

In Country Bobbie Ann Mason

A Study Guide for Bobbie Ann Mason's "In Country," excerpted from Gale's acclaimed Novels for Students. This concise study guide includes plot summary; character analysis; author biography; study questions; historical context; suggestions for further reading; and much more. For any literature project, trust Novels for Students for all of your research needs.

Seminar paper from the year 2009 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: -, University of Vienna, language: English, abstract: Bobbie Ann Mason is one of the most important southern female writers at the end of the 20th century. Joseph M. Flora in his contribution to the The History of Southern Women's Literature notes that "apart from Eudora Welty, few have more national visibility" (550). A number of Mason's short stories were re-published in anthologies (see KcKee 359); her novel In Country became part of the syllabus in many high schools and colleges since its publication in 1985, and the 1989 Hollywood film adaptation starring Bruce Willis made her work accessible to an even broader audience. The critics have also shown a keen interest in her work as the huge number of overwhelmingly positive literary reviews and academic publications demonstrate (see Flora, Fiction 282-285). The topics Mason raises in her work seem to strike a chord with both the general as well as the professional readers. As one scholar put it, the most important innovation of

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the contemporary realist authors such as Mason "is their ability to portray the experiences of people from a lower economic class with realism, complexity, and dignity." (Hovis, K Mart 395f.) In her work, Bobbie Ann Mason describes a contemporary southern society from a white working-class perspective, mostly places and characters that are well known to her, without looking down on what could be perceived as their lack of education or backwardness. It also reflects the socio-economic, historical and cultural changes and the loss of traditional certainties that the U.S., and in her case particularly the rural and semi-rural areas of Kentucky, have faced over the last century. In *In Country*, Mason pays homage to the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s that have played a pivotal role in the shaping of western societies as we know them today; the all-pervading theme, however

In the summer of 1984, the war in Vietnam came home to Sam Hughes, whose father was killed there before she was born. The soldier-boy in the picture never changed. In a way that made him dependable. But he seemed so innocent. "Astronauts have been to the moon," she blurted out to the picture. "You missed Watergate. I was in the second grade." She stared at the picture, squinting her eyes, as if she expected it to come to life. But Dwayne had died with his secrets. Emmett was walking around with his. Anyone who survived Vietnam seemed to regard it as something personal and embarrassing. Granddad had said they were embarrassed that they were still alive. "I guess you're not embarrassed," she said to the picture. This P.S. edition features an

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extra 16 pages of insights into the book, including author interviews, recommended reading, and more.

In this remarkable book, the author of *Shiloh and Other Stories*, *In Country*, and other award-winning books gives us powerful new stories that capture the restless energy of life in contemporary America. The characters here are travelers and seekers, feeling their way toward, or away from the defining moments of their lives. They roam out into the world to England, Alaska, Texas, Saudi Arabia, or ricochet back home to Kentucky, ceaselessly searching, exploring, testing for limits. I felt strange, says Chrissy in *With Jazz*, as though all my life I had been zigzagging down a wild trail to this particular place. In *Charger*, a teenage boy races along the interstate, seeking the father who abandoned him years before. In *Rolling into Atlanta*, a young woman searches for the kind of authenticity she remembers from her rural childhood. In *Proper Gypsies*, Nancy deals with the shock of being robbed in London. In *The Funeral Side*, Sandra comes home to try to fulfill her responsibilities to her family, but yearns to escape again to Alaska and the northern lights that haunt her. Writing in the spare, precise, beautifully nuanced language for which she is famous, Bobbie Ann Mason expands her art here in dramatic and illuminating fashion. These fascinating stories bring to life surprising individuals whose journeys shine a bright light on life as it is lived by many Americans today. *Zigzagging Down a Wild Trail* is a beautiful book by one of America's finest writers, a book full of drama, humor, and startling insights into the timeless longings of

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the human heart.

