

FREDRIK BACKMAN

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
ANXIOUS PEOPLE

BRITT-MARIE
WAS HERE

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

—*Paste Magazine*



ESL 360
BOOK CLUB

Chapters 4 -5

4 February 2026

Weekly Book Club Assignments, Group A (10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.)

Week	Date	Reading	Ira	Flavia	Maria	Lisa	Mariana	Banu	Fatemeh
2	28 Jan	Ch 1-3	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
3	4 Feb	Ch 4-5	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
4	11 Feb	Ch 6-8	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
5	18 Feb	Ch 9-11	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
6	25 Feb	Ch 12-14	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
7	4 Mar	Ch 15-17	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
8	11 Mar	Ch 18-20	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
9	25 Mar	Ch 21-23	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
10	1 Apr	Ch 24-26	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
11	8 Apr	Ch 27-29	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
12	15 Apr	Ch 30-32	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
13	22 Apr	Ch 33-34	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
14	29 Apr	Ch 35-36	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
15	6 May	Ch 37	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
16	13 May	Ch 38	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper

Weekly Book Club Assignments, Group B (11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

Week	Date	Reading	Monica	Cristy	Esmeralda	Yulianna	Lily S.	Yariela	Lily L.
2	28 Jan	Ch 1-3	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
3	4 Feb	Ch 4-5	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
4	11 Feb	Ch 6-8	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
5	18 Feb	Ch 9-11	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
6	25 Feb	Ch 12-14	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
7	4 Mar	Ch 15-17	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
8	11 Mar	Ch 18-20	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
9	25 Mar	Ch 21-23	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
10	1 Apr	Ch 24-26	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
11	8 Apr	Ch 27-29	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
12	15 Apr	Ch 30-32	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
13	22 Apr	Ch 33-34	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
14	29 Apr	Ch 35-36	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
15	6 May	Ch 37	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
16	13 May	Ch 38	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

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BANU

At the beginning of the Chapter 4, Britt-Marie drives toward Borg feeling anxious and overwhelmed by being on her own. Then, a series of unexpected problems occur during her journey, making her feel increasingly out of control. Next, while she is already confused and stressed, a soccer ball suddenly hits her on the head, and she loses consciousness. By the end of the chapter, Britt-Marie is physically unconscious and emotionally powerless, showing that her old ways of managing life are no longer enough. The chapter ends at a moment of complete uncertainty. This chapter shows Britt-Marie's fear of independence and her inability to cope with chaos when life does not follow the rules.

In Chapter 5, Britt-Marie wakes up after fainting and has her first real interaction with the people of Borg. First, Britt-Marie regains consciousness and realizes she is surrounded by strangers. Then, she begins to observe the people of Borg, who are different from what she expected but show concern for her. Next, Britt-Marie tries to make sense of this new environment while holding tightly to her own rules, manners, and sense of order. By the end of the chapter, Britt-Marie has not changed her worldview. As the narrator states, "Because you can't change Britt-Marie's way of seeing the world." The story makes it clear that while her surroundings may change, Britt-Marie herself resists change, setting up future tension.

Britt-Marie struggles to accept a world that does not function according to her strict values.

DEEP THINKER

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BANU

Deep Thinker questions:

1-) Why does Backman choose a sudden and accidental event, like a soccer ball hitting Britt-Marie, to end the chapter?

2-) How does Britt-Marie's loss of consciousness reflect her emotional state and fear of losing control?

3-) Why does Backman emphasize that Britt-Marie's way of seeing the world cannot be changed at this point in the story?

4-) How does Britt-Marie's first interaction with the townspeople show both her rigidity and her vulnerability?

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

LILY L.

In Chapters 4 and 5 of “Britt-Marie Was Here,” Britt-Marie arrives in the small town of Borg after accepting a temporary job. She quickly notices that the town is nearly abandoned and poorly cared for. When she meets the employment officer and other townspeople, she feels ignored and underestimated. Despite having no experience, Britt-Marie is offered a job at the recreation center, which shows how desperate the town is for help. This creates a major problem for Britt-Marie because she values order and routine, while Borg is chaotic and disorganized.

