

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Fredrik Backman is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Man Called Ove*, *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, *Britt-Marie Was Here*, *Beartown*, *Us Against You*, and *Anxious People*, as well as two novellas and one work of nonfiction. His books are published in more than forty countries. He lives in Stockholm, Sweden, with his wife and two children.

- [Author's website](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We first meet Ove in an Apple store trying to buy an "O-Pad." What did you think of him? Did you find yourself feeling more sympathetic for the salesman or Ove? Why did the author start the book in this way?
2. The author alternates between Ove's past and his present. Why does the author reveal Ove's story little by little? What surprised you about Ove?
3. Is Ove cranky or does he simply stick to his principles?
4. 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 a symbol for something else?
5. Do people in general need to feel useful and have a purpose in life? We see that Ove has an elaborate routine each morning and he is the self-appointed guardian of his housing complex. What does this routine mean to Ove?

6. Is Ove simply an introvert?
7. Why does Ove refer to everyone by a physical characteristic (the Pregnant Foreign One, the Lanky One, the Blond Weed, etc.)?
8. Why do Sonja and Ove fit so well together?
9. Was Ove a different man when he was with Sonja; or was she the only one who saw who he truly was?
10. What did the cat give to Ove?
11. Ove is a man who is very capable and can fix many things. He has contempt for the younger generations and their inability to do jobs he sees as routine. Does Ove have a point? Are we losing skills that may be valuable?
12. What caused the rift between Ove and Rune? Would you consider them to be two of a kind?
13. How is Parvaneh able to break Ove out of his depression?
14. How do the rest of the neighbors, along with the Cat, help Ove?
15. Ove wants to be “as little unlike his father as possible.” What are the father’s characteristics that Ove emulates? These characteristics prove to be a source of strength over the course of Ove’s difficult life. What are the disadvantages to these traits? How does Ove grow over the course of the novel?
16. Have you ever known anyone like Ove?
17. What is the significance of the title? Why do all of the chapter heading have “a man called Ove”?
18. What did you think of the ending? Did you find it contrived? Too sweet?
19. What words would you use to describe the book?
20. What is the author trying to say? Did he succeed?

- Publisher’s website

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Starred Review At 59, Ove is a grumble Gus of the first degree. Rules are made to be followed, signs are meant to be obeyed, and don't even get him started about computers and mobile phones. In truth, Ove has been this way his whole life, but he's gotten worse in the last four years since his wife, Sonia, died, taking with her all the color in a world Ove sees as black-and-white. Ove has decided life without Sonia is not worth living and plans to join her in the next world. But a young couple and their two children (a third is on the way) move in next door, his oldest friend and most feared enemy is about to be forcibly removed to a nursing home, and a street-scarred cat insinuates itself into his life. Suddenly, Ove's suicide plans get delayed as he helps solve neighborly crises large

and small. Though Ove's dark mission mitigates any treacherously upstaging by animals and small children, readers seeking feel-good tales with a message will rave about the rantings of this solitary old man with a singular outlook. If there was an award for Most Charming Book of the Year, this first novel by a Swedish blogger-turned-overnight-sensation would win hands down. Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews.

Publisher's Weekly

In this Swedish bestseller, Ove is a lovably miserable neighborhood curmudgeon—think a cross between Up's Carl Fredrickson and Parks and Recreation's Ron Swanson—who spends his days inspecting his community and criticizing others, judging each by how closely he follows rules and his choice of automobile (Ove cannot reason with BMW drivers). After his handicapped wife dies and he is forced to retire from his job, Ove decides he's ready to leave the world behind. But every time he tries to off himself, he's interrupted—first by his new neighbor, the pregnant Parvaneh; then by Parvaneh's clumsy husband, Patrick; Anita, the wife of Ove's former best friend; Jimmy, Ove's overweight neighbor; Adrian, the neighborhood mailman; and finally a mangy feline Ove calls "Cat Annoyance." Ove continuously pushes his demise from one day to the next, and, as time passes, these characters slowly weave themselves into his life, offering Ove a chance at rebirth. The debut novel from journalist Backman is a fuzzy crowd-pleaser that serves up laughs to accompany a thoughtful reflection on loss and love. Though Ove's antics occasionally feel repetitive, the author writes with winning charm. (July)

Kirkus Reviews

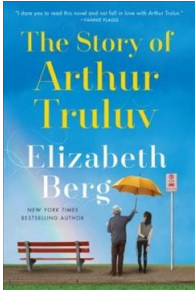
Originally published in Sweden, this charming debut novel by Backman should find a ready audience with English-language readers. The book opens helpfully with the following characterizations about its protagonist: "Ove is fifty-nine. He drives a Saab. He's the kind of man who points at people he doesn't like the look of, as if they were burglars and his forefinger a policeman's torch." What the book takes its time revealing is that this dyed-in-the-wool curmudgeon has a heart of solid gold. Readers will see the basic setup coming a mile away, but Backman does a crafty job revealing the full vein of precious metal beneath Ove's ribs, glint by glint. Ove's history trickles out in alternating chapters—a bleak set of circumstances that smacks an honorable, hardworking boy around time and again, proving that, even by early adulthood, he comes by his grumpy nature honestly. It's a woman who turns his life around the first time: sweet and lively Sonja, who becomes his wife and balances his pessimism with optimism and warmth. By 59, he's in a place of despair yet again, and it's a woman who turns him around a second time: spirited, knowing Parvaneh, who moves with her husband and children into the terraced house next door and forces Ove to engage with the world. The back story chapters have a simple, fablelike quality, while the current-day chapters are episodic and, at times, hysterically funny. In both instances, the narration can veer toward the preachy or overly pat, but wry descriptions, excellent pacing and the juxtaposition of Ove's attitude with his deeds add plenty of punch to balance out any pathos. In the contest of Most Winning Combination, it would be hard to beat grumpy Ove and his hidden, generous heart. Copyright Kirkus 2014 Kirkus/BPI Communications. All rights reserved.

READALIKES



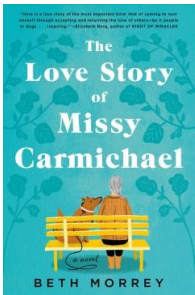
***The Big Finish* by Brooke Fossey**

A curmudgeonly senior who would avoid a nursing home forges an unexpected bond with his estranged granddaughter, an abused child who is rapidly succumbing to the alcoholism that once painfully overshadowed his own life.



***The Story of Arthur Truluv* by Elizabeth Berg**

Making daily visits to the grave of his beloved late wife, Arthur forges unexpected relationships with a nosy neighbor and a troubled teen who dubs him "Truluv" before the trio discovers healing and family together.



***The Love Story of Missy Carmichael* by Beth Morrey**

Reevaluating her past upon finding herself alone at age 79, Missy forges unexpected ties with two strangers and their spirited dog, discovering the power of friendship, family and self-forgiveness along the way.