Bobbie Ann Mason burst onto the American literary scene during a renaissance of short fiction that Raymond Carver called a "literary phenomenon." Anne Tyler hailed Mason as "a full-fledged master of the short story." Mason's work, charged with a spirit of exploration, garnered both popular and critical acclaim. This reader collects outstanding examples of Mason's award-winning work from throughout her writing career and provides a unique look at the development of one of the country's finest writers.

Highlighting her versatility, *Patchwork* provides a unique look at the development of one of the country's finest writers. *Patchwork* contains short stories first published in the *New Yorker* and other leading periodicals; chapters from Mason's acclaimed novels, including *In Country*, *An Atomic Romance*, and *The Girl in the Blue Beret*; and riveting excerpts from Mason's eclectic nonfiction. Some examples of Mason's recent explorations in flash fiction appear here in print for the first time. Mason's writing glows with a nuanced understanding of the struggles and pathos of American life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rich language and strong characters are the essence of her work. George Saunders writes in his introduction, "Bobbie Ann Mason is a strange and beautiful writer.... Her stories exist to gently touch on, and praise, even mourn, what it feels like to be alive in this moment." *Patchwork* conveys Mason's extraordinary talent and range as a writer.

The author of *Feather Crowns* examines the girl detective in her various

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guises--including Cherry Ames, Nancy Drew, and Trixie Belden--in a work first published in 1975 recalling a rural youth spent longing for mysteries. Reprint. UP.

The United States had never lost a war —that is, until 1975, when it was forced to flee Saigon in humiliation after losing to what Lyndon Johnson called a "raggedy-ass little fourth-rate country." The legacy of this first defeat has haunted every president since, especially on the decision of whether to put "boots on the ground" and commit troops to war. In *Haunting Legacy*, the father-daughter journalist team of Marvin Kalb and Deborah Kalb presents a compelling, accessible, and hugely important history of presidential decisionmaking on one crucial issue: in light of the Vietnam debacle, under what circumstances should the United States go to war? The sobering lesson of Vietnam is that the United States is not invincible —it can lose a war —and thus it must be more discriminating about the use of American power. Every president has faced the ghosts of Vietnam in his own way, though each has been wary of being sucked into another unpopular war. Ford (during the Mayaguez crisis) and both Bushes (Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan) deployed massive force, as if to say, "Vietnam, be damned." On the other hand, Carter, Clinton, and Reagan (to the surprise of many) acted with extreme caution, mindful of the Vietnam experience. Obama has also wrestled with the Vietnam legacy, using doses of American firepower in Libya while still engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. The authors spent five years interviewing hundreds of officials from every post war administration and conducting extensive research in presidential

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libraries and archives, and they've produced insight and information never before published. Equal parts taut history, revealing biography, and cautionary tale, *Haunting Legacy* is must reading for anyone trying to understand the power of the past to influence war-and-peace decisions of the present, and of the future.

Sam Hughes, whose father was killed in Vietnam, lives in rural Kentucky with her uncle Emmett, a veteran whom she suspects is suffering from exposure to Agent Orange. Sam is a typical teenager, trying to choose a college, anticipating a new job at the local Burger Boy, sharing intimacies with her friend Dawn, breaking up with her high school boyfriend, and dealing with her feelings for Tom, one of Emmett's buddies. Sam feels that her life is bound to the war in Vietnam and becomes obsessed with the idea because of the reluctance of her family and Tom to talk about it. Her father's diary finally provides the insight she seeks, insight she cannot accept until she has visited the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. *In Country* is both a powerful and touching novel of America that analyzes the impact of the 1960s on the culture of the 1980s and a beautiful portrayal of an often forgotten area of the country. --Library Journal review. Inspired by the wartime experiences of her father-in-law, Bobbie Ann Mason has crafted the haunting and profoundly moving story of an American World War II pilot shot down in Occupied Europe, and his wrenching odyssey of discovery, decades later, as he uncovers the truth about those who helped him escape in 1944. At twenty-three, Marshall Stone was a confident, cocksure U.S. flyboy stationed in England, with several

