

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 12 -14

25 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

MARIA

In chapter 12, “The policeman hurries off toward his patrol car with the balcony boxes, then he hurries back to walk alongside Britt-Marie, and she said I should like to stop by a cash machine on the way, so I can pay for the room.” For Sven, this is a great opportunity to continue their conversation. Finally, she arrives in the small town of Borg escorted by Sven (the policeman). Britt-Marie spends more time with the children and the local community. Although she doesn’t understand much about soccer, she starts helping the children to find confidence, and along the way, she finds purpose for herself beyond being someone’s wife.

In chapter 13, Britt-Marie continues adjusting to life in Borg. She is still very uncomfortable and feels out of place, but she slowly becomes more involved with the children and the community. The kids are chaotic and don’t always listen, which frustrates her because she likes order and rules. However, she begins to understand that they need someone who cares about them.

In chapter 14, Britt-Marie proves that courage is not loud or dramatic but is found in the small, brave choices she makes to build a new life in Borg. Although she feels uncomfortable and unsure, she continues helping the children with their soccer team. Britt-Marie does not understand soccer, but she throws away her worries about looking foolish and shows up for the children. This demonstrates courage because she steps outside her strict routines and familiar habits. Instead of hiding from new experiences, she chooses to support the children, even when it challenges her. Her willingness to try something unfamiliar shows that courage can mean facing fear quietly and continuing forward anyway. Through these actions, Britt Marie’s bravery is growing, and she is slowly becoming stronger and more independent.

DEEP THINKER

MARIA

1. Do you think Britt-Marie is interested in having a relationship with Sven (the policeman?)
2. Why has Britt-Marie always had a great love of maps?
3. Why does Pirate thank Britt-Marie and give her a hug?

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

YULIANNA

In this section of the book, we follow Britt-Marie as she starts discovering a new side of herself. She is in a small town, staying in a room in a rather dirty house owned by a blind woman. Britt-Marie is beginning to explore the world around her and meet new people.

Early in the morning, Britt-Marie goes to the pizzeria to buy a Snickers, a soda, and a drill. Along the way, she starts noticing interesting changes in herself. She discovers that contraband is being sold in the pizzeria. She cleans up there, helps one of the children and witnesses a situation involving the man responsible for everyone losing their jobs. Later, she calls the office to speak with the woman who gave her the chance to see a different world and finds herself, apologizing for her earlier behavior. By the end of the day, she even feeds her new neighbor, a pet rat, showing how much her outlook and actions are changing.

By the end of this section, Britt-Marie has grown more confident and active. She is starting to take control of situations, help others, and engage with the world in ways she never did before. The story shows her transformation from a quiet, cautious person into someone willing to step forward and make a difference.

DEEP THINKER

1. WHO MADE THE SUGGESTION ABOUT WHY SOMEONE LOVES FOOTBALL? DO YOU THINK BRITT MARIE CONSIDERS IT POETIC? Page 99
- 2.- HOW DID BRITT MARIE KNOW ABOUT BMW CARS AND HOW COULD SHE RECOGNIZE A VERY EXPENSIVE JACKET? Page 113
3. WHY DOES FREDRICK WANT HIS SON TO PLAY HOCKEY EVEN THOUGH HIS SON WOULD PREFER TO PLAY SOCCER? Page 117 and 118

VOCABULARY BUILDER

LISA

Wistfully

(adverb) /wɪstfəli/ WIST-fuh-lee

Sentence from the book:

"We miss your dad very much, Bank. All of Borg misses him," he says wistfully into the hall". (page 100)

Definition: It means feeling a little sad when you remember or miss something.

My own sentence: The boy looked wistfully at the window because he is missing the summer so much.



Defiance

(noun) /dɪ'faɪəns/ dih-FY-unss

Sentence from the book:

"... something makes her gather all her strength in a furious show of defiance that finally overpowers the door". (page 103)

Definition: When you refuse to obey

My own sentence: The little boy crossed his arms in defiance when his mom told him it's time to come inside.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

LISA

To prattle

Verb /'prætl/ PRAT-ul

Sentence from the book:

"If I say I have impaired vision they want to prattle on endlessly about the difference between that and being properly blind". (page 102)

Definition: Prattle is to talk for a long time about unimportant things

My own sentence: The kids sat at the dinner table and started to prattle about unicorns for almost 2 hours.



