Reading Guide:
*One Summer: America, 1927*
by Bill Bryson (2017)

1. What was the most surprising thing you learned from this book? What will you remember about it a year from now?

2. Did you agree with the choice of events that Bill Bryson chose to explore in this book? Which did you find most interesting?

3. Which of the people featured in the book did you find most compelling? Was it in a positive or negative way?

4. Did you think that Bryson's casual, humorous writing style worked well with this subject matter? Why or why not?

5. If you are familiar with our previous selection by Bryson, *At Home*, or with other books he has published, how did *One Summer* compare?

6. The book has been criticized as a collection of interesting anecdotes without a narrative line to tie them together. Would you agree with that? Why or why not?

7. Would you recommend this book to others? Who do you think the ideal reader for this book would be?

8. What other books, movies, or other resources would you recommend to someone who enjoyed this book?
Author Biography

Bill Bryson was born in Des Moines, Iowa. For twenty years he lived in England, where he worked for the Times and the Independent, and wrote for most major British and American publications. His books include travel memoirs (Neither Here Nor There; The Lost Continent; Notes from a Small Island) and books on language (The Mother Tongue; Made in America) as well as books on history and science. His science book A Short History of Nearly Everything won the 2004 Aventis Prize of the Royal Society and the Descartes Prize, the European Union’s highest literary award. His account of his attempts to walk the Appalachian Trail, A Walk in the Woods, was a New York Times bestseller.

If you liked One Summer, you may enjoy these other books (descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com):

Onl y Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s by Frederick Lewis Allen (2015 reprint from 1931 original):
Originally published in 1931, soon after the era ended, this book is still considered a classical account of the 1920s. Beginning with the end of World War I (November 11, 1918) on through to the stock market crash on November 12, 1929, and the ensuing Great Depression, the author provides a well-written history of the times. Some of the events of the day included are: Al Capone and Prohibition, scandals surrounding then-President Harding, growth of the automobile industry, the first radio, and the “scandalous” rise of skirt hemlines.

New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America by Nathan Miller (2004):
The images of the 1920s have been indelibly imprinted on the American imagination—from jazz, bootleggers, flappers, talkies, the Model T Ford, Babe Ruth, and Charles Lindbergh to the fight for women’s right to vote, racial injustice, and the birth of organized crime. Nathan Miller has penned the ultimate introduction to the era.

City of Scoundrels: The 12 Days of Disaster That Gave Birth to Modern Chicago by Gary Krist (2012):
The masterfully told story of 12 volatile days in the life of Chicago, when an aviation disaster, a race riot, a crippling transit strike, and a sensational child murder roiled a city already on the brink of collapse. When 1919 began, the city of Chicago seemed on the verge of transformation. Modernizers had an audacious, expensive plan to turn the city from a brawling, unglamorous place into “the Metropolis of the World.” But just as the dream seemed within reach, pandemonium broke loose—the city’s highest ambitions suddenly under attack by the same unbridled energies that had given birth to them in the first place.

This monumental work of cultural history was nominated for a National Book Award. It chronicles America’s transformation, beginning in 1880, into a nation of consumers, devoted to a cult of comfort, bodily well-being, and endless acquisition.