

# Southfield Public Library

## A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman

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*Discussion questions used at SPL May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2017*

### Discussion Questions

1. How does the opening scene, in which Ove attempts to purchase a computer, succinctly express the main points of Ove's ongoing battle with the stupidities of the modern world?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. Parvaneh's perspective on life, as radically different from Ove's as it is, eventually succeeds in breaking Ove out of his shell, even if she can't change his feelings about Saabs. How does her brash, extroverted attitude manage to somehow be both rude and helpful?
7. 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?
8. Ove is a believer in the value of routine—how can following a routine be both comforting and stultifying? How can we balance routine and spontaneity? Should we? Or is there sense in eating sausage and potatoes your whole life?
9. 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?
10. Although we all identify with Ove to some extent, especially by the end of the story, we certainly also have our differences with him. Which of the supporting cast (Parvaneh, Jimmy, the Lanky One, Anita) did you find yourself identifying with most?
11. 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?
12. On page 113, after a younger Ove punches Tom, the author reflects: "A time like that comes for all men, when they choose what sort of men they want to be." Do you agree with this sentiment, especially in this context? How does the book deal with varying ideas of masculinity?
13. 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?

14. 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?

15. On Ove and Sonja's trip to Spain, Ove spends his time helping the locals and fixing things. How does Ove the "hero" compare and contrast to his behavior in the rest of the book? Is that Ove's true personality?

16. 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?

17. Saab? Volvo? BMW? Scania?  
(Questions issued by the publisher.)

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## *General discussion questions*

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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*Title: A Man Called Ove*

*Discussion questions taken from a website: Litlovers.com*

*website address: <http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/9920-man-called-ove-backman?start=3>*

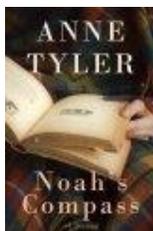
Movie (in Swedish) *A Man Called Ove*—Southfield Public Library has 2 copies of it!



Other books by Fredrik Backman:

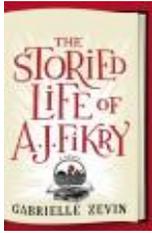
- *Britt-Marie was here*
- *My grandmother asked me to tell you she's sorry*
- *Beartown*

Similar Books:



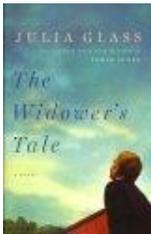
Noah's Compass (2010)

From the incomparable Anne Tyler, a wise, gently humorous, and deeply compassionate novel about a schoolteacher, who has been forced to retire at sixty-one, coming to terms with the final phase of his life



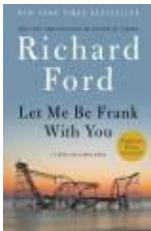
### The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry (2014)

When his most prized possession, a rare collection of Poe poems, is stolen, bookstore owner and recent widower A.J. Fikry begins isolating himself from his friends, family, and associates before receiving a mysterious package that compels him to remake his life



### The Widower's Tale (2010)

Enjoying an active but lonely rural life, seventy-year-old Percy allows a progressive preschool to move into his barn and transform his quiet home into a lively, youthful community that compels him to reexamine the choices he made after his wife's death



### Let Me Be Frank With You (2014)

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Frank Bascombe travels to the site of his former home on the shore, visits his ex-wife, who is suffering with Parkinson's, and meets a dying former friend