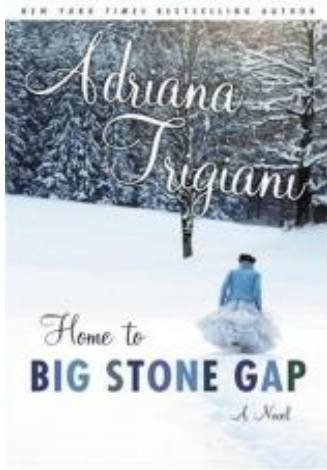


Home to Big Stone Gap

by Adriana Trigiani



About the Book

Millions of readers around the world have fallen in love with the novels of the *New York Times* bestselling author Adriana Trigiani. In **Home to Big Stone Gap**, she tells her most powerful story yet, full of humor and heart, wisdom and hope.

Nestled in the lush Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, the town of Big Stone Gap has been home for Ave Maria Mulligan Machesney and her family for generations. She's been married to her beloved Jack for nearly twenty years, raised one child and buried another, and run a business that binds her community together, all while holding her tight circle of family and friends close.

But with her daughter, Etta, having flown the nest to enchanting Italy, Ave Maria has reached a turning point. When a friend's postcard arrives with the message "It's time to live your life for you," Ave Maria realizes that it's time to go in search of brand-new dreams. But before she can put her foot on the path, her life is turned upside down.

Ave Maria agrees to helm the town musical, a hilarious reunion of local talent past and present. A lifelong friendship collapses when a mysterious stranger comes to town and reveals a long-buried secret. An unexpected health crisis threatens her family. An old heartthrob reappears, challenging her marriage and offering a way out of her troubles. An opportunistic coal company comes to town and threatens to undermine the town's way of life and the mountain landscape Ave Maria has treasured since she was a girl. Now she has no choice but to reinvent her world, her life, and herself, whether she wants to or not.

Trigiani is at her best in this exquisite page-turner. **Home to Big Stone Gap** is an emotional and unforgettable journey that reminds us that you can go home again and again.

Discussion Guide

1. In one of the early scenes in **Home to Big Stone Gap**, Ave Maria's friend Theodore Tipton sends her a postcard that states, "Start living your life for YOU." By the end of the novel, has Ave Maria taken this advice?
2. When the prospect of using mountaintop removal as an alternative form of coal mining is raised to Ave Maria and her husband, Jack, Ave Maria is instantly against the idea. Do you think she has considered both sides? What exactly is at stake in her argument with Jack about this issue?
3. Why does Trigiani include the character of Randy in her novel? What is the significance of the similarities between Randy and Joe, as well as between Randy's mother and Ave Maria? What does Ave Maria learn from Randy?
4. Do you think it's fair for Ave Maria to confront Iva Lou about her mysterious past? What lasting effects does this experience have on Ave Maria and Iva's relationship? What would you do in the same situation?
5. According to Ave Maria's experience, a woman's method of coping is to "make things pretty when the road gets rocky," while Jack "wants facts, answers, and drop-dead ultimatums." Do you generally agree with her assessment of her husband? How do men and women deal with crises differently?
6. Reflecting upon Etta's move to Italy, Ave Maria says, "Maybe fate is the footwork of decisions made with loving intentions." Do you think this is true? What examples from the book support this claim? What examples challenge it?
7. How does the trip to Scotland affect Ave Maria's relationships with Etta and Jack? Do you feel that any transformations have occurred?
8. Bridges, both literal and figurative, are an important symbol throughout the novel. Why is one of Jack's goals to build a bridge? What sorts of bridges are constructed --- and dismantled --- throughout the course of the novel? Finally, how do you interpret Ave Maria's statement that "Jack needed to build it, if only to know the deep river that runs through Cracker's Neck Holler"?
9. Perhaps more so than any of the other novels in this series, **Home to Big Stone Gap** grapples with the theme of loss. One of Ave Maria's major challenges throughout the book is learning how to let go and come to terms with moving on. In what ways has she accomplished this by the end of the novel? In what ways is she still hanging on? How do Ave Maria's experiences compare with your own?

Author Bio

Adriana Trigiani is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 21 books of fiction and nonfiction. Her work has been published in 38 languages around the world. An award-winning playwright, television writer/producer, and filmmaker, Trigiani wrote and directed the major motion picture of her debut novel, **BIG STONE GAP**; adapted her novel, **VERY VALENTINE**, for television; and directed the documentary, *Queens of the Big Time*, among others.

In 2023, President Sergio Matterella of Italy awarded Trigiani the *Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia*. The

Library of Virginia bestowed their highest honor, the *Patron of Letters* degree, to Trigiani in 2024. She received the 2025 Ellis Island Medal of Honor for her significant contributions to literature, culture, and community.

Trigiani grew up in Appalachia, in the mountains of Virginia, where she co-founded The Origin Project, a year-round, in-school writing program that has served over 25,000 students since its inception in 2014. Trigiani is proud to serve on the New York State Council on the Arts. She lives in Greenwich Village with her family.

Critical Praise

"Trigiani's novels, set in small-town Virginia, are about family and friends, love and loss as well as daily dilemmas we all face - and they are utterly addictive."

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