

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 15 -17

4 March 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

FLAVIA

Chapter 15: It's dark outside. Britt Marie locks the recreation center and walks alone in the middle of the road towards a bed and a balcony that are not her own. Suddenly, she hears someone yelling and a car honking. Fredrik is shouting furiously because he almost ran her over. She remains still until another voice interrupts Fredrik. Sami and Psycho step in to defend her. Fredrick then drives away in his BMW.

The next day, Omar and Vega knock on Britt Marie's door and invite her to have a dinner with them. They also ask if she wants to be their coach. At first she refuses, but the children are so persistent that she accepts.

Chapter 16: Britt Marie goes to dinner and brings cigarettes instead of flowers. The food is ready exactly at six! Britt Marie asks Omar and Vega about their parents and about who takes care of them. They tell her that their mom drives a truck abroad and that their dad "cleared off." After dinner, Britt Marie cleans the kitchen while Sami goes to smoke on the balcony. Britt Marie tells Sami that he has a very nice cutlery drawer. Then, Sami drives them all to the parking area for practice session.

Britt Marie holds up her list, calls the children's names to do the register, and distributes handwritten notes to them, asking for their parents' signatures. The children fight. Britt Marie asks Sami what she is supposed to do, and he explains an idiot exercise, which involves running between the soft drink cans.

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

FLAVIA

Chapter 17: Bank walks across the parking area with her stick and her white dog in the middle of a training session. Omar elbows Toad and asks if he thinks Bank has superpowers. He then encourages Toad to throw the soccer ball at her head.

Britt Marie defends Toad saying it was an accident and believes it was marvelous, not that he Bank but that he hit anything at all! Banks leaves the parking area in a hailstorm of bad words. From the pizzeria, Somebody breaks the silence. The training session is over. Somebody thanks Britt Marie for cleaning the pizzeria the previous night. Returning home after washing, drying and getting the jerseys ready for the next day, Britt Marie recognizes Pirate at the bus stop. He asks her to go with him to get his father's signature. After almost an hour, the bus stops in front of an enormous white building, a prison.

DEEP THINKER

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FLAVIA

1. Do you think Britt Marie could be a good soccer coach? Why or why not?
2. Which character do you think seems most similar to Britt-Marie? What evidences shows that similarity?
3. What do you think explains Britt Marie different reaction when Toad hits Bank in the head with the ball compared to when Vega (or the kids) hits her with the ball when she first arrived in Borg?

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

ESMERALDA

One night, Britt-Marie takes a large amount of money from her handbag, wraps it in toilet paper, and hides it under a door of the pizzeria. Then she begins walking along the road that leads out of town.

Suddenly, a truck approaches from behind. Frightened, she quickly runs to the other side of the road. A car honks loudly, and someone shouts at her. It is Fredrick in his BMW. He yells angrily, saying he almost killed her. Then Sami and Psycho appear and warn him to leave her alone. Fredrick drives away. Despite their attempts to help her, she cannot stop judging them by their appearance, and she feels deeply afraid of them, however she hides her fear and when she moves a little farther away, she lets out a deep sigh.

The next morning, she wakes up late and almost falls when she realizes the sun is already up. Vega and Omar are knocking at her door. They invite her to dinner and ask her to become the new coach of their team. She feels nervous and makes excuses, but she eventually agrees.

When she arrives to take a dinner at Sami's house, she brings cigarettes instead of flowers, because there is no florist in Borg. Later, she drives the children to practice. She reads their names from a list and gives them permission slips for their parents to sign. Even though she does not really know how to coach, she tries her best.

The next day, Omar and Tod plan to hit Bank with the ball. Bank gets upset, but Britt-Marie does not get angry, and everyone ends up laughing. Slowly, she and the children begin to understand each other, sharing new adventures and finding happiness together.

DEEP THINKER

YULIANNA

1. Why does Britt-Marie begin to take responsibility for the children's football team even though she knows nothing about football?
2. Who needs whom more — Britt-Marie or the children? Why?
3. Why do you think the children trust Britt-Marie, even though she is different from them?

