

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 18 - 20

25 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
	11 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB							
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
8	25 Mar	Ch 18-20	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
9	1 Apr	Ch 21-23	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
10	8 Apr	Ch 24-26	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
11	15 Apr	Ch 27-29	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
12	22 Apr	Ch 30-32	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
13	29 Apr	Ch 33-34	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
14	6 May	Ch 35-36	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
15	13 May	Ch 37	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
16	20 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
	11 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB							
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
8	25 Mar	Ch 18-20	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
9	1 Apr	Ch 21-23	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
10	8 Apr	Ch 24-26	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
11	15 Apr	Ch 27-29	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
12	22 Apr	Ch 30-32	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
13	29 Apr	Ch 33-34	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
14	6 May	Ch 35-36	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
15	13 May	Ch 37	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
16	20 May	Ch 38	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

IRA

Brit-Marie learns a lot about Pirate, about his parents, and about acquiring his nickname. She discovers that neither Ben's father nor Sami, the older brother of Vega and Omar, are criminals at all, even though Sami ended up in the company of the "dangerous lunatic," Psycho; after all, it is impossible to turn your back on a man who once carried your siblings on his back, helping you through your darkest times. Brit-Marie finds the courage to ask Sven about his personal life. Sven, in turn, shows Brit-Marie a mesmerizing view of Borg and gives her one of his drawings. He attempts to invite her out to a restaurant, but the "sensible part" of her retreats into the house and closes the door...

Sitting on her balcony with Sven's drawing in her hands, Brit-Marie reflects on how, around Kent and his children, she never once felt like the "primary" woman, and yet, judging by this far-from-perfect drawing, he sees her. Calling the young woman at the unemployment office, Brit-Marie leaves a message on the answering machine, something entirely out of character for her, regarding a rare instance where one of the children on the soccer team hits something he was aiming at. Brit-Marie asks Bank for advice on soccer and receives it. She takes a bold step and, entirely on her own, assembles a piece of IKEA furniture right there in the pizzeria. Ben's mother brings the signed document and, as a token of appreciation, presents Brit-Marie with a bottle of Faxin. During practice, the goalkeeper, Toad, utters the phrase "let's turn this thing around," and Sami explains its origin to Brit-Marie. At the end of this remarkable day for Brit-Marie, she closes her eyes and summons all the energy she has in order to blurt out to Sven, "I have dinner at six."

Britt-Marie sits in the town hospital with a bump on her head and two broken fingers. This is one of the absolute worst days of her life. It had all started so promisingly: Britt-Marie had slept through the entire night for the first time since arriving in Borg; she had cleaned Bank's kitchen; she had then headed to the pizzeria to see Somebody, where she learned a lot about Bank and how she had lost her sight, about Somebody and how she had ended up in a wheelchair, about the national team, and about why the team jerseys were yellow. She continued her enthusiastic day with a bus trip into the town to visit a tanning salon, hoping to erase the white mark on her finger left behind by her wedding ring, and it was there that the incident occurred, leading to such catastrophic consequences that her dinner with Sven never took place.

DEEP THINKER

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I R A

1. Do you think Kent ever loved Britt-Marie?
2. Why did it become important for Britt-Marie to remove the white mark on her finger?
3. Why did Bank leave the town?

60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

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CRISTY

She wonders what Kent might be doing right now and what he would think of her if he knew where she was—specifically, that she is helping Ben see his father. She defends Sami to Sven, arguing that he isn't a gangster because he is far too organized; Sven then shares the story of how Sami and his friend used to help ensure that Omar and Vega wouldn't see their father when he was drunk. Sven takes her to a spot overlooking the entire city and invites her out to dinner.

At the Borg household, Britt-Marie asks Bank if she knows anything about soccer—judging by the photos on display—but Bank replies that she doesn't; she claims the team is terrible and that there is nothing she can do to improve it. Ben's mother thanks her for her help and gives her Faxin as a gift. Sami tells her that he loves soccer because he was born in 1994, the year the World Cup was held in the USA.