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bombing raids in a B-17 under his belt. But when enemy fighters forced his plane to crash-land in a Belgian field during a mission to Germany, Marshall had to rely solely on the kindness of ordinary Belgian and French citizens to help him hide from and evade the Nazis. Decades later, restless and at the end of his career as an airline pilot, Marshall returns to the crash site and finds himself drawn back in time, unable to stop thinking about the people who risked their lives to save Allied pilots like him. Most of all, he is obsessed by the girl in the blue beret, a courageous young woman who protected and guided him in occupied Paris. Framed in spellbinding, luminous prose, Marshall's search for her gradually unfolds, becoming a voyage of discovery that reveals truths about himself and the people he knew during the war. Deeply beautiful and impossible to put down, *The Girl in the Blue Beret* is an unforgettable story—intimate, affecting, exquisite—of memories, second chances, and one intrepid girl who risked it all for a stranger.

Sixteen stories centering on small-town existence and how peoples' lives are shaped by love explore the ways in which need and loneliness color individuals' longings for affection

In this superb memoir, the bestselling author of *In Country* and other award-winning books tells her own story, and the story of a Kentucky farm family, the Masons of Clear Springs. Like Russell Baker's *Growing Up*, Jill Ker Conway's *The Road from Coorain*, and other classic literary memoirs, *Clear Springs* takes us back in time to recapture a

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way of life that has all but disappeared, a country culture deeply rooted in work and food and family, in common sense and music and the land. Clear Springs is also an American woman's odyssey, exploring how a misfit girl who dreamed of distant places grew up in the forties, fifties, and sixties, and fulfilled her ambition to be a writer. A multilayered narrative of three generations--Bobbie Ann Mason, her parents and grandparents--Clear Springs gracefully interlaces several different lives, decades, and locales, moving from the industrious life on a Kentucky farm to travels around the South with Mason as president of the Hilltoppers Fan Club; from the hippie lifestyle of the 1960s New York counterculture to the shock-therapy ward of a mental institution; from a farmhouse to the set of a Hollywood movie; from pop music concerts to a small rustic schoolhouse. Clear Springs depicts the changes that have come to family, to women, and to heartland America in the twentieth century, as well as to Bobbie Ann Mason herself. When the movie of Mason's bestselling novel *In Country* is filmed near Clear Springs, it brings the first limousines to town, even as it brings out once again the wisdom and values of Mason's remarkable parents. Her mother, especially, stands at the center of this book. Mason's journey leads her to a recognition of the drama and significance of her mother's life and to a new understanding of heritage, place, and family roots. Brilliant and evocative, *Clear Springs* is a stunning achievement. A vibrant, sympathetic portrait of the once and future king of rock 'n' roll by the award-winning author of *Shiloh* and *In Country* To this clear-eyed portrait of the first rock 'n' roll

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superstar, Bobbie Ann Mason brings a novelist's insight and the empathy of a fellow Southerner who, from the first time she heard his voice on the family radio, knew that Elvis was "one of us." Elvis Presley deftly braids the mythic and human aspects of his story, capturing both the charismatic, boundary-breaking singer who reveled in his celebrity and the soft-spoken, working-class Southern boy who was fatally unprepared for his success. The result is a riveting, tragic book that goes to the heart of the American dream.

In Italy in 1491, Mangus the magician and his apprentice are summoned to the castle of Duke Claudio to determine if his daughter is indeed being haunted by a ghost. Reissue.

