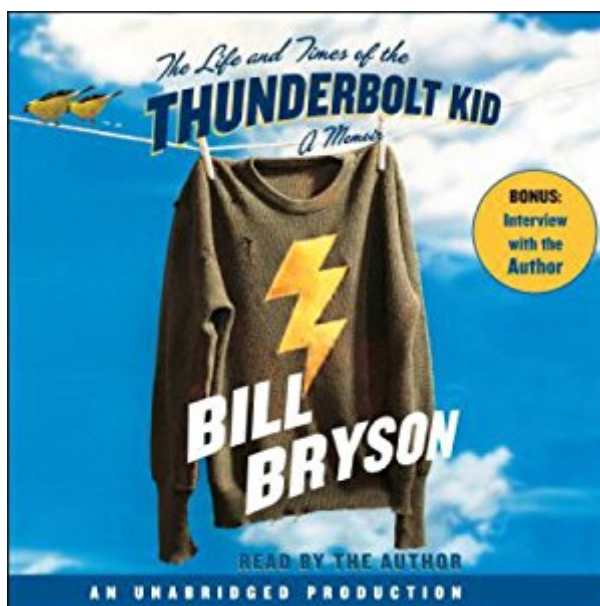


The book was found

The Life And Times Of The Thunderbolt Kid



Synopsis

Some say that the first hint that Bill Bryson was not of Planet Earth came when his mother sent him to school in lime-green Capri pants. Others think it all started with his discovery, at the age of six, of a woollen jersey of rare fineness. Across the moth-holed chest was a golden thunderbolt. It may have looked like an old college football sweater, but young Bryson knew better. It was obviously the Sacred Jersey of Zap, and proved that he had been placed with this innocuous family in the middle of America to fly, become invisible, shoot guns out of people's hands from a distance, and wear his underpants over his jeans in the manner of Superman. Bill Bryson's first travel book opened with the immortal line, 'I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to.' In his deeply funny new memoir, he travels back in time to explore the ordinary kid he once was, and the curious world of 1950s America. It was a happy time, when almost everything was good for you, including DDT, cigarettes and nuclear fallout. This is a book about growing up in a specific time and place. But in Bryson's hands, it becomes everyone's story, one that will speak volumes - especially to anyone who has ever been young. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To entertain so wonderfully by telling the tales of the past with such grace is the supreme talent of Bill Bryson. The ease at which he delivers the heavy and the humorous, especially for those blessed with the audio version of his books, only opens up parts of the heart and mind that could have been dormant for ages. I highly recommend this book, in particular, but also other of his works including, but not limited to One Summer... It's not only history, not only entertaining, but is a subtle, gentle call

out to all of us to learn, to know, and to allow the things we know to affect us beyond merely reading a book.

This is a sentimental book about the good old 1950's and growing up in them in the midwest. There are not nearly as many laughs as there are in some of Bryson's earlier books, but it's a pleasant read filled with warm memories and Bryson's obsessively researched asides. I'm curious about the concept of the Thunderbolt Kid for the book. His super-hero alter ego is mentioned maybe five times throughout the book and is completely unnecessary. In fact, it seems to be such an afterthought that I wonder if the publisher read the first draft and told him to add something that would grab the book shopper's attention. This is not at all a Bryson must-read, but if you grew up in the 50's, it may take you back.

Even though I was a "girl", but still of the same generation as the author, this book brought back many carefree memories for me. I too remember running around the neighborhood with a towel pinned around my neck, playing a Super Girl of sorts. This was before I'd ever heard of Wonder Woman. Memories as well of getting our first TV, and later the first time I actually saw a color TV! Overall, this book was highly entertaining, and provided me with far more than one moment of "burst out loud laughter". Immediately, as reading, I thought of others I would most certainly recommend this book to. This was a time way back, when most children I knew lead carefree lives, and actually "used their imaginations" to think of ways to entertain themselves. When kids played games outside with other neighborhood kids, and were actually expected to be "highly respectful" of their elders. Very nicely done. Lovely little jabs at the quirks of his father, his mother's cooking, other family members, all sorts of friend's oddities, both young and old. A book you can pick up to read, just for the joy of escaping to a another time and place. To get a few good chuckles. Also to come to understand the viewpoint from a young boy's point of view, of stories in the local and international news, that now make me stop and realize how little I was effected by it all.

My husband received this book as a gift from my step-mother. She had no idea what a perfect gift it was for him, since he was born in Des Moines, Iowa, where the adventures in this book took place. While my husband is younger than the author, his brother was the same age and it could almost be written by him. My husband's siblings have now all read this book or will have once his last sister receives this in the mail. Had to share it with her, but did not want to give up our own copy. It's a keeper. While I, myself, grew up elsewhere, there are a lot of similarities with my own experiences of

growing up in small town America, same types of businesses, just different names, same feel. It's really about growing up in the '50's and '60's all across America. If you grew up in that time era, you will most likely find similarities in your own life. Reading this book is like sitting down with the author, himself, and hearing his stories of growing up. This book is fabulously nostalgic, warmly engaging, and truly laugh-out-loud funny. While reading this book has led to reading other books by Bill Bryson, this is my husband's very favorite. Parts of it, he read aloud to me and I loved it as well. If this review has been helpful to you, please indicate below. I rely heavily on reviews of others, so have tried to review this to the best of my ability. Read the book. It's great!

If you were alive in the midwest in the mid twentieth century, many parts of this book will either have you laughing out loud or feeling sentimental. The author must have been a thoughtful child and keen observer, though he portrays his child-self as carefree and heedless. Bryson described what I believed, while growing up, was the life of everyone's family but mine. The large and small details of everyday life that are described in the book make the times come to life for the reader. I find myself telling my children about things that existed then, and I have forgotten, because the book ignited those memories for me. The book is definitely written from the perspective a boy of the fifties and sixties, which is fine. He was a boy. I would be interested to read a book from the same era written by someone who was a girl at that time. I think it would include many of the same details and events peculiar to that time, but might be expressed in as a very different experience for the author, maybe not as humorous. That said, Bryson is also insightful in pointing out absurdities, incongruities, and consequences of the culture of that time in America.

Bill Bryson's memoir of growing up in Des Moines is not only an exercise in nostalgia for what it was like being a child in the 1950's but a wonderful recapturing of what it is like to be a child. It is also a very funny book and not one to be read in public if you dislike having people look at you oddly when you involuntarily erupt into helpless laughter. The sheer number of endearingly eccentric characters from Bryson's formative years is amazing, from his oblivious parents to budding mad scientist Doug Willoughby to the infamous Stephen Katz. This book does for this period in America what Mark Twain did for the era of Tom Sawyer: keeps it vividly alive for all time.

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