VOCABULARY BUILDER

MARIA

Encapsulated (verb)

“But in Borg life is encapsulated once darkness falls.” (p 126)

Definition: Encapsulated means to express or show the most important parts of something in a short, clear way.

Definition: Enclose (something) in or as if in a capsule.

Example: “The material is toxic and must be encapsulated”.

Example: “I like to take the pills in capsule form that the doctor prescribes”.



Stutters (verb)

“Frederick stutters indecipherably”. (p128)

Definition: talk with continued involuntary repetition of sounds, especially initial consonants.

Example: “The child was stuttering in fright”



VOCABULARY BUILDER

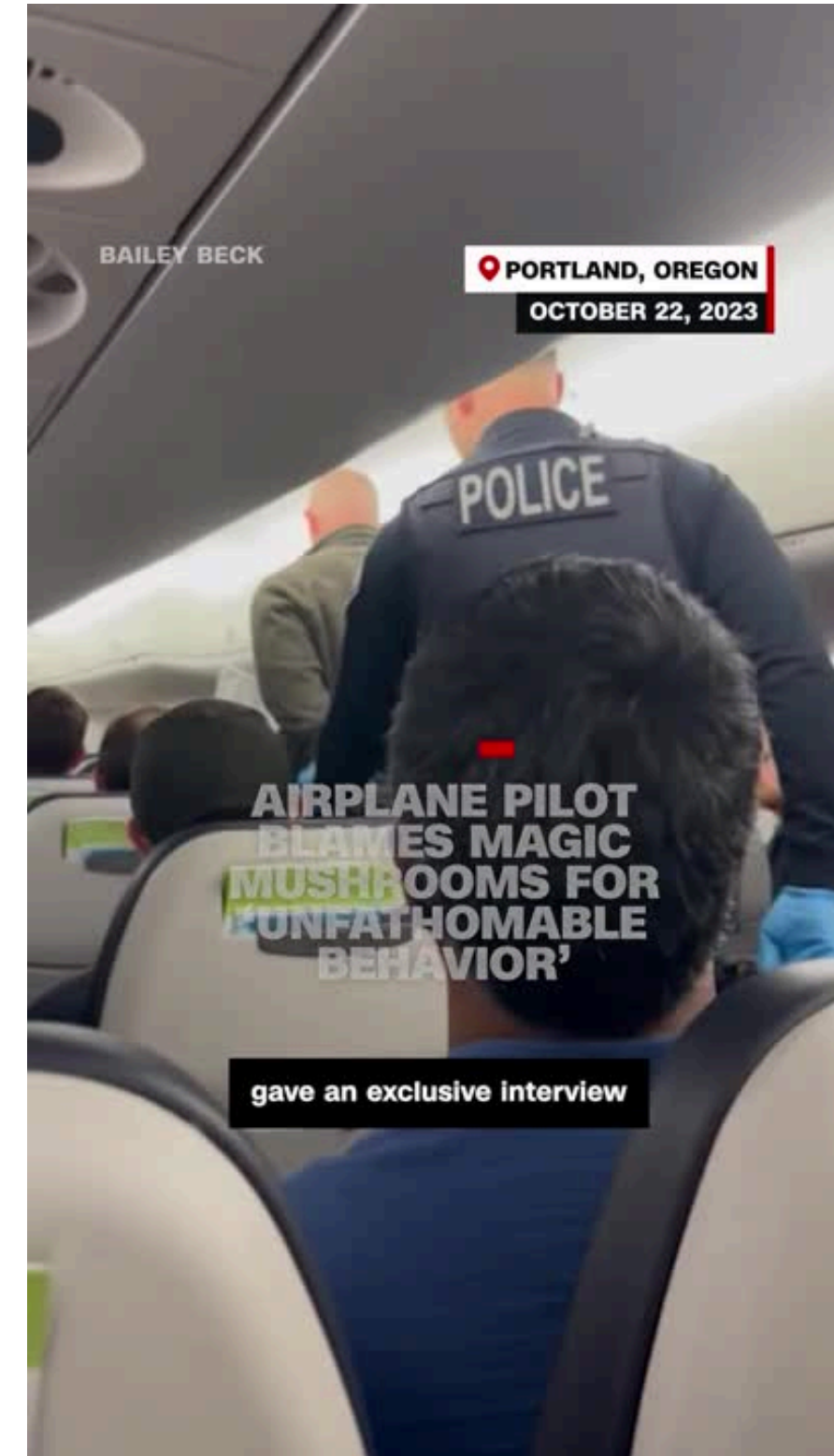
MARIA

Unfathomable (adj)

