



***A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail***  
by Bill Bryson (Bantam, 1999)

**Target Audience:** Adult readers who enjoy humor, non-fiction and the great outdoors.

**Synopsis:** The subtitle of the book is *Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail* and that is exactly what Bill Bryson set out to do. After a 20-year absence, he set out on the 2,100-mile trail to reacquaint himself with his native country.

**Author Biography:** Bill Bryson was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1951. A backpacking expedition in 1973 brought him to England where he met his wife and decided to settle. He wrote for the English newspapers *The Times* and *The Independent* for many years, writing travel articles to supplement his income. He lived with his family in North Yorkshire before moving back to the States in 1995, to Hanover, New Hampshire, with his wife and four children. IN 2003 he and his family moved back to England, where they currently reside.

**Reviews:**

**The Washington Post Book World**

“Choke-on-your-coffee funny.”

**The New York Times Book Review**

“Bryson is...great company right from the start—a lumbering, droll, neatnik intellectual who comes off as equal parts Garrison Keilor, Michael Kinsley, and...Dave Barry.”

**The Boston Globe**

“*A Walk in the Woods* is an almost perfect travel book.”

**National Geographic Traveler**

“A laugh-out-loud account...If you were to cross John Muir’s writings with Dave Barry’s you’d end up with *A Walk in the Woods*.”

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What do you think of the title of the book, *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*? Can you really discover America?
2. What did you think of the scene where Bryson and Katz discovered on a map that they had only hiked two inches of the four feet of trail?

3. On the trail, Bryson and Katz meet numerous characters. Which ones were your favorites? How do they interact?
4. The book is filled with information – the history of the trail, geology, ecology, global warming, social customs – how do these add to the story?
5. Katz and Bryson are good but unlikely friends. What is their relationship based on? How does it change over the course of the book?
6. Do you think that readers could find this book offensive or controversial? In what ways?
7. At the end of the book Bryson says that it doesn't feel right cutting the grass after hiking the trail. Should the book have ended differently?

**Compiled by Marie Aronstein, Monroe Free Library - March 2009  
Ramapo Catskill Library System Adult Services Advisory Council**