

Further Reading

Nomadland
Jessica Bruder (2017)
SOCSCI BRU

An award-winning journalist sets out on the road to explore the new phenomenon of “workampers” who are migrant workers made up of transient older Americans who took to the road after discovering that their social security came up short and their mortgages were underwater.

The Fractured Republic
Yuval Levin (2016)
POLITICS LEV

Preeminent conservative thinker Yuval Levin argues that our political thinking is stuck in the past, and that both parties must adapt to our modern world if we are to solve the massive social problems we face today.

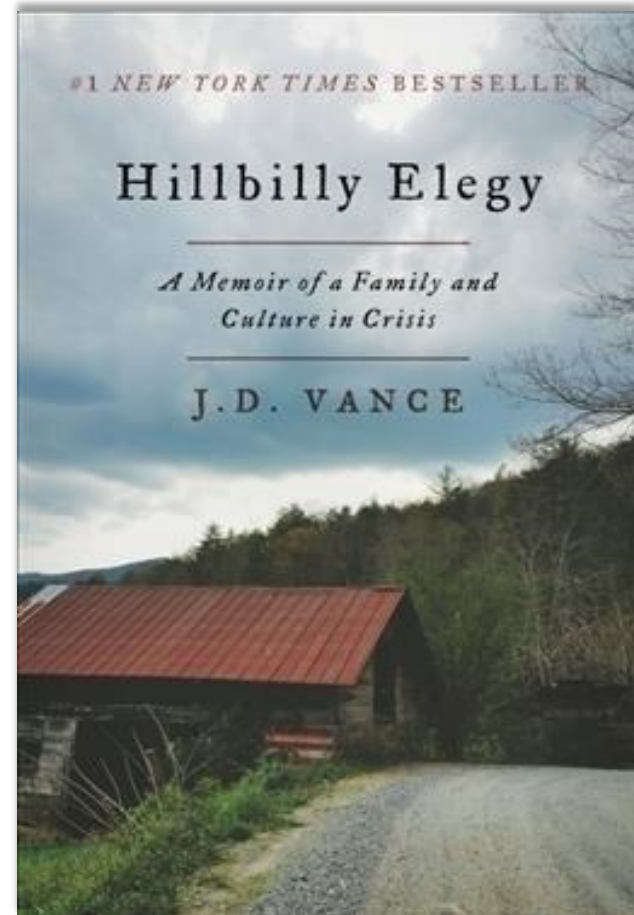
Heat and Light
Jennifer Haigh (2016)
HAIGH

A latest tale set in the Pennsylvania town depicted in Baker Towers follows an agreement to lease mineral rights to frackers, causing unexpected complications in the life of farmer Rich Devilin, his family members and his neighbors throughout Bakerton.

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Book Discussion Guide



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About the Book

Shares the poignant story of the author's family and upbringing, describing how they moved from poverty to an upwardly mobile clan that included the author, a Yale Law School graduate, while navigating the demands of middle-class life and the collective demons of the past.

Discussion Questions

1. What is Jackson, Kentucky like? Why does Vance have such an affection for the place?
2. Class disloyalty is something Vance's grandmother, Mamaw, dislikes. How does she define class disloyalty?
3. What are some of the contradictions apparent in Jackson, Kentucky? How do these contradictions shape the town?
4. What are Vance's grandparents, Mamaw and Papaw, like?
5. In this book, we learn about the migration of people out of Appalachia in search of jobs. What does this migration do for communities?
6. Are you surprised at the kinds of violence that Vance encounters at home? Do you think the family themselves consider some of their behaviors violent?
7. Compared to Jackson, Kentucky, what is Middletown, Ohio like? In what ways is it similar to Jackson? What ways is it different?
8. In spite of their shared love of books and learning, and the nurturing relationship they seem to have, Vance's relationship with his mother begins to change. What is the catalyst for this change, and what is the outcome?
9. On page 104, Vance talks about his and his sister Lindsay's shared fear of imposing on other people. How do Vance and his sister think of themselves as burdens? Are they in any way justified in thinking of themselves that way?
10. From Vance's analysis, why are people in places like Middletown, Ohio so distrustful of contemporary America? How does the media and internet feed the anxieties of these people/shape their views of American society and government?
11. What is the "uneasy truce" Vance strikes in caring for his mother?
12. What social issues does Vance outline from his experiences? How might changes in public policy help the hillbilly community?