She accepts Sven's invitation to go out to dinner the following day. The next day turns out to be Britt-Marie's worst day yet: she suffers a blow to the head and breaks two fingers. She sends a letter to Kent explaining how to open the balcony door and where to find the Faxin. Someone tells her the story of Bank—a woman who loved soccer and traveled to various countries until she returned home following her father's death and due to issues with her eyesight. Ben's mother tends to her injuries, and when Sven arrives, she asks him to take her home.

DEEP THINKER

ESMERALDA

Why did it take Britt-Marie so long to assemble the entire piece of IKEA furniture?"

How did Ben's mother thank Britt-Marie for everything she did for Ben?

Why did Britt-Marie send so many mails to Kent?

Why do they think Bank hates soccer?

VOCABULARY BUILDER

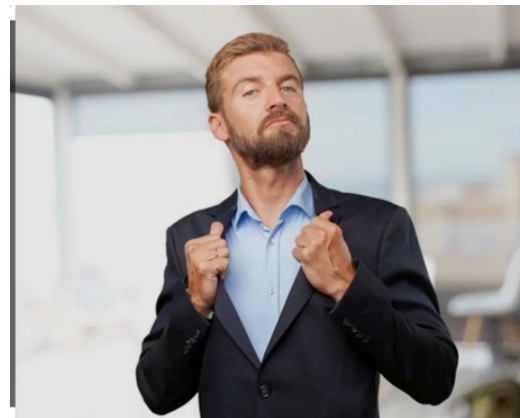
FLAVIA

SWAGGER /'swægər/ Noun

Book: "There's a certain swagger about their disregard for the police." p-154

Definition: Extremely proud, confident or arrogance manner. When someone likes to show up. Could be in positive or negative way.

Example: Her swagger didn't disappear even though the team lost the competition.

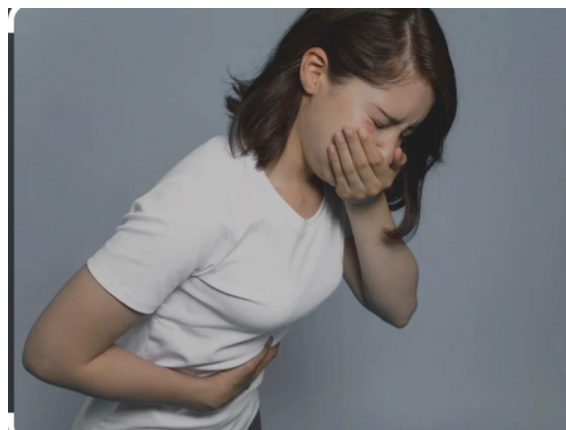


QUEASINESS /'kwi:zi.nəs/ KWEE-zee-nuhs Noun

Book: "Britt Marie peers down over the edge until she feels a queasiness in her stomach." p-156

Definition: It's a sensation of nausea or urge to vomit

Example: I feel a queasiness every time I sit in the back seat of a car.

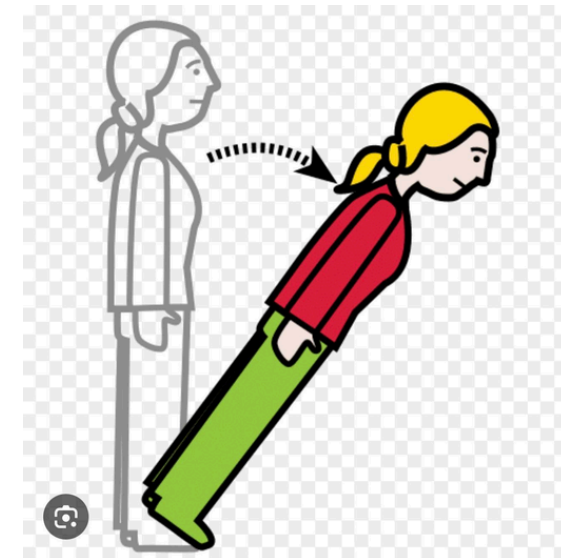


LEANS /li:ns/ Verb (to lean)

Book: "Bank leans towards the photo until her nose is almost touching the glass." p-160

Definition: To incline or bend from a vertical position.

