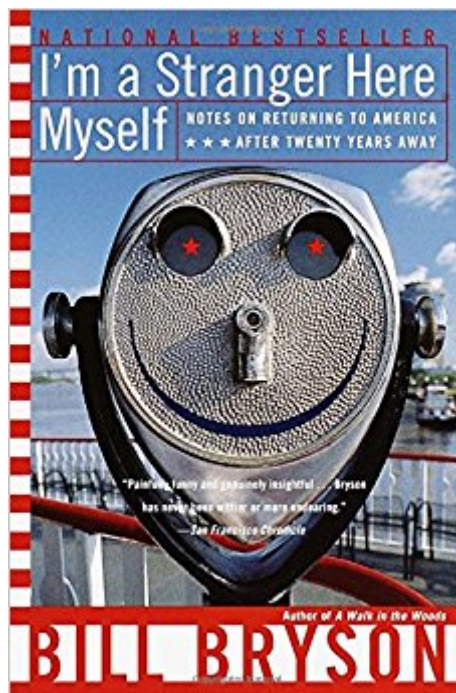




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# I'm A Stranger Here Myself: Notes On Returning To America After 20 Years Away



## Synopsis

A CLASSIC FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF ONE SUMMER 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 aliensâ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, twenty-four-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.Â 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 twenty years away.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the world of contemporary travel writing, Bill Bryson, the bestselling author of *A Walk in the Woods*, often emerges as a major contender for King of Crankiness. Granted, he complains well and humorously, but between every line of his travel books you can almost hear the tinny echo: "I wanna go home, I miss my wife." Happily, *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* unleashes a new Bryson, more contemplative and less likely to toss daggers. After two decades in England, he's relocated to Hanover, New Hampshire. In this collection (drawn from dispatches for London's *Night & Day* magazine), he's writing from home, in close proximity to wife and family. We find a happy marriage

between humor and reflection as he assesses life both in New England and in the contemporary United States. With the telescopic perspective of one who's stepped out of the American mainstream and come back after 20 years, Bryson aptly holds the mirror up to U.S. culture, capturing its absurdities--such as hotlines for dental floss, the cult of the lawsuit, and strange American injuries such as those sustained from pillows and beds. "In the time it takes you to read this," he writes, "four of my fellow citizens will somehow manage to be wounded by their bedding." The book also reflects the sweet side of small-town USA, with columns about post-office parties, dining at diners, and Thanksgiving--when the only goal is to "get your stomach into the approximate shape of a beach ball" and be grateful. And grateful we are that the previously peripatetic Bryson has returned to the U.S., turning his eye to this land--while living at home and near his wife. Under her benevolent influence, he entertains through thoughtful insights, not sarcastic stabs. --Melissa Rossi --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Ex-expatriate Bryson, who chronicled one effort at American reentry in his bestselling *A Walk in the Woods*, collects another: the whimsical columns on America he wrote weekly, while living in New Hampshire in the mid-to-late 1990s, for a British Sunday newspaper. Although he happily describes himself as dazzled by American ease, friendliness and abundance, Bryson has no trouble finding comic targets, among them fast food, computer efficiency and, ironically, American friendliness and putative convenience. As he edges into Dave Barry-style hyperbole, Bryson sometimes strains for yuks, but he's deft when he compares the two cultures, as in their different treatment of Christmas, pointing out how the British "pack all their festive excesses" into that single holiday. Bryson also nudges into domestic territory with regular references to his own British wife, the resolutely sensible Mrs. B. In a few columns, Bryson adopts a sentimental tone, writing about his family and his new hometown of Hanover. In others, he's more sober, criticizing anti-immigration activists, environmental depredation and drug laws (though he draws out the humor in these as well). Not all the columns hit their mark, and they are best read in small groupings, but this collection should sell well enough, although not likely to the heights of *A Walk in the Woods*. Agent, Jed Mattes. Author tour; BDD audio. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

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 catch up to the changes 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 questions 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 and 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!

It 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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