To Squirm

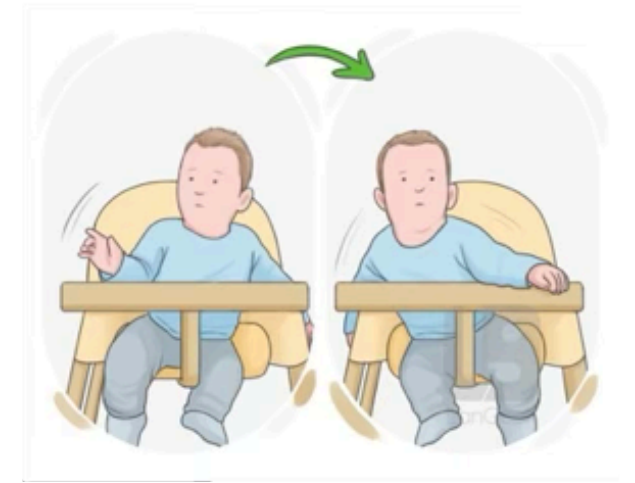
(verb) /skwɜ:rm/ skwurm

Sentence from the book:

"Then he tries to embrace her again, laughs when she squirms, and runs off". (page 123)

Definition: When you are feeling uncomfortable and you move your body

My own sentence: During a long flight I used to squirm in my seat because it is so uncomfortable.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

LISA

Dismayed

(adjective) /dis'meɪd/ dis-MAYD:

Sentence from the book:

"Britt-Marie takes it, dismayed" (page 117)

Definition: Feeling upset or worried about something

My own sentence: She felt dismayed after her exam result.



Bonus Challenge

I used the word “dismayed”...

“I felt dismayed when I was watching the Olympic Games and I saw one of the competitors getting seriously hurt.

VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

YULI ANNA

1. **amateur** (noun) ['a-mə-cher]

"I mean, I don't mean my own paintings, of course. I'm just a bit of a happy amateur." P.97

Definition: a person who regularly or occasionally engages in an activity as a pastime rather than as a profession;

My Explanation : A person who does an activity for fun, not as a job. Synonym : hobby

My Example: In Russia, during the summer and early autumn, I used to watch soccer through my window. The players were amateurs, not professionals.



2. **tentatively** (adverb) ['ten-tə-tiv-li]

"Britt-Marie is tentatively reaching for two dirty plates when Somebody, as if she can sense what she is up to, yells: "Don't touch washing-up!" page 107

Definition: in a way that shows uncertainty or hesitation;

My Explanation: doing something carefully because you are unsure, nervous .

My Example: My child took his first steps tentatively.



VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

YULI ANNA

3. Sack (verb) [sæk]

“Why? Are you here to give someone the sack?” Vega answers acidly, than, pretending to have suddenly realizing something, slaps her forehead dramatically: “Oh, no! That’s right, you can’t because you don’t work here! And where you work there’s no one left to sack, because you already sacked them all!” page 114

Definition: to dismiss someone from their job.

My Explanation: To fire someone.

My Example: Sacking coworkers you know personally is a tough task.