Example: She leaned out of the window to see who was knocking on the door.

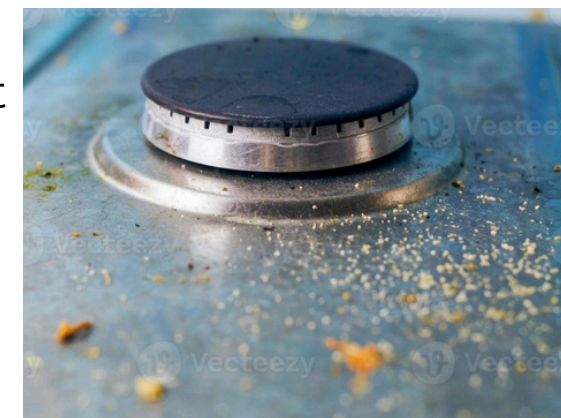


SPATTERED /'spæt.ərd/ Verb (to spatter)

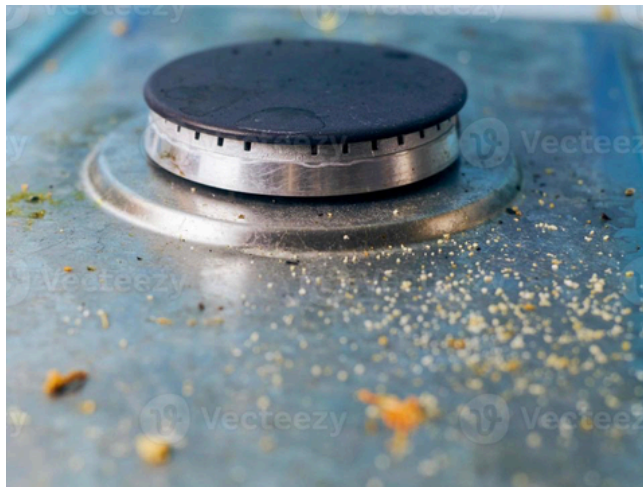
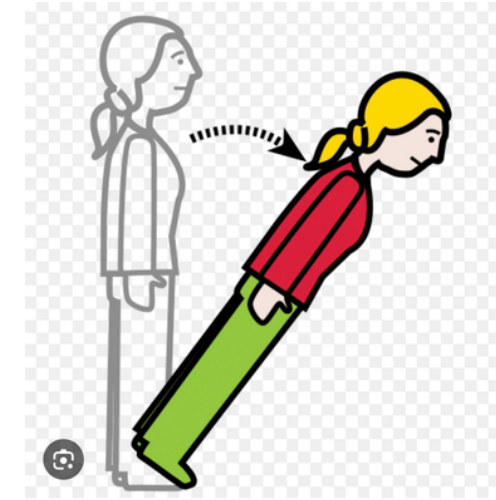
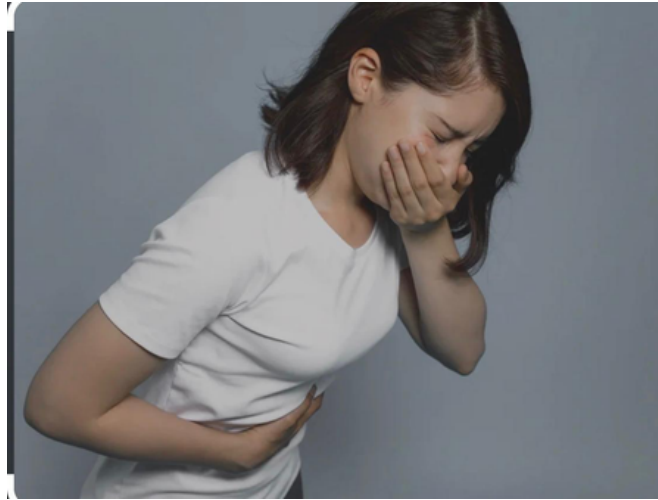
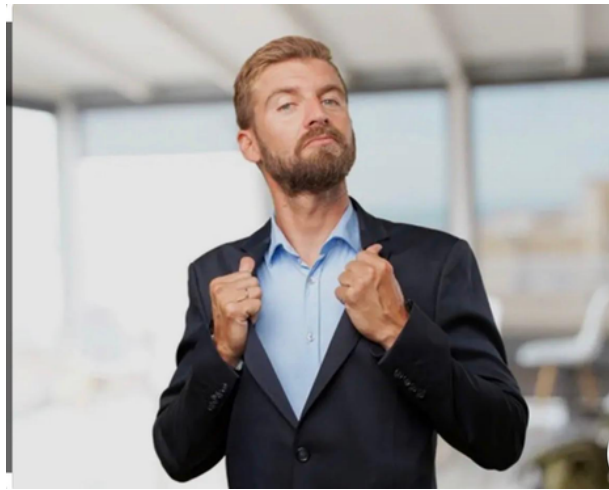
Book: "I'm aware of who you are," says Britt Marie guardedly, as if preparing to be spattered with mud again by passing truck." p-162