Although Britt-Marie feels uncomfortable and out of place, she chooses to accept the job. She begins meeting the people of Borg, including several children, who do not follow rules the way she expects. These interactions push Britt-Marie out of her comfort zone and move the story forward. By the end of these chapters, Britt-Marie starts to realize that the town may actually depend on her. This marks an important change from the beginning, when she feels unwanted and unnecessary, to the end, when she begins to feel a sense of purpose.

DEEP THINKER

MONICA

1. Why does Britt Marie accept a job that is temporary, badly paid and away from where she lives?
2. Why do you think Britt Marie is so calm while visiting her husband at the hospital, after she finds out about his infidelity?
3. Do you think Britt Marie lets her cleanliness take priority over the relationship with her husband?
Why or why not?

VOCABULARY BUILDER

IRA

1. splutter

... whereupon the car splutters pathetically (p.24)

verb

(speech) speak hurriedly and unclearly due to emotion

He spluttered an apology after the argument.

(choking sound) make a series of short explosive spitting or choking sounds

He began to splutter as he laughed.

(emission) emit something forcefully in small drops

The engine spluttered oil onto the ground.

noun

(sound) forceful choking or spitting sound

The engine gave a loud splutter before stopping.

(speech) chaotic and forceful speaking or verbal exchange

His speech was a splutter of angry words.

image.png



2. thump

After a moment there's disconcerting thumping noise (p.24)

verb

(action) hit something hard with a fist

He thumped the table in frustration.

(sound) make a loud dull sound

The book thumped onto the floor.

(heart sound) beat strongly or with a loud noise

Her heart thumped loudly as she awaited the results.

noun

(dull bang) sound of a heavy object hitting something

The book fell with a thump.

(impact) heavy blow with a dull sound

I heard a thump from the next room.

(medical) strong heartbeat felt physically

He felt a thump in his chest as he approached the stage.



VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

IRA

3. tick

She ticks that point (p.24)

verb

(sound) make a short, light, regular tapping sound

The clock will tick every second.

(marking) mark an item with a small check to show approval. "She ticked the correct answer on the quiz."

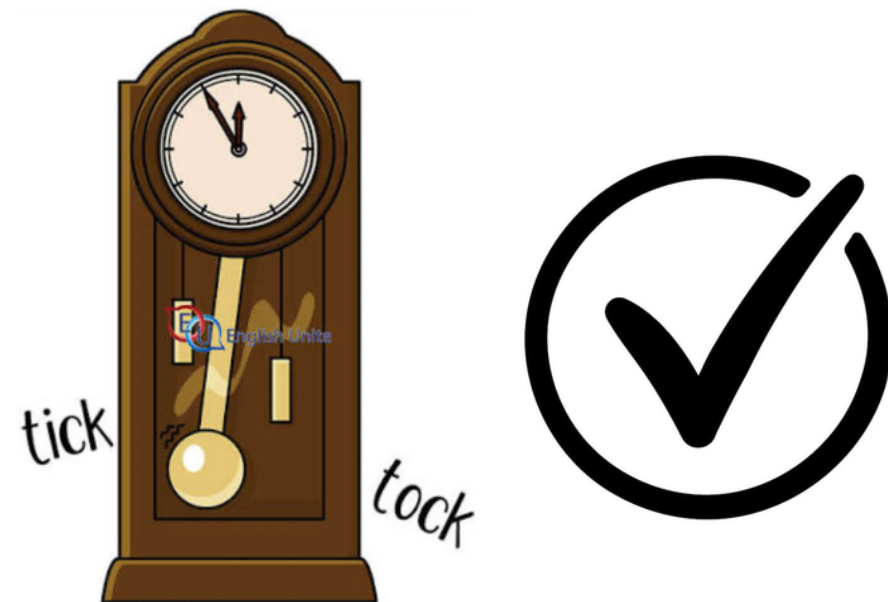
noun

(mechanics) short sound made by a clock or machinery

I heard the tick of the clock at night.