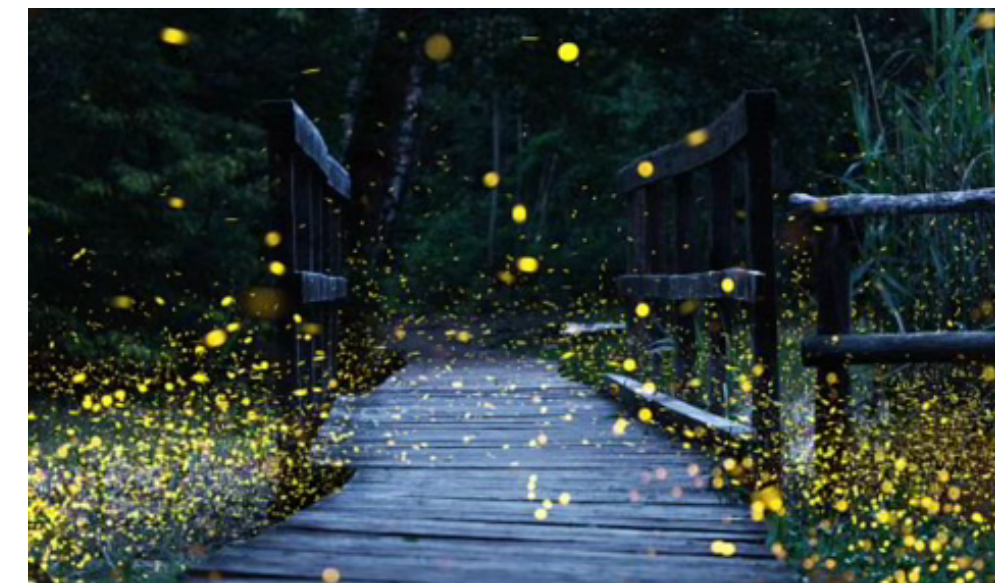
4. flicker (verb) ['flɪk·ər]

“The boy runs out, the man marches behind him and slams the door so hard that the fluorescent tube on the ceiling flickers.” Page 115

Definition: to burn or shine with an unsteady light that goes on and off quickly

My Explanation: means flashes or shakes quickly for a short time

My Example: The fireflies flickered in the dark.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

YULIANNA

5. **consternation** (noun) [ˌkɒnˌstərˈneɪʃən]

"The boy stares at her in the mirror with consternation." Page 118

Definition: a strong feeling of surprise or sudden disappointment that causes confusion

My Explanation: it is feeling shocked, worried, or very surprised

My Example: Many students feel consternation when the time comes to take a test.

TERROR vs. CONSTERNATION



SOUND SPOTTER

MARIANA

1. **Wistfulness** (p 98) /'wɪstfəl.nəs/, WIST-fuhl-lee

Definition: A feeling of gentle sadness or longing for something from the past.

Book sentence: “The corners of the policeman’s mouth do what the corners of mouths do when trying to overcome wistfulness.” Page 98

Pronunciation difficulty: This word is difficult because the middle sound “stf” is hard to pronounce smoothly.

Example : She looks at him with a certain wistfulness

2. **Entrepreneur** (p 99) /,ɑ:n.trə.prə'nɜ:z/, ON-truh-pruh-NUR

Definition: A person who starts and runs their own business, especially someone who takes financial risks.

Book sentence: “My husband told me that, and he’s an entrepreneur.” Page 99

Pronunciation difficulty: This word is hard because the stress is at the end and the pronunciation is different from how it is written.

Example: One day I hope to be an entrepreneur and have my own business.

3. **Awkwardly** (p 101) /'ɑ:k.wəd.li/, AWK-werd-lee

Definition: In a nervous, uncomfortable way , When someone feels shy, embarrassed, or not natural.

Book sentence: “He nods awkwardly and turns round. Page101

Pronunciation difficulty: This word is difficult because the “awk” and “w” sounds together feel strange in my mouth.

Example: I laughed awkwardly when I forgot what to say in English.

SOUND SPOTTER

MARIANA

4. **Grudgingly** (p 105) /'grʌdʒ.ɪŋ.li/, GRUD-jing-lee

Definition: Doing something in an unwilling or annoyed way. Doing something, but not happily.

Book sentence: "Somebody grudgingly opens up and informs Britt Marie that the pizzeria and all its other financial activities are closed at this time of day". Page 105

Pronunciation difficulty: This word is hard because the "gr" and "j" sounds together are difficult to pronounce clearly.

Example: My son grudgingly cleaned his room after I asked.

5. **Strikingly** (p 122) /'straɪ.kɪŋ.li/, STRY-king-lee

Definition: In a way that is very easy to see.

Book sentence: "He's strikingly rude , says Britt Marie but Pirate obviously can't hear anything, because the sound of his jumping echoes quite a lot in the bathroom."

