

April 08 – IN A SUNBURNED COUNTRY by Bryson

G'Day!

Thank you to everyone who came down under with Barb at the Tattered Cover for ***In A Sunburned Country*** by Bill Bryson. 14 happy faces and a distant voice from Maryland joined in as we followed Mr. Bryson down those dusty, hot, dry expanses of Oz! I for one was shocked at how much of the country he willingly chose to see from a car versus another mode of transportation.

Mr. Bryson has made multiple trips to Australia and will most likely do so again in the future. He did tend to lay it on thick when he did not like a location (Canberra) or a subject that obviously fascinated him (the amount of urine drunk by those stranded and soon to die in the outback). Under all that, however, there seemed to be a true reverence and respect for Australia and Australians as a whole.

Most of us enjoyed his droll descriptions of things that tickled him. His cricket description got high marks, as did the jam donut incident and the dangerous, poisonous, stinging animals, species, plants that seem intent on killing us. Several people when queried if they intended to make their first visit to Australia after reading the book said no.

His style of writing in this book tended to go into great detail at times, but many of us found that it was possible to skim ahead over the less interesting parts, and then pick him up later on without losing much of the story. Several people mentioned that they loved all the history included and I am sure that everyone learned at least one new thing about Australia, whether you had been there or not. We were uniformly fascinated to hear about the new species that continue to show up and how much of Australia is still undiscovered, uncharted and unmapped.

He was excellent at describing personal interactions with people. He obviously has a lower pain threshold for comforts and a higher tolerance for missed opportunities than most of us. Some of his hotels and food choices left a lot of us cold and the thought of spending a grand total of 2 hours at Uluru and a 10-hour roundtrip by car did not seem to have the proper amount of planning.

There were side discussions on Australia's health care system (excellent and inexpensive if you have an emergency) and is the society still male dominated (Seems to be). That being said, those that have experienced

Australia agreed that to visitors, the Aussies are the most laid back, easy going, no worries, beer drinking, soccer loving (footie in Oz) bunch of people in the world. And on a personal note, their meat pies aren't bad either!

His lack of discussion on the Aborigines (one very small chapter) was mentioned and while he did bring up a small amount about their previous treatment and recent changes in the government that have improved their rights, the lack of integration and inclusion in Australian society and his book left a bit a hole in our understanding.

Several of the readers had enjoyed other Bryson books and could speak to his humor, strange though it can be to some of us. Depending on your interest, ***Notes from a Small Island***, ***A Walk in the Woods*** and ***I am a Stranger Here Myself*** all are recommended, in fact, generally recommended over the current book.

Additional books about Australia that were brought up included *The Fatal Shore* and children's books by Norman Lindsay and Mim Fox, some of which were included in the back of *IASC* by Bryson.

Movies that were brought up for those interested included *Rabbit Proof Fence*, *A Town Called Alice* and *10 Canoes*. Others that came to me after the meeting include *Picnic at Hanging rock*, *Strangers in Good Company*, *Cosi*, *Muriel's Wedding* and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

Thanks Barb for suggesting ***In A Sunburned Country!***

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