Definition: To splash tiny drops of liquid, grease, mud

Example: When you fry bacon the grease spatters everywhere



sp|atter-- bigger drops, bigger messes



VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

FLAVIA

GUFFAWS /gə'fɔ:z/ Verb (to guffaw)

Book: "Sami guffaws." p-163

Definition: A loud laugh

Example: He guffawed loudly after he stumbled and fell down on the floor.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

YULIANNA

Impaired /ɪm'peɪrd/ adj.

Book: "I was under the impression you had impaired vision." P.159

Dictionary: not as good as before, Syn: broken.

In your own words: it is not working normally or it is weaker than it should be.

My example: Sometimes when I don't sleep well, I feel impaired.



Assembled /ə'sembəld/ verb.

Book: "Omar comes in behind her, and when he sees Britt -Marie's newly assembled balcony furniture, immediately tries to sell her some furniture polish." P.161

Dictionary: to put all the parts of something together

In your own words: brought people or things together

My example: My family assembled in the kitchen for dinner.



Pep /pɛp/ noun

Book: "A pep talk?" p.163

Dictionary: physical energy

In your own words: having energy or being full of life

My example: I need some pep in my step this morning, so I drank a cup of tea to wake up. I need a pep talk this morning because I am tired.



Bemused /bɪ'mju:zd/ adj.

Book: "It 's ...national team", answered Somebody, looking bemused. P. 169

Dictionary: looking as if you are confused Syn.: bewildered

In your own words: not sure what is happening

My example: I was bemused when I saw the new software on my computer.



VOCABULARY BUILDER

YULIANNA

Consternation /kɒnstər'neɪʃən/ noun

Book: "Britt- Marie was annoyed by this, so she didn't ask anything else. Instead she suddenly blurted out, to her own consternation" p169.

Dictionary: a feeling of worry, shock, or fear

In your own words: a strong feeling of surprise and worry that makes you confused or upset

My example: I felt consternation when I forgot my homework.



"to her own consternation" is a natural, fixed phrase, which makes it a collocation. Here is a common pattern we use in English:

- to her surprise
- to his horror
- to their delight
- to everyone's amazement
- to her own consternation

These phrases function as prepositional phrases expressing the emotional reaction of the subject to what just happened. The word "own" adds a layer of meaning. It emphasizes that even Britt-Marie herself was caught off guard by what she blurted out, which is very true to her character.

SOUND SPOTTER

MARIA

Word: Pickpocketing

IPA: 'pɪk,pɒk.ɪ.tɪŋ / Phonetic: PICK / pock / et / ing.

Tip: The -ck- cluster in the middle can feel like a tongue-twister. Slow it down.

