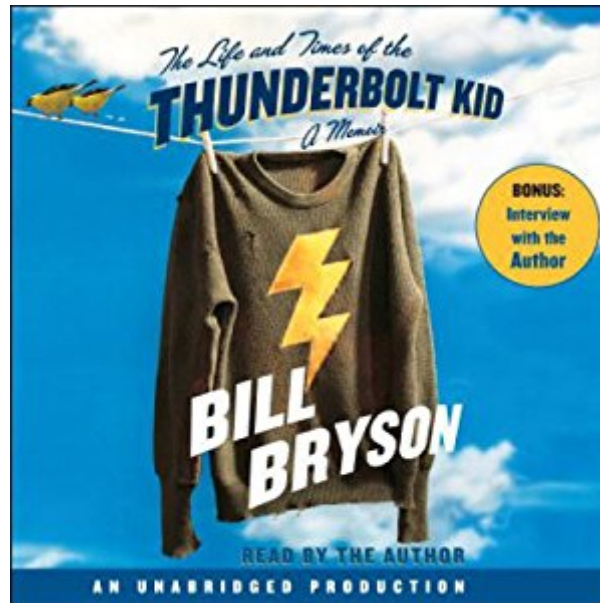


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# The Life And Times Of The Thunderbolt Kid



## Synopsis

**BONUS FEATURE:** Exclusive interview with the author. From one of the most beloved and bestselling authors in the English language, a vivid, nostalgic and utterly hilarious memoir of growing up in the middle of the United States in the middle of the last century. A book that delivers on the promise that it is a laugh-out-loud funny. Some say that the first hints that Bill Bryson was not of Planet Earth came from 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'll come from Des Moines. Somebody had to." In this hilarious new memoir, he travels back to explore the kid he once was and the weird and wonderful world of 1950s America. He modestly claims that this is a book about not very much: about being small and getting much larger slowly. But for the rest of us, it is a laugh-out-loud book that will speak volumes especially to anyone who has ever been young. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Any Baby Boomer who thinks fondly on a childhood in the 1950s will enjoy this book immensely. Born in 1951 and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, Bill Bryson had what we might consider the average middle-class life in the geographic center of America. As such, it's easy for us to nod in agreement

at many of the details he recalls: spider-web-like strands of airplane glue that stuck to everything except small plastic model pieces; the confusion of having two different actors play the Lone Ranger on TV; the stilted and unrealistic conversations we read in our Dick and Jane textbooks; and the fact that we all spent our free time outside, making up our own games. Bryson additionally got into a few unusual scrapes with some of his neighborhood buddies, and the distance of time makes each one of their escapades a real hoot. Those post-war days were indeed the best of times and the worst of times. The nation grew wealthy and happier and stronger, and technological advances like television made us feel more powerful. Simultaneously the Cold War intensified, and we grew ever more fearful of a nuclear attack from Russia. It was a unique and great time to be a kid."Happily," Bryson writes, "we were indestructible. We didn't need seat belts, air bags, smoke detectors, bottled water, or the Heimlich maneuver. We didn't require child-safety caps on our medicines. We didn't need helmets when we rode our bikes or pads for our knees and elbows when we went skating. We knew without a written reminder that bleach was not a refreshing drink and that gasoline when exposed to a match had a tendency to combust.

Bill Bryson was born in 1951 in Des Moines, Iowa. Talk about lucky! "I can't imagine there has ever been a more gratifying time or place to be alive than America in the 1950s," he writes. "We became the richest country in the world without needing the rest of the world."And Billy Bryson --- white, Protestant, son of a brilliant sportswriter and the home furnishings editor of the Des Moines Register --- was in just the right place to take full advantage.As many of you know, Bryson grew up to live in England and write first class travel books --- *A Walk in the Woods*, his account of walking the Appalachian Trail with his out-of-shape friend, Steve Katz, is both informative and hilarious --- and serious studies of language, like Bryson's *Dictionary of Troublesome Words*. But as a kid, he was a pure doofus. He had no interest in school, his city's cultural institutions or its many opportunities for youth athletics.By the testimony of this memoir, Billy Bryson had only one childhood obsession: trouble. Namely, how much damage to property and civility could one fresh-faced boy --- and, of course, his posse of equally privileged homies --- do each and every day.And because kids roamed free in those days and time stretched to the horizon, Billy had all of Des Moines as his target.Exhibit A: He liked to hide on the top floor of an office building with a central atrium. Seven stories below was a restaurant: "A peanut M&M that falls seventy feet into a bowl of tomato soup makes one heck of a splash, I can tell you.

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