FINALIST FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD From prize-winning author Bobbie Ann Mason, a brilliantly wrought novel about the first woman to give birth to quintuplets in early 1900s America. Set in the apocalyptic atmosphere of 1900—a time when many Americans were looking for signs foretelling the end of the world—Feather Crowns is the story of a young woman who unintentionally creates a national sensation. A farm wife living near the small town of Hopewell, Kentucky, Christianna Wheeler gives birth to the first recorded set of quintuplets in North America. Christie is suddenly thrown into a swirling storm of public attention. Hundreds of strangers descend on her home, all wanting to see and touch the "miracle babies." The fate of the babies and the bizarre events that follow their births propel Christie and her husband far from home, on a journey that exposes them to the turbulent pageant of life at the beginning of the modern era. Richly detailed and poignant, Feather Crowns focuses on one woman but opens out ultimately into the chronicle of a time and a

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people. Written in Bobbie Ann Mason's taut yet lyrical prose, the novel ranges from a peaceful farming community to a fire-and-brimstone revival camp, from traveling shows to the the nation's capital. Moving through the center of it all is Christie, a charming, headstrong, loving woman who struggles heroically to come to terms with the extraordinary events of her long life. Feather Crowns is an American parable of profound resonance. Spellbindingly readable, it is a novel of classic stature that confirmed Bobbie Ann Mason as one of America's most important writers.

It is in the spirit of the LZ that the essayists in "Fourteen Landing Zones" approach the writings of the Vietnam War. These fourteen diverse and powerful works by some of today's leading critics in Vietnam studies begin to answer the question of how we will filter the writings of the Vietnam War. Including fiction, poetry, drama, and memoirs. What will survive the process of critical acclaim and societal affirmation and why? Included is an incisive introduction by Jason that provides an overview of the burgeoning body of Vietnam War literature and its peculiar life in the literary and academic marketplace. This strong, often emotional volume will be of particular importance to all those interested in the literature of the Vietnam War, contemporary literature, and contemporary culture and history."

From the acclaimed author of the classics *Shiloh* and *Other Stories* and *In Country* comes a beautifully crafted and profoundly moving novel which follows a woman as she looks back over her life and her first love. Ann Workman is smart but naïve, a misfit who's traveled from rural Kentucky to graduate school in the transformative years of the late 1960s. While Ann fervently seeks higher learning, she wants what all girls yearn for—a boyfriend. But not any boy. She wants the "Real Thing," to be in love with someone who loves her equally. Then Jimmy

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appears as if by magic. Although he comes from a very different place, upper-middle class suburban Chicago, he is a misfit too, a rebel who rejects his upbringing and questions everything. Ann and Jimmy bond through music and literature and their own quirkiness, diving headfirst into what seems to be a perfect relationship. But with the Vietnam War looming and the country in turmoil, their future is uncertain. Many years later, Ann recalls this time of innocence—and her own obsession with Jimmy—as she faces another life crisis. Seeking escape from her problems, she tries to imagine where she might be if she had chosen differently all those years ago. What if she had gone to Stanford University, as her mentor had urged, instead of a small school on the East Coast? Would she have been caught up in the Summer of Love and its subsequent dark turns? Or would her own good sense have saved her from disaster? Beautifully written and expertly told, *Dear Ann* is the wrenching story of one woman's life and the choices she has made. Bobbie Ann Mason captures at once the excitement of youth and the nostalgia of age, and how consideration of the road not taken—the interplay of memory and imagination—can illuminate, and perhaps overtake, our present. Jayne Anne Phillips's reputation-making debut collection paved the way for a new generation of writers. Raved about by reviewers and embraced by the likes of Raymond Carver, Frank Conroy, Annie Dillard, and Nadine Gordimer, *Black Tickets* now stands as a classic. With an uncanny ability to depict the lives of men and women who rarely register in our literature, Phillips writes stories that lay bare their suffering and joy. Here are the abused and the abandoned, the violent and the passive, the impoverished and the disenfranchised who populate the small towns and rural byways of the country. A patron of the arts reserves his fondest feeling for the one man who wants it least. A stripper, the daughter of a witch, escapes

