

Man Called Ove (Backman)

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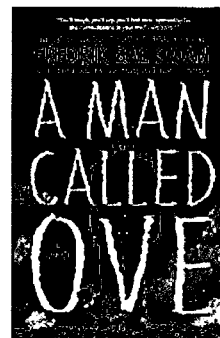
A Man Called Ove

Fredrik Backman, 2012 (U.S., 2014)

Atria Books

368 pp.

ISBN-13: 9781476738024



Summary

In this bestselling and delightfully quirky debut novel from Sweden, a grumpy yet loveable man finds his solitary world turned on its head when a boisterous young family moves in next door.

Meet Ove. He's a curmudgeon—the kind of man who points at people he dislikes as if they were burglars caught outside his bedroom window. He has staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. People call him “the bitter neighbor from hell.” But must Ove be bitter just because he doesn't walk around with a smile plastered to his face all the time?

Behind the cranky exterior there is a story and a sadness. So when one November morning a chatty young couple with two chatty young daughters move in next door and accidentally flatten Ove's mailbox, it is the lead-in to a comical and heartwarming tale of unkempt cats, unexpected friendship, and the ancient art of backing up a U-Haul. All of which will change one cranky old man and a local residents' association to their very foundations.

A feel-good story in the spirit of *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* and *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*, Fredrik Backman's novel about the angry old man next door is a thoughtful and charming exploration of the profound impact one life has on countless others. *(From the publisher.)*

Author Bio

- Birth—June 2, 1981
- Raised—Helsingborg, Sweden
- Education—no degree
- Currently—Stockholm

Fredrik Backman, Swedish author, journalist, and blogger, was voted Sweden's most

successful author in 2013.

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 he began freelancing, and in 2012 he became a writer for the *Metro*. About his move to writing, Backman said...

I write things. Before I did that I had a real job, but then I happened to come across some information saying there were people out there willing to pay people just to write things about other people, and I thought "surely this must be better than working." And it was, it really was. Not to mention the fact that I can sit down for a living now, which has been great for my major interest in cheese-eating.

(From his literary agent's website (<http://partnersinstories.se/authors/fredrik-backman.html>)

.)

Backman married in 2009 and became a father the following year. He blogged about preparations for his wedding in "The Wedding Blog" and about becoming a father on "Someone's Dad" blog. 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* (U.S. release in 2014), and a work of nonfiction, *Things My Son Needs to Know About the World*. His second novel, *My Grandmother Sent Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, came out in 2013 (U.S. release in 2015). (*Adapted from Wikipedia and the publisher. Retrieved 7/23/2014.*)

Book Reviews

(*Starred review.*) [A]s time passes, [the] characters slowly weave themselves into his life, offering Ove a chance at rebirth. The debut novel...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.

Publishers Weekly

(*Starred review.*) 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.

Booklist

[A] charming debut. The book...takes its time revealing that [its] dyed-in-the-wool curmudgeon has a heart of solid gold.... [T]he 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.

Kirkus Reviews

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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About the Author

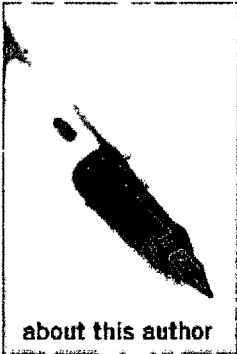
Full text biography:
Fredrik Backman
Birth Date : 1981

Known As : Backman, Carl Fredrik

Place of Birth : Sweden, Stockholm

Nationality: Swedish

Occupation : Writer

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Personal Information:

Born June 2, 1981, in Stockholm, Sweden; married; children: two. **Addresses:** Home: Near Stockholm, Sweden. **E-mail:** backmanland@hotmail.com.

Career Information:

Writer. Previously worked variously as a busboy and forklift operator.

Writings:
NOVELS

- *En man som heter Ove*, Forum (Stockholm, Sweden), 2012, translation published as *A Man Called Ove*, Atria Books (New York, NY), 2014.
- *Min mormor hälsar och säger förlåt*, Forum (Stockholm, Sweden), 2013, translation by Henning Koch published as *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, Atria Books (New York, NY), 2015.
- *Britt-Marie var här*, Pocketförlaget, (Stockholm, Sweden), translation by Henning Koch published as *Britt-Marie Was Here: A Novel*, Atria Books (New York, NY), 2016.

Also author of a nonfiction work called *Things My Son Needs to Know about Life*. Contributor to magazines and websites.

Sidelights:

Before Swedish writer Fredrik Backman began his career as a writer, he worked as a forklift operator and a busboy. In 2012, he released *En man som heter Ove* in Sweden. Two years later, the novel was published in English as *A Man Called Ove*. Backman has also written a nonfiction work called *Things My Son Needs to Know about Life*. He has been active as a blogger and contributed to several magazines and websites.

