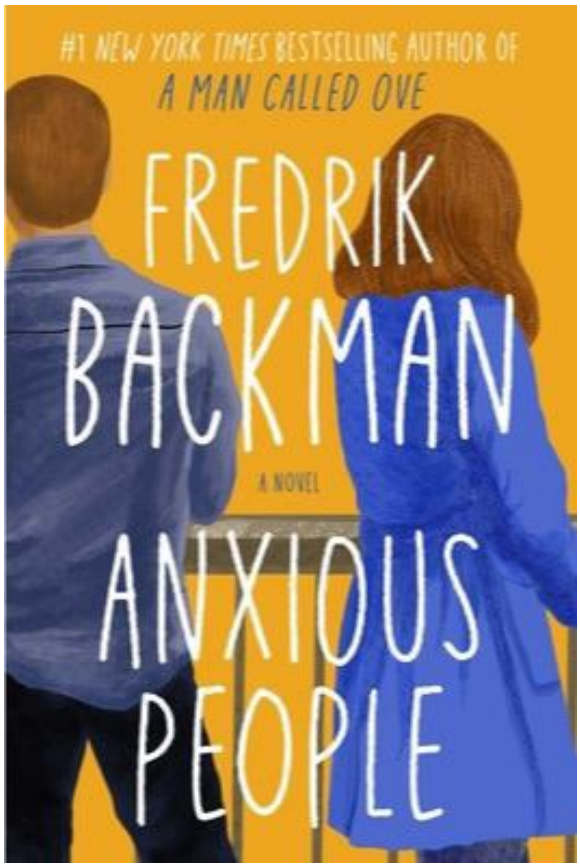
Anxious People by Fredrik Backman

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

Anxious People by Fredrik Backman



Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions

Book summary

Looking at real estate isn't usually a life-or-death situation, but an apartment open house becomes just that when a failed bank robber bursts in and takes a group of strangers hostage. The captives include a recently retired couple who relentlessly hunt down fixer-uppers to avoid the painful truth that they can't fix their own marriage. There's a wealthy bank director who has been too busy to care about anyone else and a young couple who are about to have their first child but can't seem to agree on anything. Add to the mix an eighty-seven-year-old woman who has lived long enough not to be afraid of someone waving a gun in her face, a flustered but still-ready-to-make-a-deal read estate agent, and a mystery man

also available to download from Libby

who has locked himself in the apartment's only bathroom, and you've got the worst group of hostages in the world.

Each of them carries a lifetime of grievances, hurts, secrets, and passions that are ready to boil over. None of them is entirely who they appear to be. And all of them—the bank robber included— desperately crave some sort of rescue. As the authorities and the media surround the premises, these reluctant allies will reveal surprising truths about themselves and set in motion a chain of events so unexpected that even they can hardly explain what happens next.

Source: SimonAndSchuster.com

https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Anxious-People/Fredrik-Backman/9781501160844#reading-group-guide

Anxious People
by Fredrik Backman

Meet the Author

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.



Source: SimonAndSchuster.com

https://www.simonandschuster.com/p/fredrik-backman

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Discussion Questions

1. The man on the bridge tells the boy, “Do you know what the worst thing about being a parent is? That you’re always judged by your worst moment…Parents are defined by their mistakes.” Do you think this statement is true? Does social media make it more likely to be the case these days? In what ways are people critical of other’s parenting choices? Is the bank robber a bad parent?
2. In *Anxious People*, the author writes, “If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans” and “The worst thing a divorce does to a person isn’t that it makes all the time you devoted to the relationship feel wasted, but that it steals all the plans you had for the future.” Do you make plans for your life or do you let life guide you? Even if our plans often don’t turn out as we’d hoped, is there a benefit to our making them? Discuss these questions with your group.
3. Zara tells her psychologist, “your generation doesn’t want to study a subject, they want to study themselves.” Is she speaking of millennials? Why are boomers and millennials so critical of each other? How do they see the world differently?
4. Nadia (the psychologist), James (the police officer), Zara, and Estelle all have stories tied in some way to the bridge. What does the bridge represent to each of them? Has the bridge’s meaning changed for them by the end of the book? If so, how?
5. Anna-Lena compares her and Roger’s marriage to a shark that can’t breathe unless it is moving the whole time: “People need a project…if we didn’t keep moving, our marriage wouldn’t get any oxygen. So we buy and renovate and sell.” Why does Anna-Lena think that a project is the one thing keeping their marriage from falling apart? What surprised you about their history as individuals and as a couple? How have they underestimated each other, despite having been together for so many years?