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from poverty into another kind of violence. A young girl during the Depression is caught between the love of her crazy father and the no less powerful love of her sorrowful mother. These are great American stories that have earned a privileged place in our literature. Reverberations of the Vietnam War can still be felt in American culture. The post-9/11 United States forays into the Middle East, the invasion and occupation of Iraq especially, have evoked comparisons to the nearly two decades of American presence in Viet Nam (1954-1973). That evocation has renewed interest in the Vietnam War, resulting in the re-printing of older War narratives and the publication of new ones. This volume tracks those echoes as they appear in American, Vietnamese American, and Vietnamese war literature, much of which has joined the American literary canon. Using a wide range of theoretical approaches, these essays analyze works by Michael Herr, Bao Ninh, Duong Thu Huong, Bobbie Ann Mason, le thi diem thuy, Tim O'Brien, Larry Heinemann, and newcomers Denis Johnson, Karl Marlantes, and Tatjana Solis. Including an historical timeline of the conflict and annotated guides to further reading, this is an essential guide for students and readers of contemporary American fiction

Bobbie Ann Mason burst onto the American literary scene during a renaissance of short fiction that Raymond Carver called a "literary phenomenon." Anne Tyler hailed Mason as "a full-fledged master of the short story." Mason's work, charged with a spirit of exploration, garnered both popular and critical acclaim. This reader collects outstanding examples of Mason's award-winning work from throughout her writing career and provides a unique look at the development of one of the country's finest writers. *Patchwork* contains short stories first published in the

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New Yorker and other leading periodicals; chapters from Mason's acclaimed novels, including *In Country*, *An Atomic Romance*, and *The Girl in the Blue Beret*; and riveting excerpts from Mason's eclectic nonfiction. Some examples of Mason's recent explorations in flash fiction appear here in print for the first time. Mason's writing glows with a nuanced understanding of the struggles and pathos of American life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. George Saunders writes in his introduction, "Bobbie Ann Mason is a strange and beautiful writer.... Her stories exist to gently touch on, and praise, even mourn, what it feels like to be alive in this moment." *Patchwork* conveys Mason's extraordinary talent and range as a writer.

Bursting with color, free-spirited and energetic, this gift book celebrates living fully, being inspired and embracing possibilities.

An analysis introducing Mason's nonfiction prose, short stories and novels. Price sheds light on the writer's distinctive style and thematic concerns in her writings about contemporary Western Kentucky.

Weaving multiple storylines with vivid description of characters apace, Haske's debut novel brings new life and a unique voice to the fiction of rural America. *North Dixie Highway* is a story of family bonds, devolution, and elusive revenge. When Buck Metzger's childhood is interrupted by the disappearance of his

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grandfather, several family members and close friends plot revenge on the suspected killer. From remote towns in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, to the Texas/Mexico border, to war-torn Bosnia, Metzger struggles for self-identity and resolution in a world of blue-collar ethics and liquor-fueled violence.

Kentucky native Nancy Culpepper boldly left home to attend school in Massachusetts, married a Yankee, and raised her son in the Northeast. "One day I was feeding chickens and listening to Hank Williams and the next day I was expected to know what wines went with what," she tells her husband, Jack. Yet no matter where she travels, her rural southern heritage is never far from her thoughts, her habits, and her heart. Nancy is on a lifelong quest to understand her place in the world. Returning home to the family farm, she searches for photographic evidence of an ancestor bearing her own name. Still in her jeans, she brings home strange ideas and an assertiveness she learned up north. Always adventurous, Nancy travels far and wide—searching, seeking. The narrative sweep of her life traverses the turbulent sixties, the Vietnam War, the eighties and the foreboding death of John Lennon, and finally the new millennium—when a self-assured Nancy finally emerges. These humorous and often touching stories recount her courtship and marriage to Jack, her relationship with her precocious son, and the deep, loving bond between her

