



## **Quicklet - Bill Bryson's Notes from a Big Country**

Peg Robinson

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#### ABOUT THE BOOK

The first time I read a Bill Bryson book, I was not expecting much at all. For many years my family shared a rustic cottage on a lake with all the other members of my mother's family. Entertainment on nice days usually involved swimming, swimming, more swimming, and the occasional nap. On gray days, we read. Over the years four generations of the family left behind a muddled collection of books. When I read through the books I had brought with me, I'd grab whatever my relations had left behind.

That's how I first encountered Bill Bryson. I found a well-worn, tattered copy of A Walk in the Woods, left behind by a relative. I picked it up with uncertainty, not sure I was completely interested in a stranger's account of a summer spent hiking the Appalachian Trail. As for a stranger who told that story while trying to be funny? I suspended my disbelief.

But, Bryson really was funny. So funny that when I returned home I promptly ordered a copy and made my husband read it. After finishing it, he went out and got still more Bryson books. They were funny, too.

That's the first thing that should be said about Bryson, and about Notes from a Big Land: It's a funny book written by a man who has a mastery of funny.

#### MEET THE AUTHOR

Peg Robinson holds a BA in Religious Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and has partially completed an MA/PhD in Mythological Studies from Pacifica Graduate Institute. She holds a certificate in copy editing from Media Bistro.

Her publishing career started in 1998, on winning a place in Simon and Schuster's Star Trek: Strange New Worlds competition. Her novelette "Tonino and the Incubus" qualified for the 2007 Nebula Awards. She has worked as a content provider, copy writer, informational writer, copy editor, and developmental editor.

#### EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

Notes from a Big Country is the British version of a book published in the United States under the title I'm a Stranger Here, Myself. Both books are compiled of essays written for the British publication, Mail on Sunday's Night and Day, edited by Simon Kelner, a friend and associate of Bryson's.

There are extensive differences between the two books. Notes from a Big Country contains a full 78 essays; I'm a Stranger Here, Myself contains only 70. Editorial adjustments were made to take the language and assumptions of each nation into account. An extensive comparison of the two volumes can be found from the Department of Translation Studies, at the University of Tanjere. The linguistic analysis may not interest everyone, but it provides a fairly extensive overview of the changes made in adapting the book for two distinct audiences.

There is no question to an American reader that Notes from a Big Country was written for an English audience. While Bryson is on record as considering his identity in England that of an outsider it's impossible

to read the essay chapters without realising how deeply Bryson has adapted to English culture. It's equally impossible to miss how profoundly he felt the culture-shock on returning to the United States.

Buy a copy to keep reading!

#### **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

- Quicklet on Bill Bryson's Notes from a Big Country
- Bill Bryson's Notes from a Big Country
  - Introduction
  - Biographical Information
  - o Overview: Notes from a Big Country
  - Material and Tone
  - ...and much more



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