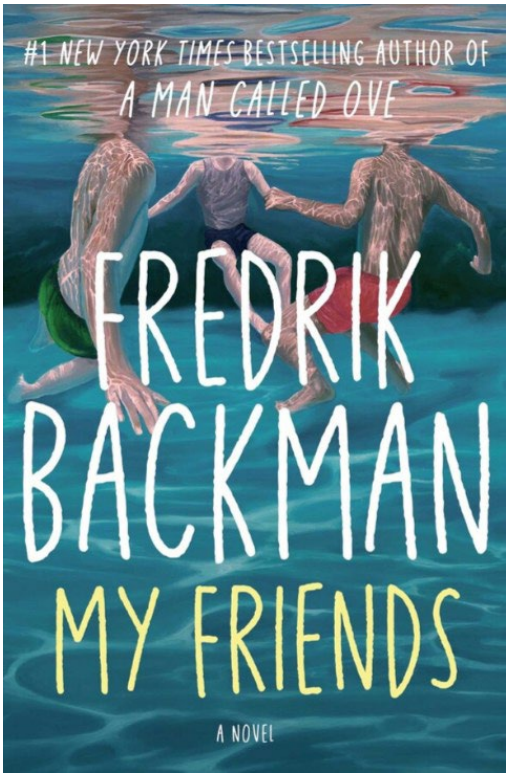
Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

My Friends by Fredrik Backman

Included in the Kit:

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



Book summary

Most people don't even notice them—three tiny figures sitting at the end of a long pier in the corner of one of the most famous paintings in the world. Most people think it's just a depiction of the sea. But Louisa, an aspiring artist herself, knows otherwise, and she is determined to find out the story of these three enigmatic figures.

Twenty-five years earlier, in a distant seaside town, a group of teenagers find refuge from their bruising home lives by spending long summer days on an abandoned pier, telling silly jokes, sharing secrets, and committing small acts of rebellion. These lost souls find in each other a reason to get up each morning, a reason to dream, a reason to love.

Out of that summer emerges a transcendent work of art, a painting that will unexpectedly be placed into eighteen-year-old Louisa's care. She embarks on a surprise-filled cross-country journey to learn how the painting came to be and to decide what to do with it. The closer she gets to the painting's birthplace, the more nervous she becomes about what she'll find. Louisa is proof that happy endings don't always take the form we expect in this stunning

testament to the transformative, timeless power of friendship and art. *(Source: https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/My-Friends/Fredrik-Backman/9781982112820)*

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, Anxious People, The Winners*, and *My Friends*, 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. Connect with him on Facebook and X @BackmanLand and on Instagram @Backmansk.

(Source: https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Fredrik-Backman/411545926)

Discussion Questions

1. Have you read any of Fredrik Backman's previous books? How does My Friends rank compared to his other stories?
2. The book jumps back and forth in timelines, with multiple perspectives. Why do you feel the author decided to tell this story in this way?
3. Was there a character you connected with, and why?
4. The novel details the story behind the most famous painting in the world, The One of the Sea. Why did this painting inspire such a following? How was it widely misunderstood by the general public?
5. Why was Louisa so drawn to the painting? What does it say about Louisa that she was able to decipher the true meaning of the painting, while others did not?
6. What was your impression of her encounter with the artist, Kimkim? How did this set the stage for what was to come?
7. What are your thoughts about Louisa as a whole? How did she change from the beginning of the novel to the end?

8. The book is about friendship, broken homes, found family, and finding "your people." Why did Kimkim, Joar, Ted, and Ali share such a strong connection?
9. Why did Kimkim choose to draw this painting? What did it really represent to him and his friends?
10. This is quite a dark book in many ways, highlighting abuse, trauma, depression, violence, and death. Why do you feel there was such a focus on those areas, and how did it influence the reading experience for you?
11. Let's talk about the impact of Christian, the janitor who helped Kimkim see his potential, on the story as a whole?
12. What finally prompted Ted and Louisa to bond?
13. What are your thoughts on the ending? What happens next for all the main characters?
14. Is there a piece of art that you enjoy, similar to how so many loved Kimkim's painting?
15. Did you highlight any passages or scenes? If so, who would like to share those?

(Source: https://bookclubchat.com/books/book-club-questions-for-my-friends-by-fredrik-backman/)

My Friends
by Fredrik Backman

Recipes

World's Best Lasagna



Ingredients:

- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage
- ¾ pound lean ground beef
- ½ cup minced onion
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 (28 ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 2 (6.5 ounce) cans canned tomato sauce
- 2 (6 ounce) cans tomato paste
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, divided
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried basil leaves
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt, divided, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon fennel seeds
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 12 lasagna noodles
- 16 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 egg
- ¾ pound mozzarella cheese, sliced
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Cook sausage, ground beef, onion, and garlic in a Dutch oven over medium heat until well browned. Stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato paste, and water. Season with sugar, 2 tablespoons parsley, basil, 1 teaspoon salt, Italian seasoning, fennel seeds, and pepper. Simmer, covered, for about 1 ½ hours, stirring occasionally.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook lasagna noodles in boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain noodles, and rinse with cold water.

In a mixing bowl, combine ricotta cheese with egg, remaining 2 tablespoons parsley, and 1/2 teaspoon salt.

To assemble, spread 1 ½ cups of meat sauce in the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish. Arrange 6 noodles lengthwise over meat sauce, overlapping slightly. Spread with 1/2 of the ricotta cheese mixture. Top with 1/3 of the mozzarella cheese slices. Spoon 1 ½ cups meat sauce over mozzarella, and sprinkle with 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese.

Repeat layers, and top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. Cover with foil: to prevent sticking, either spray foil with cooking spray or make sure the foil does not touch the cheese.

Bake in the preheated oven for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for an additional 25 minutes. Rest lasagna for 15 minutes before serving.

(Source: https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/23600/worlds-best-lasagna/)