“Children are unfathomable that way”. (p137)

Definition: Unfathomable means impossible to understand, comprehend, or measure.

Example: His behavior is completely unfathomable.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

MARIA

Clatters (noun)

“Sami stands up and clatters demonstratively with the plates in the sink”. (p 138)

Definition: A clatter is a loud, rattling, or banging noise, typically caused by hard objects (like metal or dishes) striking together rapidly.

Example: “The child threw his plate on the floor and it was a very loud sound”.



Bonus Challenge: “I used the word “clatters” One day we were in the restaurant and we heard the waiter drop the plates, and there was a very loud sound”.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

MARIA

Scrupulous (adjective)

“Britt-Marie is scrupulous about telling him that throughout the whole bus journey”. P149

Definition: Scrupulous means very careful to do things properly and correctly.

Example: Some people are very careful and precise when doing their work.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

LILY S.

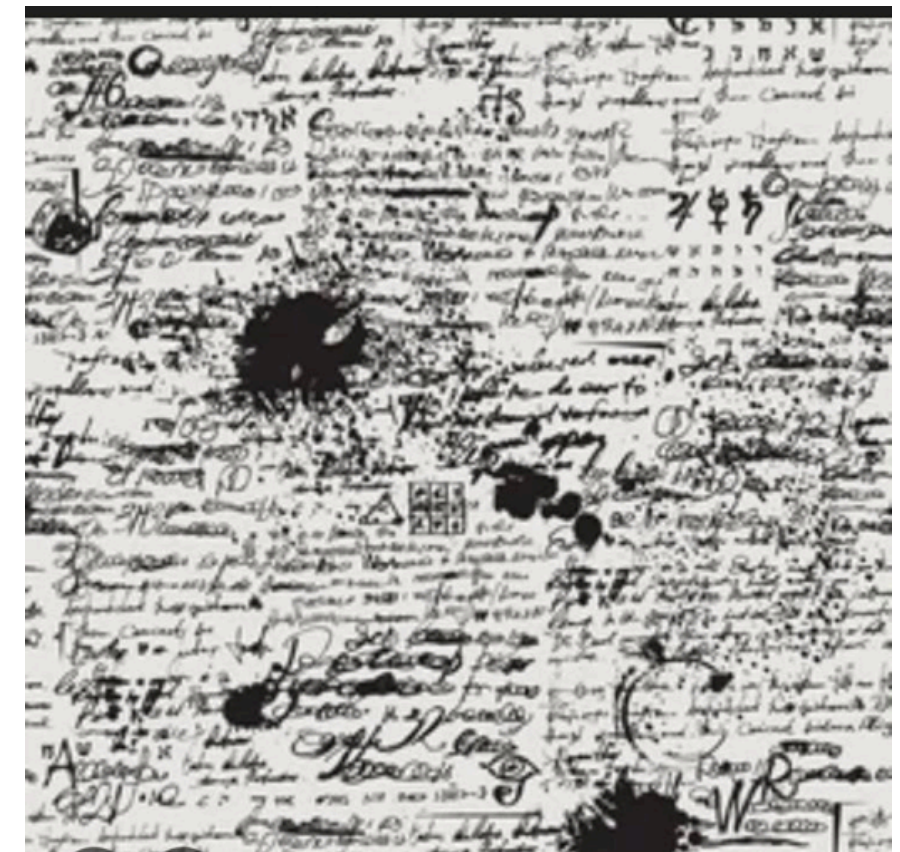
1. HOWLING : Noun, A long loud emotional, sad cry or wailing sound.