Pronunciation difficulty: This word is difficult because the "str" blend at the beginning is hard to say quickly.

Example: My daughter is strikingly confident when she speaks in class.

SOUND SPOTTER

LILY L.

1. Obviously (Adverb)

Sentence from the book (p. 95):

“If it’s no bother to you. I obviously don’t want to cause you any bother.”

IPA: /'ɑ:b.vi.əs.li/ (American English)

Why it is difficult for me:

The word has four syllables, but the middle syllables are very soft. I sometimes pronounce each syllable too strongly (ob-vi-ous-ly) instead of saying it smoothly. The “v” and “b” sounds together are also tricky for me.

New sentence about my life:

Obviously, I need to practice English every day if I want to improve.

Bonus practice:

I used “obviously” in a conversation when explaining something that was clear to everyone.

2. Enthusiastically (Adverb)

Sentence from the book (p. 106):

Britt-Marie stands in the middle of the room, looking enthusiastically at the picture.

IPA: /ɪn,θu:zi'æs.tɪ.kli/

Why it is difficult for me:

It is a very long word with many syllables. The “th” sound (/θ/) is hard for me, and I sometimes pronounce it like “t” or “s.” The stress is on “AS” (æs), which I need to remember.

New sentence about my life:

I answered enthusiastically when my teacher asked for volunteers.

Bonus practice:

I used this word when talking about how I feel about joining new activities.

3. Particularly (Adverb)

Sentence from the book (p. 111):

Not that there’s a particularly large number of customers.

IPA: /pər'tɪk.jə.lə.li/

Why it is difficult for me:

SOUND SPOTTER

LILY L.

3. Particularly (Adverb)

Sentence from the book (p. 111):

Not that there's a particularly large number of customers.

IPA: /pəˈtɪk.jə.lə.li/

Why it is difficult for me:

It is long and has many syllables. The “r” sound and “ly” ending are hard to pronounce smoothly together.

New sentence about my life:

I particularly enjoy reading novels in English because they help me improve my vocabulary.

Bonus practice:

I used this word when explaining which subject I like most at school.

4. Reassuringly (Adverb)

Sentence from the book (p. 117):

Get on with it! He'd say reassuringly.

IPA: /ˌriː.əˈʃʊr.iŋ.li/

Why it is difficult for me:

The beginning has two vowel sounds together (ree-uh), which makes it hard to say smoothly. Also, the “shur” sound (/ʃʊr/) is difficult for me to pronounce clearly.

New sentence about my life:

My friend spoke reassuringly before my presentation and helped me feel calm.

Bonus practice:

I practiced saying “reassuringly” when describing how someone supported me during a stressful situation.

CHARACTER ANALYZER

BANU

Character Name: Pirate (the ginger-haired boy) - Ben

Character trait: thoughtful and polite

Evidence:

Pirate approaches Britt-Marie in the laundry room to apologize: "I'm the one who shot the soccer ball at your head yesterday. I didn't do it on purpose. I'm pants at aiming. I hope it didn't ruin your hair"

When asking for help with his hair, he says: "Can I ask you something?" and "Would you help me fix my hair?"

He explains: "Your hair's really nice. I was thinking you're good at doing hair, because your hair is nice."

After all the drama in the pizzeria, Britt-Marie whispers to him: "I have time for your hair now"

CHARACTER ANALYZER

MONICA

Sven is Borg's policeman, a man with an emphatic personality and an easygoing nature. He is someone who understands the financial crisis the people in Borg are going through after the truck company shut down. "Sven's patience with Britt-Marie allows him to see her as a lonely woman in need of help. Sven likes Britt-Marie, and his caring attitude towards her is evident; however, his habit of asking her questions is something she finds unusual and annoying," He is curious and keen to learn. He has several hobbies and enjoys improving his skills. Much like Britt-Marie he is a lonely man. Overall, his life experiences have made Sven a prudent, well-mannered, and appreciative man. He now sees Britt-Marie as a suitable companion and someone who would be good company.

