

# Book Discussion Guide

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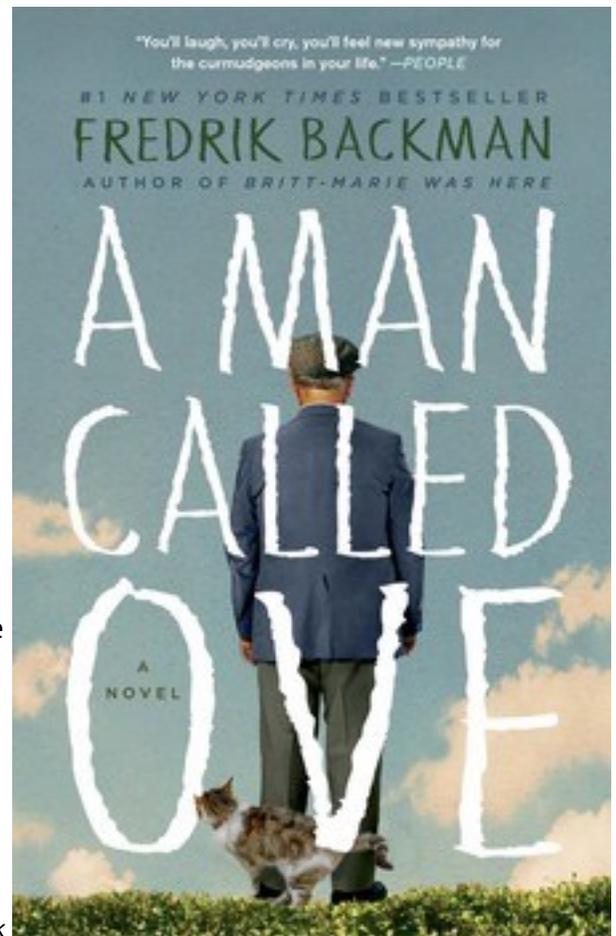
## *A Man Called Ove*

by Fredrik Backman

“At first sight, Ove is almost certainly the grumpiest man you will ever meet, a curmudgeon with staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. People think him bitter, and he thinks himself surrounded by idiots.

Ove’s well-ordered, solitary world gets a shake-up one November morning with the appearance of new neighbors, a chatty young couple and their two boisterous daughters, who announce their arrival by accidentally flattening Ove’s mailbox with their U-Haul. What follows is a heart-warming tale of unkempt cats, unlikely friendships, and a community’s unexpected reassessment of the one person they thought they had all figured out.”

—Description from the back of the book



## Author Biography

Born on June 2, 1981, Fredrick Backman grew up in Helsingborg, studied comparative religion but dropped out and became a truck driver instead. When the free newspaper *Xtra* was launched in 2006, the owner reached out to Backman, then still a truck driver, to write for the paper. After a test article, he continued to write columns for *Xtra*.

In spring 2007, he began writing for *Moore Magazine* in Stockholm. A year-and-a-half later Backman began freelancing, and in 2012 he became a writer for the *Metro*. During the 2010 Winter Olympics, he wrote the Olympic blog for the Magazine Cafe website and has continued as a permanent blogger for the site.

In 2012, Backman debuted as an author, publishing two books on the same day: a novel, *A Man Called Ove*, and a work of nonfiction, *Things My Son Needs to Know About the World*. Fredrik Backman was voted Sweden's most successful author in 2013. Currently he lives in Stockholm.

—Adapted from LitLovers.com



**Siskiyou Reads** supports the shared experience of reading a book in common in order to build our community. It’s a simple idea designed to bring people together to discuss a shared book and, more importantly, the issues that affect us all.

Watch for events this fall by following Siskiyou Reads on the Siskiyou County Library web site or on Facebook.

## Book Discussion Questions

*A Man Called Ove* explores a lot of interesting ideas and themes. Here are 10 questions to jumpstart your book conversation. You can choose the ones you like or come up with your own!

1. Ove loves things that have a purpose, that are useful. How does this worldview fail him when he believes himself to be useless? How is he convinced that he can still be useful?
2. As readers, we get to know Ove slowly, with his past only being revealed piece by piece. What surprised you about Ove's past? Why do you think the author revealed Ove's past the way that he did?
3. We all know our own grumpy old men. How do Ove's core values lead him to appear as such a cranky old coot, when he is in fact nothing of the sort? Which of these values do you agree or disagree with?
4. Although Ove has some major "disagreements" with the way the world turned out, there are some undeniable advantages to the modernization he finds so hollow. How do these advantages improve Ove's life, even if he can't admit it?
5. Ove strives to be "as little unlike his father as possible." Although this emulation provides much of the strength that helps Ove persevere through a difficult life, it also has some disadvantages. What are some of the ways that Ove grows into a new way of thinking over the course of the book?
6. The truism "it takes a village to raise a child" has some resonance with *A Man Called Ove*. How does the eclectic cast of posers, suits, deadbeats, and teens each help Ove in their own way?
7. What did you make of Ove's ongoing battle with the bureaucracies that persist in getting in his way? Is Ove's true fight with the various ruling bodies, or are they stand-ins, scapegoats, for something else?
8. On page 246, the author muses that when people don't share sorrow, it can drive them apart. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
9. What do you think of Ove's relationship with the mangy cat he adopts? What does the cat allow him to express that he couldn't otherwise say?
10. Ove and Sonja's love story is one of the most affecting, tender parts of the book. What is the key to their romance? Why do they fit so well together?

—Questions courtesy of the Simon & Schuster Reading Group Guide

## Join the Siskiyou Reads Community



If your book group reads and discusses *A Man Called Ove*, take a picture of your group with the book, share it on Facebook, and join the fun!

## If you liked *Ove*, you might also like...

- *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*, by Gabrielle Zevin
- *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*, by Helen Simonson
- *There Must Be Some Mistake*, by Frederick Barthelme
- *This is Your Life, Harriet Chance!*, by Jonathan Evison
- *The Widower's Tale*, by Julia Glass
- *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, by Rachel Joyce