- Her coat is wet and dirty, and there is a howling in her ears. Pag.127
- It's a full moon and wolves are howling. (verb)
- I heard the howling of the wolves last night. (noun)



2. INDECIPHERABLY: Adverb. Describing the manner of being impossible to read, decode, or understand. It refers to actions like writing or speaking in an unclear, illegible or incomprehensive way.

- Fredrick stutters indecipherably, Sami says nothing. Pag.128
- The instructions were indecipherably written. (adverb)
- He spoke so fast, it was indecipherable. (adjective)

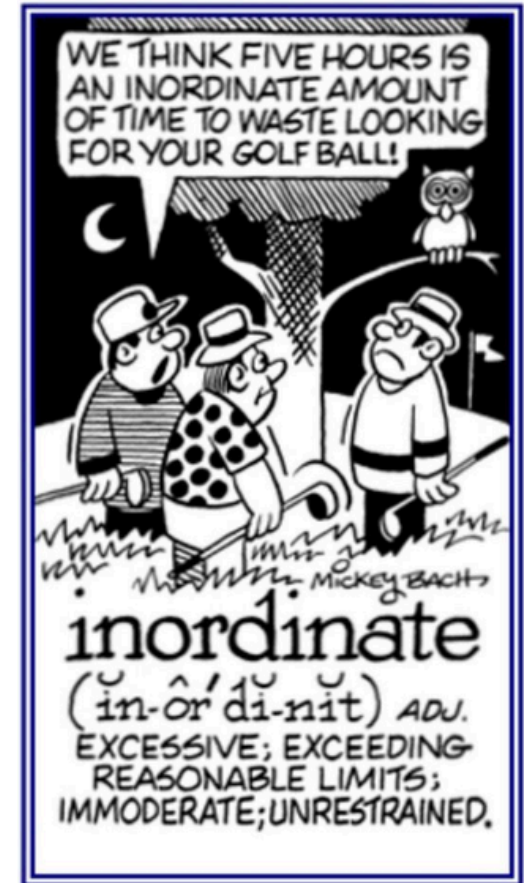


VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

LILY S.

3.INORDINATE: Adj. Unusually or disproportionately large; excessive. Unreasonable. Exaggerated.

- She finds herself spending an inordinate amount of time thinking about sushi and how you make it. Pag.130
- Getting his divorce had taken an inordinate amount of time.



4.UNFATHOMABLE: Adj. Something Impossible to understand, comprehend or measure. Incomprehensible. Difficult to understand.

- Children are unfathomable that way. Pag.137
- I don't understand the unfathomable behavior of my friends last night at the party.
- My friend's behavior at the party last night was unfathomable. I simply don't understand why they acted like that.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

LILY S.

5. MERELY: Adverb. Use to emphasize that something is small, unimportant, or simple. Not better, more important, or more exciting. Only, just, simply. Or nothing more than. Sometimes downplays the importance of something.

-She is not blind. She merely has impaired vision. Pag. 145

-I merely wanted to say I love you.

Synonyms: only, just, solely, simply



6. OBLITERATE: Verb. Remove completely from recognition or memory. To remove all signs of something, destroy. Delete, wipe out, erase.

• But then Omar utters those golden words that have the magical power to obliterate every child's self-restraint anywhere in the world. Pag. 145.

• The earthquake obliterated the small town in Italy



SOUND SPOTTER

LISA

1. Considerably

IPA: kən'sɪdərəbli | kuhn-SID-uh-ruh-blee

Book: "... *but she gets out a considerably larger than reasonable amount of money from her handbag...*" (page 127)

Pronunciation: The pronunciation is so fast that I can barely hear the "...dera..." part.

Meaning: a large amount

My own sentence: Flight prices increase considerably during summer break.

2. Unfathomable

IPA: ʌn'fæðəməbəl | uhn-FADH-uh-muh-buhl

Book: "Children are unfathomable that way." (page 137)

Pronunciation: The TH sound doesn't exist in my native language.

