

Read Along the Lakeshore 2010 – A One Book, One Community Program

Discussion Questions for *A Walk in the Woods*  
(provided by LitLovers)

1. One of the most interesting aspects of this book is the unlikely friendship between Bryson and Katz. What is the relationship based on? Consider, especially, the episode in Maine when Katz gets lost: somehow the friendship is altered. How does Bryson's attitude toward Katz change over the course of the book? How does Katz himself change? Or does he? What was Katz's motivation, anyway, to walk the AT?
2. The book offers an excellent microscope through which to examine the meaning of friendship—our own friendships. Do the two men remind you of friends who tested your patience, but who exhibited intense loyalty?
3. In fiction a journey usually symbolizes a journey of self-discovery—at the end the protagonist comes to learn something about him/herself. Although *A Walk* isn't a novel, do either of the men come to greater self-awareness by the end of their journey?
4. The tone of the book veers back and forth between humor and seriousness, even anger. In fact, the book is a sort of jeremiad against environmental threats to the great wilderness areas of the country. Is Bryson's anger justified? He criticizes, but does he offer solutions? Are there solutions?
5. Katz pokes fun at rural Southerners, which some readers find funny, others find offensive. You?
6. Bryson ponders the attraction of hiking: "You have no engagements, commitments, obligations, or duties; no special ambitions and only the smallest, least complicated of wants; you exist in a tranquil tedium, serenely beyond the reach of exasperation." If you're a hiker, backpacker, camper, are your experiences similar to or different from Bryson's? For those who aren't hikers, are there other avenues to "exist in a tranquil tedium"?
7. You might also talk about the numerous characters Bryson and Katz meet on the trail. Mary Ellen is one, for instance: how do you feel about their treatment of her?