Backman begins *A Man Called Ove* with short descriptive sentences about the book's titular character. The reader learns that Ove drives a Saab, is retired, and is fifty-nine years old. Also, Ove is suspicious of people and points at specific individuals whom he finds odd or displeasing. He follows the rules and obeys the signs, and he becomes upset if other people do not do the same. He often causes problems among his neighbors. Ove has always had a

cantankerous side, but he has become worse since his wife, Sonja, died four years before. Ove believes that Sonja was the only one who understood him. Every day he brings flowers to her graveside and "chats" with her about events and his feelings. He misses Sonja so much that he decides he wants to join her in death, so he begins making plans to commit suicide.

As the story unfolds, the reasons behind Ove's prickly personality are revealed. His long-dead father had been demanding and exacting, and he had insisted that his son live by certain standards. Ove therefore has trouble understanding those who do not live as he does, and his personality has made it difficult to have friends. He lost his only friend, Rune, over an argument about a car. Rune bought a BMW, which angered Ove, who believes that Saabs are the only worthwhile cars. Ove hates cats, but one day he encounters a cat on his morning patrol. The cat follows Ove and eventually moves into his house. Ove still plans to end his life, but activity in his neighborhood continually distracts him. A new family moves onto the block where he resides, and during the moving process they run over his mailbox. However, Ove slowly becomes fond of the couple and their two daughters.

Ann Jonas, a contributor to the College of Saint Benedict website, commented: "The book has great depth of character, empathy and thoughtfulness and offers numerous profound passages, mostly coming from Ove's thoughts. This charming, heartwarming novel is an enjoyable and satisfying read." Writing at the *Readings* website, Australian reviewer Samuel Zifchak observed that Backman "humanises Ove in such a marvellous way that by the end of the novel, you are unequivocally on his side." In an online review for the London *Independent*, Lucy Scholes suggested: "On occasion the slightly repetitive tone becomes cloying, but Backman can tickle the funny bone and tug on the heart strings when he needs to, and is a clever enough storyteller to not overindulge in either." "Each short chapter of *A Man Called Ove* could stand alone as a beautifully crafted short story. Bring the chapters together and you have the most uplifting, life-affirming and often comic tale of how kindness, love and happiness can be found in the most unlikely places," stated Jane Clinton in her online review for the London *Express*. Although noting that "Ove's antics occasionally feel repetitive," a reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* remarked that Backman "writes with winning charm." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor declared: "In the contest of Most Winning Combination, it would be hard to beat grumpy Ove and his hidden, generous heart." Likewise, *Booklist* contributor Carol Haggas concluded: "If there was an award for 'Most Charming Book of the Year,' this first novel by a Swedish blogger-turned-overnight-sensation would win."

My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry is a modern-day fairy tale. The central character is precocious, seven-year-old Elsa, whose parents are divorced and remarried. Her only true friend is her oddball grandmother. Each night, Granny shares with Elsa tales from the Land of Almost-Awake, a realm that consists of six kingdoms, each with its own interconnected story. After granny suddenly passes away, Elsa is heart-broken, but she learns that her granny has left behind a trove of letters that she wants Elsa to deliver to the other residents of their apartment building. These letters are apologies to the people Granny believes she has offended in some way. Among the recipients are "The Monster"; Alf, a cantankerous cabbie; Britt-Marie, the fussy wife of a businessman; and others. What Elsa further learns is that the life of each of these characters is mirrored in the Land of Almost-Awake--and that both worlds are fraught with tragedy, excitement, and perils.

Reviewers responded to *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry* with approval. A *Publishers Weekly* critic, calling the novel "entertaining," praised it for its "whimsical charm and warm heart." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor concluded by calling the novel "a touching, sometimes-funny, often wise portrait of grief." Katie Lawrence, in a review for *Library Journal*, found the book "full of heart, hope, forgiveness, and the embracing of differences" and felt that the story "sticks with you long after you've turned the last page."

Backman's next novel, *Britt-Marie Was Here: A Novel*, tells the story of a persnickety woman who hates dirt and messes, who rises at the same early hour every day because only crazy people rise later, and who finally decides to leave her brute of a husband. In her sixties, she is astonished to find herself settling in a desolate place called Borg, where she becomes the leader of a youth club and a trainer for a football team and where she dates a cop.

A reviewer for the *ByMarlida* website had high praise for the author, writing that "he manages to make the people you [despise] into someone you completely fall in love with." Writing in *Paste*, Steve Nathans-Kelly called *Britt-Marie Was*

Here "Backman's truest, most satisfying book to date."