Meaning: impossible to understand or measure; mysterious

My own sentence: The beginning of the book was unfathomable to me.

The size of the universe is unfathomable to me.

SOUND SPOTTER

LISA

3. Obliterate

IPA: ə'blɪtəreɪt | uh-BLIT-uh-rayt

Book: “But then Omar utters those golden words that have the magical power to obliterate every child’s self-restraint anywhere in the world.” (page 145)

Pronunciation: When you speak this word fast seems like the letter combinations don’t match the sound.

Meaning: to destroy completely

My own sentence: She wants to obliterate the old document because it brings back horrible memories from her past.

4. Thoroughly

IPA: 'θɜːrəli•'θʌrəli | THUR-uh-lee

Book: “Britt-Marie pauses and looks thoroughly offended.” (page 132)

Pronunciation: The TH sound doesn’t exist in my native language.

Meaning: completely and absolutely

My own sentence: I was thoroughly exhausted after cleaning my house.

SOUND SPOTTER

LISA

5. Repeatedly

IPA: /rɪˈpiːtɪdli/ | ri-PEE-tid-lee

Book: “Britt-Marie stays in the doorway, keeping her hands clasped together while opening and closing her mouth repeatedly...”. (page 133)

Pronunciation: The pronunciation is fast that it is hard to connect the “...tedly...” part.

Meaning: many times

My own sentence: Listening to a new word repeatedly helps me to memorize the pronunciation.

BONUS

I used the word “**repeatedly**” when I was talking to my son about needing to practice his clarinet a lot.

SOUND SPOTTER

CRISTY

Indecipherably

/,ɪndə'sɪf(ə)rəb(ə)l

Book (113 kindle) Frederick stutters

indecipherably

Meaning: not able to be read or understood

Me: My oldest kid always writes

indecipherably

Shriek

SHrēk

Book (116 kindle) Then Omar shrieks, Ouch!

Meaning: expression of terror, pain or

excitement

Me: I shrieked at the basketball game.

Unfathomable

,ən'fɑTH(ə)məb(ə)l/

Book (122 kindle) Children are unfathomable that way

Meaning: incapable of being fully explored or understood

Me: I love the ocean because it is unfathomable.

Ludicrous

'lōdəkɹəs

Book (kindle 133) It's obviously wholly

ludicrous

Meaning: so foolish

Me: It's ludicrous to me when the people in my city ask if I miss the USA because of course I do!

CHARACTER ANALYZER

MARIANA

CHARACTER ANALYZER — SAMI

Traits: Responsibility, Loyalty, Protective, Growing Trust

Definition:

- 1- Responsibility means helping and taking care of problems.
- 2- Loyalty means staying with and supporting your friends.
- 3- Protective means wanting others to be safe.
- 3- Trust means believing someone cares and wants to help.

The evidence:

In chapters 15–17, Sami acts very mature for his age. He takes care of the younger kids, which shows responsibility. He is a young man who works hard and sacrifices his own needs to protect and support his siblings, Vega and Omar. He stays loyal to his friends and continues supporting the team even when life in Borg is difficult. Sami is also protective because he wants everyone to feel safe and included. During these chapters, he starts to trust Britt-Marie more because he sees that she truly cares about the children and wants to help them succeed.

CHARACTER ANALYZER

LILY L.

Protective — means caring deeply about others and wanting to keep them safe from harm.

Sami, the oldest brother, shows his protective nature through his quiet actions. Even though he is still young, he behaves like someone much older. Life has forced him to grow up quickly. Instead of complaining about his own problems, he focuses on helping Vega and Omar. When difficulties happen around the football team and in the community, Sami stays calm. He thinks carefully before acting and always considers what is best for his brother and sister.

Britt-Marie, who is usually strict and very serious about order, feels sympathy for Sami. This is important because Britt-Marie does not easily show emotion. She sees how much responsibility he carries at such a young age.

