Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail is an excellent memoir about Cheryl Strayed’s solo journey on the 1,100-mile Pacific Crest Trail. Published in 2012, the book serves as an inspirational reminder of people’s physical and emotional resilience. When Strayed is faced with an enormously painful chain of events in her young twenties, she decides rather impetuously to follow the Pacific Crest Trail, without proper training or preparation. The physical strain Strayed endures on the Pacific Crest Trail gives her life meaning and eventually helps her heal her emotional wounds.

Strayed gives a raw, unselfconscious account of the tumult that led her to decide to hike the entirety of the Pacific Coast Trail. The main force that pushed her to go was the death of her mother, which was the impetus for the dissolution of Strayed’s marriage and the breakdown of her family. Even if the reader is not able to personally identify with the tragedy that Strayed faces, she recounts it with a smattering of more incidental struggles that everybody can relate to.

Wild is an especially relatable read for young adults. Throughout the memoir, Strayed questions the purpose and direction of her life. She says repeatedly that she is “not as much loose in the world as bound to it.” This idea resonates with college students who feel that even though there are countless opportunities in the world, they all seem to have their own set of limitations. It also speaks to the emotional baggage, or as Strayed calls it, "bruising," that cannot be undone. Even though independently walking the entire Pacific Crest Trail is an incredibly
freeing experience, Strayed quickly finds out that nothing can fully release her from the grief of her past.

Loneliness represents a significant obstacle for Strayed as she must come to terms with the loss of her mother, the divorce from her best friend and the realization that she does not have a day-to-day support system of friends. The various people whom she meets along the trail reconcile some of this loneliness, but by the end, Strayed recognizes the importance of her relationship with herself. This idea of self-discovery is common in memoirs, but Strayed somehow manages to keep the material so authentic that it does not feel stale. In addition, there is a certain amount of self-deprecating humor that keeps the reader engaged in the experience.

The most important theme in *Wild* that relates to American Studies is the importance of place. First of all, the Pacific Crest trail is a unique American treasure that passes through many different biomes, ranging from deserts to rainforests. It also goes through many national parks, which are a special part of the United States’ land-reserving legacy. In addition, Strayed’s relationship with nature as a way to come to terms with despair is a common idea throughout American history. The American landscape, especially the West, has historically been seen as a place to make a new life, find purpose and generally reinvent one’s self.