Related Information:

PERIODICALS

- *Booklist*, May 15, 2014, Carol Haggas, review of *A Man Called Ove*, p. 15.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, July 15, 2014, review of *A Man Called Ove*; May 1, 2015, review of *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*.
- *Library Journal*, June 15, 2015, Katie Lawrence, review of *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, p. 71.
- *Publishers Weekly*, May 5, 2014, review of *A Man Called Ove*, p. 38; April 20, 2015, review of *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*, p. 48.

ONLINE

- *BBC Online*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/> (November 4, 2014), author interview.
- *ByMarlida*, <http://bymarlida.blogspot.com/> (March 7, 2015), review of *Britt-Marie Was Here: A Novel*.
- *College of Saint Benedict Website*, <http://www.csbj.edu/> (November 4, 2014), Ann Jonas, review of *A Man Called Ove*.
- *Express Online* (London, England), <http://www.express.co.uk/> (July 27, 2014), Jane Clinton, review of *A Man Called Ove*.
- *Fredrik Backman Home Page*, <http://www.fredrikbackman.com> (April 9, 2016).
- *Independent Online* (London, England), <http://www.independent.co.uk/> (July 10, 2014), Lucy Scholes, review of *A Man Called Ove*.
- *Page to Stage Reviews*, <http://www.pagetostagereviews.com/> (June 19, 2015), "Interview with author Fredrik Backman."
- *Partners in Stories*, <http://partnersinstories.se/> (November 4, 2014), author profile.
- *Paste*, <http://www.pastemagazine.com/> (July 12, 2016), review of *Britt-Marie Was Here: A Novel*.
- *Readings Website*, <http://www.readings.com.au/> (June 26, 2014), Samuel Zifchak, review of *A Man Called Ove*.
- *Simon & Schuster Website*, <http://www.simonandschuster.com/> (November 4, 2014), short author profile.
- *Spectator Online*, <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/> (July 2, 2014), Mark Mason, review of *A Man Called Ove*.
- *Vegan Daemon*, <http://www.easyvegan.info/> (June 26, 2015), Kelly Garbato, review of *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*.*

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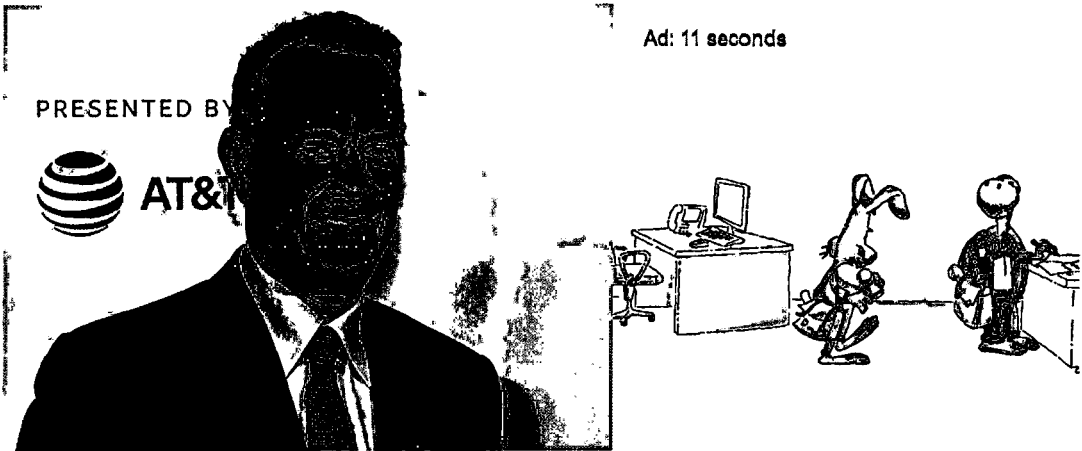
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Tom Hanks Is Set to Star in and Produce 'a Man Called Ove' Adaptation

Jeremy Fuster
The Wrap September 21, 2017



Tom Hanks Is Set to Star in and Produce 'a Man Called Ove' Adaptation

What to Read Next

Tom Hanks will star in and produce an English language adaptation of the best-selling novel "A Man Called Ove," *TheWrap* has learned.

Hanks will produce the film through his Playtone banner with Gary Goetzman, along with his wife, I Wilson, and Fredrik Wikstrom Nicastro. Nicastro produced the upcoming tennis film "Borg vs. McEnroe," as well as the Swedish adaptation of "A Man Called Ove," which was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and was the highest grossing foreign film of 2016.

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Also Read: Tom Hanks Is Set to Star in and Produce 'a Man Called Ove' Adaptation

Written by Fredrik Backman and published in 2011, "A Man Called Ove" follows Ove Lindahl, a depressed widower whose life is changed for the better when a chatty family of four moves in next door. The Swedish

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