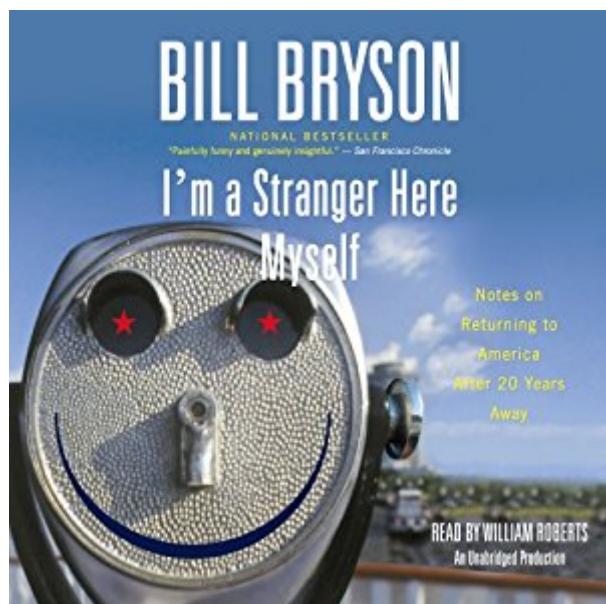


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# I'm A Stranger Here Myself: Notes On Returning To America After Twenty Years Away



## Synopsis

After living in Britain for two decades, Bill Bryson recently moved back to the United States with his English wife and four children (he had read somewhere that nearly 3 million Americans believed they had been abducted by aliens - as he later put it, "It was clear my people needed me"). They were greeted by a new and improved America that boasts microwave pancakes, 24-hour dental-floss hotlines, and the staunch conviction that ice is not a luxury item. Delivering the brilliant comic musings that are a Bryson hallmark, *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* recounts his sometimes disconcerting reunion with the land of his birth. The result is a book filled with hysterical scenes of one man's attempt to reacquaint himself with his own country, but it is also an extended, if at times bemused, love letter to the homeland he has returned to after 20 years away.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I read my first Bill Bryson book, *A Walk in the Woods*, when it was first published and have been a fan ever since. I recently began acquiring them on my Kindle and reading them again, and they are still enjoyable. Bill Bryson has an interesting perspective on two cultures. Born in the U.S., moving to Britain in his 20s, and then moving back to the U.S. after 20 years, he essentially gets to be an outsider in his native country as he tries to the changes in that have occurred in his home country in the two decades he has been away. The book is essentially a collection of weekly columns he wrote that were published back in Britain. They range between funny and poignant, but are all well written and will leave you smiling.

I bought this book thinking there would be a lot of insightful comparisons of living in England vs. the U.S. The book, published in 1998, is actually just a collection of newspaper columns which do not seem to have been edited much. Bryson complains about things like not being able to figure out how to use his computer and his automatic garage door opener and even question their usefulness. He sounds like a silly old Luddite frankly. Only a few sections of the book compare the US and England, which makes it a bit of false advertising. Bryson does make a lot of hilarious comments about the travails of life generally and I guess that's where the value of the book lies. Phrases like "IQ of a mollusc" made me laugh out loud. He whines about a lot of other silly things that people in this day age do not because they have improved so dramatically--computers, hotel room service food, etc. I would say about 20% of this book is actually insightful or funny. The rest is just filler newspaper columns.

Being the Yankee daughter of a Yorkshire lass, myself, Bill Bryson's book brought back fond memories and hysterical observations that either my mother or I had also made whilst comparing kindred but definitely separate cultures. Even if you've been confined to only one side of the pond or the other, this great read will offer hours of entertainment. When I sit and read a "Bryson", it is like meeting up with an old friend: you know you'll get a tad nostalgic, you know the friendship will immediately re-bloom and you know, too, you'll laugh your butt off. AND you'll look forward to seeing him again--real soon! Right now, Bryson and I are walking the AT. There is no end to the adventures!

Serving as a weekly columnist for the local newspaper, this book is a compilation of Bryson's columns, so they are short and to the point. Much like Andy Rooney, Bryson has that deadpan delivery about everyday life which throws the reader back into the chair with laughter!

truly made me laugh right out loud. Great insight into both cultures in such a relatable way. Read it after his Little Dribbling book and it didn't disappoint. Great book if you enjoy the British Shows. Reminded me of Reggie Perrin type of British humor.

I have read and re-read this book a number of times, but recently I came back to the States after spending three years living abroad. Mr. Bryson's already sharp, hilarious commentary took on a whole new glow under those conditions. I have had some of the exact same experiences he describes in the book: the glorious carnival of an American grocery store, the overwhelming

magnificence of American customer service. A few of his chapters are now entirely outdated, but you can't help wishing for an update (given his struggles with fax machines, one wonders what Mr. Bryson might make of smartphones). What sets this book apart - though not surprising to those who have read certain others of his titles - are the countless moments of actual, out-loud bursts of laughter. If you read this around other people, expect to be frequently shoving it at your neighbors so they can experience it for themselves.

Bryson's books are always reliably witty and often laugh-out-loud funny. This is the kind of book you pick up for a change of pace after some heavy reading. Although this book is a bit dated, I still found it to be very good.

*I'm a Stranger Here Myself* is the 3rd Bill Bryson book I've read. The other two books (*A Short History of Nearly Everything* and *One Summer -- America 1927*) taught you something but did so with a wonderful sense of humor, too. This book has the humor, but is more reflective than educational and so just seemed to have less meat on its bones. Also, be warned that, since the book is simply a collection of articles that Bryson wrote for a British newspaper (back in the 1990s, by the way), each chapter is very short (about 5 minutes reading time) and the articles are more directed at a British audience than an American audience.

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