(symbols) mark indicating correctness or completion

Place a tick next to the correct answer.



4. scamper

...that's the point at which she sees the rat, more or less as big as a normal-sized flowerpot, scampering across patches of ice...(p.29)

verb

(movement) run lightly and quickly in a playful way

The children scampered across the playground.

(hasty task) hurry quickly through a task or place

She scampered through her homework to go outside.

noun

quick run, hasty escape

He heard the squeak and scamper of rats.



VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

IRA

5. aim

But don't get angry, they weren't aiming at you! (p.33)

verb

(weapons) point a weapon towards a target

He aimed the gun at the target.

(goals) strive to achieve a goal

She aims to become a doctor.

noun

(goals) the target or object intended to be hit

The aim was a small red circle.

(precision) accuracy of hitting a target

She practiced daily to improve her aim.

(goal) intention or purpose behind an action

Her aim was to finish the project early.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

CRISTY

Whereupon

Book: (page 21 Kindle) and she abandons both brake and clutch pedals, whereupon the car splutters pathetically.

Meaning: (Conjunction) Immediately after which

Me: My son won the basketball game, whereupon he was in the finals of the tournament.



Unduly

Book: (page 21 kindle) After a few unduly dramatic deviations...

Meaning: (Adv) to an unwarranted degree (with excess)

Me: I was unduly alarmed by the tornado warning.



Engulfed

Book: (page 22 Kindle) to be engulfed in flames at any moment.

Meaning: Cover something completely

Me: The rain of dust engulfed the city



VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

CRISTY

Sniggers

Book: (page 29 Kindle) Somebody sniggers, without a care in the world

Meaning: laugh in a half-suppressed, secret laugh

Me: My cousin sniggers me when I make a mistake in English



Breezily

Book: (page 30 Kindle) Somebody, breezily, while shovelling the pizza into her mouth

Meaning: (adj) appearing relaxed, informal

Me: On Sunday my husband breezily forgets about work



Vexatious

Book: (page 30 Kindle) She found it very vexatious passing out.

Meaning: (adj) cause annoyance, frustration or worry

Me: The noise was vexatious



SOUND SPOTTER

FLAVIA

HORRIFIC Hor-ri-fic

Adjective

/hō'rifik,hə'rifik/

“ It would be horrific, thinks Britt-Marie” p-30

Ex: The weather is horrific

It's hard to say 2 kinds of sound of letter /R/ in the same word. It confuses me because in Portuguese the letter / H / doesn't has sound and the letter / R / has the same sound like / H / in English.

SLIGHTLY slight·ly

Adverb

/'slītlē/

“ He was sleeping, snoring slightly.” p-30

Ex: “That's slightly to far.”

It's hard to say 4 consoantes together in the same word. I don't know which one I don't pronounce.

SOUND SPOTTER

FLAVIA

FRESHEN (ED) fresh·en

Verb

/'freSHən/

/'frefnd/ or /'frefənd/

“ Then she polished the windows with Faxin and freshened up the mattress and brought in the balcony boxes and...”

p-31

Ex: “I freshened my house after cleaned.”

It's hard to say /ed/

VEXATIOUS vex·a·tious

Adjective

/vek'sāSHəs/

“ It would be terribly vexatious if she left bloodstains on Somebody's floor, whether it's been mopped or not.” p-32

Ex: This makes me vexatious

It's hard to say / x / and / t / because they are similar sounds.

SOUND SPOTTER

ESMERALDA

1. Unintelligible

Book: The girl mutters something unintelligible, her voice sounding as if it's coming from inside a tin can. The word "unintelligible" is transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as:

/ʌnɪn'tɛlɪdʒəbl/

This represents the standard pronunciation in English.