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parents, Spence and Lila Culpepper. Eventually Nancy's marriage is threatened by a cultural divide that plagued her and Jack from the start. But when she inherits the Culpepper family farm and discovers more pieces of her ancestral puzzle, she realizes that her life is assuming its proper shape. Later, standing on a lonely mountain in England, she sees the world from a surprising perspective. Bestselling author Bobbie Ann Mason's prizewinning Nancy Culpepper chronicles have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Southern Review*, and other distinguished literary anthologies. She has compiled these stories into one definitive collection, which includes the novella *Spence + Lila*, two new, never-before-published stories, and one Pushcart Prize winner. Heartfelt and thought-provoking, *Nancy Culpepper* is a poignant depiction of change and growth in a modern-day heroine.

A farm couple married forty-six years look back on their long relationship during Lila's extended hospitalization

The Earl of Rossmore is deeply distressed when an American of no account claims his title--Novelist.

"These stories will last," said Raymond Carver of *Shiloh and Other Stories* when it was first published, and almost two decades later this stunning fiction debut and winner of the PEN/Hemingway Award has become a modern American classic. In *Shiloh*, Bobbie

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Ann Mason introduces us to her western Kentucky people and the lives they forge for themselves amid the ups and downs of contemporary American life, and she poignantly captures the growing pains of the New South in the lives of her characters as they come to terms with feminism, R-rated movies, and video games. "Bobbie Ann Mason is one of those rare writers who, by concentrating their attention on a few square miles of native turf, are able to open up new and surprisingly wide worlds for the delighted reader," said Robert Towers in *The New York Review of Books*.

In 1982, John Newman, curator of the Vietnam War Literature Collection at Colorado State University, said of W.D. Ehrhart: "As a poet and editor, Bill Ehrhart is clearly one of the major figures in Vietnam War literature." This autobiographical account of the war, the author's first extended prose work, demonstrates Ehrhart's abilities as a writer of prose as well. *Vietnam-Perkasie* is grim, comical, disturbing, and accurate. The presentation is novelistic--truly, a "page-turner"--but the events are all real, the atmosphere intensely evocative.

This provocative, rollicking story is the much-anticipated new novel--the first in over a decade--from acclaimed author Bobbie Ann Mason. In *An Atomic Romance* we meet Reed Futrell, a sexy, thoughtful hero who grapples with radioactive contamination, a midlife crisis, and string theory--all while falling in love. Reed is an engineer at a uranium-enrichment plant near a riverside city in heartland America. He has deep roots in this community: He was raised there; his father worked at the very same plant before

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him. And it was here that Reed met, married, and then divorced his wife. Reed spends countless nights camping at a local wildlife preserve, gazing at the stars, fishing and hunting—that is, until deformed frogs are discovered at the site. Though his father was killed in a tragic accident at the atomic plant years ago, Reed stays on, proud to perform demanding and dangerous work for the benefit of the nation. As for the radioactive “incidents” he has endured, Reed prefers to think about other things—Hubble photographs of distant galaxies, Albert Einstein, his dog. Reed’s casual attitude toward danger infuriates his on-again-off-again girlfriend, Julia, as much as his quirky mind and muscular body intrigue her. Julia, a biologist, is truly Reed’s match—or maybe more than his match. They both are witty, curious, and fascinated by science. Indeed, their courtship began with banter about Stephen Hawking’s theories of space-time, and ever since it has been an up-and-down adventure of sexual attraction, intellectual game-playing, and long silences when Julia refuses to return Reed’s calls. When news reports reveal evidence of radioactive pollution in the land surrounding the plant, Reed and Julia’s relationship faces an unprecedented challenge. In *An Atomic Romance*, Bobbie Ann Mason delivers a brilliant novel set against a backdrop of atomic power: a love story between a motorcycle-riding loner and an independent, strong-minded biologist; between the peaceful present in a typical American community and the nation’s violent nuclear past; and, finally, between a good man and the work he takes pride in, though it may be putting his life in danger.

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