One touching example is the scene with the kitchen drawer filled with spoons, forks, and knives, which captures her heart. Sami carefully organizes the drawer and pays attention to small details in the home. This may seem like a simple action, but it has deeper meaning. In a life that feels unstable, organizing the drawer gives him a sense of control. By creating order in small things, he tries to make life feel safer and calmer for his family. This is not typical behavior for a child — it is something a parent might do.

The children also act like a strong and loving team. Even though they have serious problems with their father, they stay united. Their difficult situation could separate them, but instead it brings them closer. They clearly love their mother and protect one another emotionally. Sami's protective nature is part of this strong family bond. He is not only protecting them as a brother, but also helping to hold the family together.

Through these actions, Sami shows quiet strength, kindness, and courage. His love is shown in small, careful actions that make a big difference.

WORD ARTIST

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BANU

Where and when : A dark road in Borg, at night in January, after Britt-Marie leaves the recreation center alone.

I stand alone when darkness collapses around me. The truck roars behind me ,too close, too fast ,and suddenly I'm thrown back in time, hearing my mother scream, tasting Ingrid's name on my lips a thousand times in a single second.

Mud pelts my body like stones; my heart can't tell if it's been run over or not. Rain-soaked and trembling, I'm blinded by headlights as Fredrik emerges, shouting, and his rage makes me feel invisible and too visible all at once.

Then, a cold voice slices through the night: "Problem?" Sami appears from the shadows like a spirit of violence, and the danger shifts away from me. I smell fear and exhaust and rain, and even though terror still squeezes my chest, something inside me softens when he calls me "Coach." In this moment of darkness, someone sees me. Someone steps forward. For the first time in forever, I am not completely alone.

WORD ARTIST

MONICA

Have you ever being at a Recreation Center-Pizzeria-Clinic-Grocery store In a small town?

In architecture, this is often called adaptive reuse, (repurposing an existing building for another function). This building has been "hacked" by the local residents to satisfy a necessity. It doesn't need to look like a pizzeria because the people inside aren't there for the "brand"—they are there for the utility and social connection.

On the inside, you will find a spacious place, where time seems to stand still. It is outdated and dirty, “an organized chaos” where the odor fluctuates between pizza, alcohol, and sweaty jerseys, depending on the time of day.

It is the kind of place you do not feel attracted to: a mysterious space and a group of people with a shadowy history to tell. You'll find yourself wondering exactly when this decay became the “new normal.”

Somewhere Britt Marie’s “small changes” aren’t just about cleaning; they also represent a positive impact that she is bringing to the community.



CONNECTION MAKER

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I R A

“Dino says almost nothing, but he laughs the whole time. Britt-Marie doesn't understand what he's laughing at. He and Omar don't even need to say anything before they burst out laughing, all they have to do is look at each other. Children are unfathomable that way.”

Reading this, I was transported back to my school years, when my friend Tanya and I would burst into uncontrollable, light, ringing laughter at the mere sight of each other in class, which would get us kicked out from class, and despite this, we continued to roar with laughter in the hallway, which sometimes led to us being thrown out of the school building. In fact, I really miss this incomprehensible lightness, this causeless joy, this ringing laughter with a friend for no apparent reason, simply from a single, radiant glance at her. It's as if the bubbles inside you, rising upward, make you weightless, hovering above the earth, barely touching it, capable of anything with boundless, ethereal finesse, and nothing—not responsibility, not anxiety, not fear—could weigh you down like shackles.

But this particular song is new for her; a young man is singing in a cracked voice about how you can either be "someone" or "no one at all".

We can be "someone," whoever we want to be, but the main thing is not to make a mistake in who we want to be, because this can lead us to the fact that we can turn into "no one at all".

CONNECTION MAKER

CRISTY

When Britt Marie started coaching the football team and described the field, I was reminded of the fields at the community center in my city. It's a public place, but my city is like a desert. The soccer fields are dirt, the goalposts don't have nets, and the benches for watching the game don't have a roof, so they get incredibly hot in the city's sun. The entrance fee to this community center is 5 pesos per person (a quarter of a dollar). The children who train and play there don't have many financial resources, but many times the best players have come from there because they know how to overcome any adversity, both on and off the field.