Emphatic personality - He talks all the way, just as Kent used to do when they were in the car. Kent always told her things whereas the policeman asks her questions.

He likes her- He turns around and his whole face lights up

Patience- He doesn't mention the fact the nearest cash machine is a twelve mile detour. The policeman doesn't tell her to hurry up.

Caring- He doesn't hold her arm, but he does position his arm a few inches under hers without touching her. So he can catch her in case she slips.

Keen to learn- in the back seat of the police car is a painter's easel and a jumble of brushes and canvases.

Lonely - It's not much fun cooking for yourself.

Prudent- He stops laughing when he notices that she doesn't much appreciate it.

Well-mannered- It is not appropriate to go inside a lady's home without invitation.

Appreciative- Well anyway, it is nice of you to take on the youngsters like you have.

WORD ARTIST

.....
I R A

We're in Sven's police car, which, to put it mildly, isn't exactly elegant. She has her feet half-buried among empty pizza boxes and paper bags from the burger place, reminiscent of quicksand you're afraid you'll sink into even the slightest movement. In the backseat is an artist's easel, remindful of the skeleton of a magical creature lurking and waiting, and a jumble of brushes resembles a strange bird with mesmerizing plumage, ruffled up in anticipation of something, and canvases, like the wings of fallen angels, catch the eye and tempt.

"Do you like paintings?" the policeman asks her, anticipating the start of a pleasant conversation about beauty, which, like the clear waters of a calm river, will carry them away to a quiet backwater, filled with the sensation of thoughts in unison, when he sees her looking at them.

"No".

He fidgets with embarrassment at the steering wheel. This short answer, after the bright hope that a point of contact that would melt the ice of stiffness, like a bolt from the blue, like a sobering icy shower, knocked the ground out from under his feet.

WORD ARTIST

CRISTY

Bank's house is a bit messy, and it's also an old house because it belonged to her father. I imagine the furniture is old and it smells "old" and dusty because Bank only recently moved back in (while it's being sold). Bank is almost blind, and although she tries to keep the house clean to sell it, she's not an organized person. I also imagine it smells a bit like dog because she has pets that live inside.



CONNECTION MAKER

FLAVIA

I can connect with Britt Marie in many ways, especially when I had to RESTART my life after moving to Texas. When you move to a new place, nobody knows who you are. I think you switch between surviving and building a new identity while creating new memories (visual, auditory and sensory).

I am learning a lot of things, from simple tasks, like how to ask something at the supermarket, to more complex tasks, such healthcare and taxes.

Like Britt Marie, I can be strict and fastidious. I'm very concerned with cleanliness, caring for my family, and making lists.

After moving to Texas I became shy, quiet, insecure, embarrassed, and sometimes depressed.

Considering these 3 chapters, I connect with chapter 13. After Britt Marie mops the pizzeria floor, she asks two men to wipe their feet outside before getting in. I recognize myself in that moment. I also feel uncomfortable when I mopped the floor and my children or Puff or Fabio step on it while it is still wet. Also if they come from outside, I always ask them to take their shoes off before entering the house.

CONNECTION MAKER

ESMERALDA

I have often remembered the town where I was born while reading the story of Britt-Marie. I can compare many things, such as the fact that it feels desolate, there is a lot of dust, and there are barely any services. The main entertainment in town is soccer. There are only two small grocery stores, and you can never find what you need. You want to cook something, but the ingredients just aren't there. The vegetables are always dry and bruised. Sometimes it feels as if I've been transported to Borg, where Britt-Marie works at the recreation center.

Just like in Borg, where there is only one pizzeria, in my town there is also very little variety. However, at least in my town there is a small taco place that opens on Fridays. It's something people look forward to, and in its own simple way, it brings a bit of life and flavor to the community.

Many parts of the story also remind me of some of my relatives. For example, when Britt-Marie gets upset because people walk in with muddy, dirty shoes — that is just like my sister. She spends all day sweeping, mopping, and cleaning the house. At least Britt-Marie doesn't have to cook all day long. My sister, on the other hand, cooks and cooks constantly. In fact, her meals are quite delicious.