

November 2023: The Body: A Guide for Occupants

Discussion Questions

1. Were you surprised by the myriad physical processes that your body performs as you go about your daily life? How about things like the number of oxygen molecules you breathe in and out every so many minutes ... those cute little mites that dine on your eyebrows? (Oh yum.)
2. If we're lucky enough, we take our bodies for granted. Has reading Bill Bryson's book opened your eyes to just how remarkable these large clusters of cells actually are, how well (for the most part) they perform their jobs?
3. (*Follow-up to Question 2*) Unfortunately, our bodies aren't always in good health, yet over the years science has developed treatments for disease and physical dysfunction. Sometimes they have been legendary cures, like Jonas Falk's vaccine for polio. Other times they have been the seemingly insignificant things like, say, the use of agar in petrie dishes. Talk about some of the unsung heroes—those who never became household names but whose work resulted in important discoveries.
4. What are some of the myths about health that Bryson says have been debunked by science. What surprised you: perhaps the information antioxidants or how often men think about sex?
5. What does Bryson have to say about the overuse of antibiotics? How have we gotten ourselves to the point where we find ourselves in a bacterial "arms race"? How do we win? Can we win?
6. Overall, what do you think of Bill Bryson's *The Body*? Do you feel informed, that you've learned something valuable after reading it? Is it engaging? Does it offer a good balance of science and technology with readable prose for the non-expert? Is it funny?
7. Bryson discusses the importance of the “physician’s demeanor as having a surprising impact. “ Every day attributes like empathy and common sense can be useas as important as the most technologically sophisticated equipment.” Discuss this statement using your own experiences.
8. “The US spends 2.5 times more per person on health care than the average for all other developed nations” Bryson noted. In the report “Mirror, Mirror 2021 – Reflecting Poorly: Health Care in the US Compared to Other High-Income Countries”, it was stated:

“Remarkably, a high-income person in the U.S. was more likely to report financial barriers than a low-income person in nearly all the other countries surveyed: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.K.

Norway, the Netherlands, and Australia were the top performers overall. In the middle of the pack were the U.K., Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, and France. Switzerland and Canada ranked lower than those countries, although both still performed much better than the U.S. The US rated 11th in 4 of 5 categories.

Among the 11 nations surveyed, the U.S. is the only one without universal health insurance coverage. Other research suggests that the U.S. spends less than other high-income countries on social services, such as child care, education, paid sick leave, and unemployment insurance, which could improve population health.”

Respond to this information.

ource: Litlovers for questions 1 – 6. Information for questions 8 comes from Bill Bryson and the mentioned report.