- /ʌn/: As in "un".
- /ɪn/: As in "in".
- /tɛl/: "Tell".
- /ɪdʒ/: A sound similar to "judge".
- /ə/: A neutral vowel sound, as in "sofa".
- /bl/: "b" followed by "l" sound. Understandably

"My accent are so tick and most of the times my speech are so unintelligible."

SOUND SPOTTER

ESMERALDA

2. Understandably:

Laura was **understandably** excited when she played golf for first time.

Book: **Understandably** she is in panic, and she abandons both brake and clutch pedals, whereupon the car splutters pathetically.

The word “understandably” is transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as:

/ˌʌndər'stændəbli/

Here's the breakdown:

- /ʌn/: As in “un”.
- /dər/: The “er” sound in “under”.
- /'stænd/: “Stand”.
- /ə/: A neutral vowel sound, as in “sofa”.
- /bli/: “Blee”, like in “ably”. Postponement

SOUND SPOTTER

ESMERALDA

3. Postponement:

The team was to deal with the **postponement** of their game because a teacher delay.

Book: The local authority representatives were concerned it might cause a **postponement** of their annual Christmas dinner.

The word “**postponement**” is transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as:

/pɒs(t)'pɒnmənt/

Here's the breakdown:

- /pɒs/: As in “post”.
- /t/: The “t” sound, often pronounced softly or dropped in some accents.
- /'pɒn/: The “pone” sound, like in “phone”.
- /mənt/: The “ment” part, pronounced with a neutral vowel sound, like “sofa”.

SOUND SPOTTER

ESMERALDA

4. Exceedingly:

The weather in Temecula has been **exceedingly** hot this summer, much hotter than we expected.

Book: The ball is being pursued by two children. They are **exceedingly** dirty.

ɪk'si:dɪŋli/

Here's the breakdown:

- /ɪk/: The “ik” sound, as in “sick”.
- /'si:d/: The “seed” sound, with a long “ee” sound.
- /ɪŋ/: The “ing” sound, as in “sing”.
- /li/: The “lee” sound, like in “quickly”.

SOUND SPOTTER

ESMERALDA

5. Shrugs:

When we asked if we could cook for my niece, she just **shrugged** and didn't answer anything."

Book: Somebody **shrugs** his shoulders

The word "shrugs" is transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as:

/ʃrʌgz/

Here's the breakdown:

- /ʃ/: The "sh" sound, as in "shoe".
- /r/: The "r" sound, as in "red".
- /ʌ/: The "uh" sound, as in "cup".
- /gz/: The "gz" sound, as in "dogs" (the "g" followed by a "z" sound).

CHARACTER ANALYZER

MARIA

Trait: Obsession

Obsession means when your mind gets stuck on a thought, idea, person or worry, and keeps circling back to it, thinking about the same thing over and over.

The evidence: “Britt-Marie wakes up on a floor. Somebody is leaning over her, saying something, but Britt-Marie’s first thoughts are about the floor. She’s worried that it may be dirty, and that people might think she’s dead. Things happen all the time, people falling over and dying. It would be horrific, thinks Britt-Marie. To die on a dirty floor. What do people think?” (30)

She is obsessed with keeping everywhere she goes clean. If something happens to Britt-Marie, she wants everything to be spotless. She is especially obsessed with her own appearance. For example, when she wakes up after fainting she is more concerned about “having passed out with a dirty face” than she is about getting hit in the head with the soccer ball. (34)

She is also obsessed about the Faxin. When the lady offers another brand, Britt-Marie refuses: “Absolutely not! Britt-Marie interrupts, walking toward the door as she hisses: ‘I’ll use baking soda!’ Because you can’t change Britt-Marie’s way of seeing the world. Because once Britt-Marie has taken a position on the world there’s no changing her.” (37)

These examples from chapters 4 and 5 show us how Britt-Marie has an obsessive personality.

