed and somebody’s either coming or going.” *(Starlight magazine, 1988)***

**It was Homer in “The Iliad” – and Western writer Zane Grey – who coined “bite the dust” as a synonym for dying. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Thanks to the tiny particles of dust suspended in our atmosphere that, along with air molecules, intercept and scatter the sun’s shorter (blue) light waves, we have our blue sky. As the sun sets, the dusty atmosphere reveals the longer orange and red rays that paint the sky. And the fine dust suspended in the upper atmosphere creates the afterglow of twilight, that entrancing luminescence that hangs in the west at day’s end like the last chord of a haunting melody. Dust, in short, gives us the stuff poems are made of. *(Richard H. Schneider, in Reader’s Digest)***

**One of the noblest passages of the book of Genesis says that “God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Indeed, dust has long been a metaphor for human origins and mortality. The phrase “dust to dust” is a profoundly succinct equation to describe a life-span. *(Richard H. Schneider, in Reader’s Digest)***

**As boulders erode, their names change. They become cobbles, which become pebbles, then gravel, then sand. Eventually sand becomes silt and dust. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**The Dust Bowl states of the 1930s were Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Many years ago, in the still of a summer morning, I was alone in my grandmother’s parlor, absorbed in a book. Suddenly I lifted my eyes, and there, in a shaft of sunlight, was the most wonderful sight: sparkling dust motes swirling in slow motion, like stars in a galaxy. As I passed my hand through the cloud, each finger dragged a glittering vortex behind it. The never-ending chore of wiping gray grime from household crevices makes it easy for most of us to forget our first, entrancing glimpse of the kingdom of dust caught in a sunbeam. But our childhood view is the more accurate one. In God’s scheme of things, dust is responsible for much beauty in the world. Without it there would be no clouds, no delicate shades of green foliage or vari-hued shadows. We could not relish the lovely opalescent haze over mountains or savor breathtaking sunsets. *(Richard H. Schneider, in Reader’s Digest)***

**An atom is built like our solar system. It is almost all empty space. The nucleus is the only solid piece. Scientists say that if you eliminated all the space in every atom in the body of a 200-pound man he would be no bigger than a particle of dust. The earth without the space in its atoms would be a ball only one-half mile through. *(Henry J. Taylor, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Expect to see vivid displays of meteor showers (aka “shooting stars”) as our planet makes its annual trek through expansive bands of cosmic dust shed from tails of orbiting comets. This year, a shooting-star extravaganza called the Leonids peaks on the night of November 17 when meteors seem to streak from Leo the Lion, a constellation in the northern sky. And the burst of shooting stars (Geminids) blazes into view on December 13, *(The Saturday Evening Post, November, 2011, p. 16)***

**Got allergies? Asthma? Maybe you should blame Mom for keeping such a clean house. A surprising European study suggests that germs in household dust can actually help protect children from developing hay fever or asthma. The findings, published in today’s New England Journal of Medicine, counter decades of conventional wisdom. Doctors and parents long assumed that since dust can aggravate existing allergies, it can probably make a growing child more susceptible to developing them in the first place. But about 10 years ago, doctors started seeing suggestions that dirt might actually be good for children. “When it was first proposed, it seemed kind of ridiculous,” said Dr. Norman Edelman, a respiratory specialist for the American Lung Association. “We had been teaching people that a clean environment was better.” The theory is known as the hygiene hypothesis. It holds that early contact with some germs arms the maturing immune system against some allergic conditions, much as vaccines protect against disease. Some research, in fact, has suggested that children who are exposed early on to pets or to lots of other youngsters at day care are less likely to get colds or allergies later on. Supporters of the theory suspect that indoor plumbing, cleaner and more airtight homes, and antibiotics have contributed to an explosion in allergies in industrialized countries. *(Jeff Donn, in Rocky Mountain News, September 19, 2002)***

**Main reason spiders abandon webs is that the webs get too dusty. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**As every sunset shows, the Creator has included dust in his formula for the world. And we, too, are part of the fascinating, all-encompassing kingdom of dust. *(Richard H. Schneider, in Reader’s Digest)***

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