



Quicklet on Bill Bryson's *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* - A Memoir (CliffNotes-like Summary)

Becki Chiasson

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Growing up was easy. It required no thought or effort on my part. It was going to happen anyway. So what follows isn't terribly eventful, I'm afraid. And yet it was by a very large margin the most fearful, thrilling, interesting, instructive, eye-popping, lustful, eager, troubled, untroubled, confused, serene, and unnerving time of my life.

So begins *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*, which was published in 2006. It was a departure from Bill Bryson's earlier books. His previous work, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, a book about science written for the average Joe, had taken a lot out of him and he wanted to work on something easier. Bryson told the *Guardian*:

I promised my wife I would do a book I could stay at home to do ... and I promised my publisher that I would do something more amusing that would corral back the core of my readership, some of whom doubtless were slightly appalled and alienated by *A Short History*. And also, purely in a selfish way, I wanted to do a book that I wouldn't have to do a lot of hard thinking and research about. I did miss writing humorous things.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Becki Chiasson is a Baltimore-based writer who received her BS in Mass Communications from Towson University. Although she spent some time in New York as a crossword puzzle editor, she returned to her hometown in Maryland in 2010 to focus on writing. Her favorite topics include video games and women's issues. When she's not busy writing up a storm, she crochets, plays video games, and bakes.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid centers on Bryson's life as a young child in Des Moines, Iowa during the 1950s and follows Bryson through puberty. The plot is less of a structured narrative and more of a series of loosely related, humorous anecdotes about growing up during happier, simpler times. A central conceit to the book is the idea that Bryson was the Thunderbolt Kid, a superhero who could make his enemies (usually people Bryson deemed to be morons) disappear in a flash of light by casting a withering stare at them. This superpower is presented in all seriousness, although it is rather doubtful that it ever happened.

The first time Bryson used his superpower, he was six years old. He was at a diner with his mother and discovered to his great chagrin that the ancient-looking man next to him had been drinking out of Bryson's water glass. Worse still, the man had been eating poached eggs, which Bryson positively despised. Bryson

freaked out, gagging, and the man only laughed, having no remorse at all. When he turned to leave, as he reached out to open the door, bolts of electricity flew from my wildly dilated eyes and played over his body. He shimmered for an instant, contorted in a brief, silent rictus of agony, and was gone. It was the birth of ThunderVision. The world had just become a dangerous place for morons.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Quicklet On Bill Bryson's The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir

- + About the Book
- + About Bill Bryson
- + Overall Summary
- + List of Important People in the Book
- + ...and much more

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