

Discussion Questions for *In a Sunburned Country* by Bill Bryson

1. Did you like the book? If so, what was your favorite part of the book? If not, why not?
2. Did you learn anything?
3. Do you have any interest in traveling to Australia, or have you been there?
4. Did you like Bryson's narrative style? If you've read other books by the author, how did this book compare?
5. Did you have a favorite chapter? A least favorite chapter? A favorite or least favorite geographic region?
6. What is Bryson's attitude toward Australia? What do you think of his attitude?
7. Why do you think the author was so obsessed with detailing all the wildlife that can hurt or maim you?
8. What did you think of Bryson's comments on the Australian Aborigines?
9. In Chapter 16, Bryson muses on the American influence in Alice Springs:

On our way into town, we passed strip malls, car dealerships, McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets, banks, and gas stations. ... My room had a balcony where I could watch the setting sun flood the desert floor and burnish the golden slopes of the MacDonnell Ranges beyond – or at least I could if I looked past the more immediate sprawl of a Kmart plaza across the road. In the 2 million or more square miles that is the Australian outback, I don't suppose there is a more unfortunate juxtaposition.

Allan was evidently held by a similar thought, for a half hour later when we met out front he was staring at the same scene. "I can't believe we've just driven a thousand miles to find a Kmart," he said. He looked at me. "You Yanks have a lot to answer for, you know."

I started to protest, in a sputtering sort of way, but what could I say? He was right. We do. We have created a philosophy of retailing that is totally without aesthetics and totally irresistible. And now we box these places up and ship them to the far corners of the world. Visually, almost every arrestingly regrettable thing in Alice Springs was a product of American enterprise What a sad and curious age we live in.

Reactions? Comments?

10. Did any of the facts or anecdotes surprise you? Was the Australia he describes what you expected?
11. If the author were here, what would you most like to ask the author about his travels?
12. Did any thing that happened or was said in the book stick with you?
13. Did you like any of the local sayings?
14. Are there any questions you would like to ask?