CHARACTER ANALYZER

YULIANNA

Somebody

Character: the older woman

Trait: Friendly

What it means: Friendly means being kind and warm to other people. A friendly person tries to help others and make them feel supported, even if they act strangely sometimes.

Evidence from the Text : The older woman shows that she is friendly in the story. Even though she appears intoxicated, sniggers, whistles, and uses inappropriate language, she still encourages others. For example, the text says, "Somebody gestures encouragingly at the girl."

She also talks openly and casually, saying, "But, shit, are you... like... dead?" and makes a whistling sound, which shows her informal and unfiltered way of speaking. The book also says, "Somebody sniggers, without a care in the world," showing she feels relaxed and comfortable around others.

Also, the woman is described as being in her forties and using a wheelchair. The text also says, "Somebody smells of vodka and can't quite manage to dab the tissue in the right place," which suggests she is intoxicated and not very clean. Even with all this, she is still friendly and supportive.

WORD ARTIST

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LISA

Scene: When Britt-Marie arrives in Borg (chapter 4-5)

Britt-Marie is driving to Borg, a small community built along a quiet road. The town feels abandoned, like a ghost town. Almost everything is closed, such as the supermarket, the school, the shopping center, etc. The buildings look old and dirty, as if no one lives there.

It's January, and she can feel the cold winter air as soon as she arrives. The trees are dry and the grass is dead and yellow everywhere. The sky is grey and cloudy, making the town feel even more depressing. She can smell the pizza coming from a building with a broken sign that says "PizzRai." She hears no sound; it's silent over there. Then she stops her old white car in an empty parking lot. She feels confused and alone, like she is lost in the middle of a desert.

WORD ARTIST

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LILY S.

BRITT-Marie arrives in a town called Borg for her first day of work. From the author's description, I picture it as a ghost town built in the middle of nowhere, a poor dying town. It's a community situated along the highway, and I think the financial crisis hit this town particularly hard; that's why all the essential businesses are closed: the school, the pharmacy, the health care center, the supermarket, the shopping center and the liquor store. Only the dive pizzeria, with its broken neon sign and the recreation center remain open. The pizzeria is a most peculiar place; everything that is left from the other business seems to have ended up there. Inside the pizzeria with the unmopped dirty floor, I smell a mixture of pizza, cigarette smoke, coffee and alcohol. I see two men with beards and caps sitting at the corner table. I feel the silence that exists only in the remote towns; the unfriendly people or maybe the frozen January contribute to it. I hear the shouts coming from the parking area where children in worn-out, dirty clothes, playing soccer, and I wonder why they're not in school?

CONNECTION MAKER

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MARIANA

When Britt-Marie arrives in Borg, she feels lost and uncomfortable. Everything is new, and she doesn't understand the place or the people. She feels nervous and alone, but she knows she must start again.

This story connects to my life when I arrived in the USA. Everything was new for me too: a new country, a new language, and new people. I felt afraid to speak English because I didn't want to make mistakes. Sometimes I felt quiet and invisible, just like Britt-Marie.

Starting over in a new place is not easy. You miss what is familiar, and simple things feel difficult. But like Britt-Marie, I am learning, improving my English and slowly building confidence. Each day is a new beginning. This connection shows that change is hard, but it also helps us grow. Even when we feel uncomfortable, we are becoming stronger and braver.

CONNECTION MAKER

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MONICA

In my twenties, I took a job away from home due to the Mexico financial crisis of 1994. This new job “consisted of” traveling to different cities around the country. I really enjoyed the opportunity since normally we only vacationed twice a year, but living in several cities as a local, made me realize how vast the country is.

The state of Oaxaca de Juarez birth place of former president Benito Juarez and name after him is the most ethnically diverse state, with 16 officially recognized indigenous groups. Because of its mountainous terrain, many of these communities remained isolated which allowed them to preserved their own language, traditions and culture. I will dare to say its a place that represents “in many aspects” the true soul of the Mexican culture.