6. How did you feel when the identity of the bank robber was revealed? Were your assumptions challenged? How does the author manage to keep this a surprise?
7. Zara appears to be very cold and distant to other people. Is Zara's attitude toward people a defense mechanism? Do you agree with the psychologist that Zara isn't depressed, just lonely? What is it that Zara can't forgive herself for?
8. Estelle says her book-swapping moments with her neighbor were "an affair". Do you agree? What counts as an affair if there's no physical relationship involved? What book would you give as a present to a crush?
9. While on the apartment balcony, Zara starts to open up to Lennart. Why is he the person whom she is able to open up to?
10. At the start of *Anxious People*, the author tells us, "This story is about a lot of things, but mostly about idiots." In what ways are these characters acting like idiots? At the end of the book, do you think that's still a fair description of them? Are we all, by virtue of being human, inclined to act like idiots from time to time?
11. Jim and Jack, the father and son policemen, have a difficult relationship that is made worse by their working so closely together. What is it that annoys them about each other? What did you make of Jim's role in resolving the bank robber's predicament? Should he have told Jack what he was doing sooner? Why didn't he?
12. *Anxious People is* very much a character study. How did your feelings about these characters change over the course of the book? Who is your favorite character and why? Which character surprised you the most and why?

Source: SimonAndSchuster.com

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Recipes

Capricciosa Pizza

Roger orders capricciosa pizza from the police. (p.186).



- 1 pizza dough, handmade or store-bought (about 270g)
- 1 package (125g) fresh mozzarella
- 3 cremini mushroom, sliced
- 6 black olives (Gaeta or Kalamata) pitted and halved
- 40g prosciutto cotto (Italian ham), broken into pieces
- 50g carciofini (sliced artichoke hearts in oil)
- 3 Tablespoons canned San Marzano tomatoes, crushed or pureed and dressed with 1 Tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil, a pinch of salt, and a pinch of oregano

Hand crush or puree the canned tomatoes into a bowl. Drizzle in olive oil, and sprinkle in salt and oregano. Mix with a spoon. Taste for seasoning and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Oil a 12-inch round pizza pan. Stretch the pizza dough starting from the center and working your way to the outside rim of the pan creating a nice thick border.

Spoon some tomato sauce on top, and in a circular motion with the back of the spoon spread the sauce to the outside edges of the dough leaving a 1 cm border.

Place the mozzarella on top of the sauce evenly distributing it though- out, keeping some for the finish. Next, take the cooked ham and tear it apart scattering it throughout the pizza. Do the same with the artichoke hearts, sliced fresh mushrooms, and halved black olives. Toss on the rest of the mozzarella.

Drizzle with olive oil and place in the hot oven on the middle rack, on top of the pizza stone. Halfway through the cooking process, use a spatula to take the pizza out of the pan and place it directly on the pizza stone to crisp up. The pizza is done when the border is golden in color and the cheese is well melted, about 15 min. In total. Take out of the oven, let sit for a couple of minutes, cut and serve.

Source: SugarLovesSpices

https://www.sugarlovespices.com/capricciosa-pizza-italian-classic-pizza-capricciosa/

Rosenmunnar (Swedish thumbprint cookies)



- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup any flavor fruit jam

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add sifted flour and mix well. Shape dough into 1-inch balls and place on cookie sheets. Imprint your thumb in the center to make a 1/2-inch indentation. Fill with your favorite preserves. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown at the edges.

Source: AllRecipes.com

https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/9745/rosenmunnar/