Definition: The act of stealing from someone's pockets or bag without their knowledge, typically in a crowd

From book: "Bloody gangsters," Kent always used to call them, the people who were responsible for things such as street violence, extortionate taxes, pick pocketing, graffiti in public toilets, and hotels where all the deck chairs were occupied when Kent came down to the pool." Page 150

Difficulty: I struggle with the letter CK

Bonus: She didn't notice the pickpocketing until she arrived at home.

Word: Apologetically

IPA: ə,pɒl.ə'dʒet.ɪ.kli / Phonetic: uh-pol-uh-JET-ik-lee

Tip: Six syllables is a lot. It helps to find the root first: apology → apologetic → apologetically.

Definition: In a manner that expresses regret or acknowledgment of fault or failure

From book: "Sven holds up his palm apologetically." Page 154

Difficulty: I struggle because I can't pronounce the letter G.

Example: The boy apologetically left the room.

SOUND SPOTTER

MARIA

Word: Queasiness

IPA: 'kwi:zi.nəs / Phonetic: KWEE-zee-ness

Tip: The qu- sounds like kw, not k alone. The -ness suffix is unstressed and quick.

Definition: A feeling of nausea or physical discomfort; a sense of unease or anxiety

From book: “Britt-Marie peers down over the edge until she feels the queasiness in her stomach.” Page 156

Difficulty: I struggle with this word because a new vocabulary.

Example: When I tried to clean my trashcan I was queasy.

Word: Systematically

IPA: ,sɪs.tə'mæt.i.kli / Phonetic: sis-tuh-MAT-ik-lee

Tip: Another long word that becomes manageable once you see the word “system” hiding inside it.

Definition: In a methodical, organized, and thorough manner according to a fixed plan or system

From book: “Then she moves around the room and taps systematically at all the photos, as if memorizing where they are.” Page 160

Example: You might systematically memorize every word in the dictionary starting with the letter A.

SOUND SPOTTER

MARIA

Word: Connoisseur

IPA: ˌkɒn.ə'sɜːr / Phonetic: kon-uh-SUR

Tip: The most deceptive spelling in the group. The -oi- and double -s- are silent traps. The final -eur sounds simply like -ur. The word is from French, which explains the unusual spelling.

Definition: An expert judge in matters of taste, especially in fine arts, food, wine, or other cultural pursuits

From book: "Britt-Marie is no connoisseur when it comes to solariums, and as a result she was possible not very familiar with the basic functions of the machine" Page 172

Difficulty: I can't say the end of the word "sieur."

Example: I love the views, but I am not a connoisseur to Skye in the mountains.

Bonus: Encouragingly

IPA: ɪn'kʌrɪdʒɪŋli / Phonetic: en-KUR-ij-ing-lee

Tip: Five syllables but very regular stress. If you know the word "encourage," you already know where the stress falls in the word "encouragingly."

Definition: In a way that gives hope, confidence, or support; in a manner that inspires someone to continue or persist.

Example: "I smiled encouragingly when my friend presented the Shark Tank"

CHARACTER ANALYZER

LISA

Character: Britt-Marie

Trait: **SUPPORTIVE**

What it means: Supportive describes someone who is helpful, caring, encouraging, and understanding about someone or something.

Evidence from the Text:

Britt Marie remembers that when she was married to Kent, she never had a plan for her own life. She believes that being faithful and in love would be enough to have a beautiful life. This shows us how she is a caring and supportive wife at home.

Britt Marie is sitting in a waiting room in the prison, next to Pirate, holding his hands to support him, even though she is worried about being in a place full of gangsters and criminals.

She also defends Sami, saying he is not a gangster just because he keeps bad company. She doesn't believe that a person who has a spectacularly well-organized cutlery drawer is a criminal. This indicates to us that Britt Marie has a good understanding of Sami, and does not judge him.

When Ben's mother comes to the recreation center just to thank Britt Marie for seeing Ben and caring about him, she says that not many adults would do that. Then Ben gives Britt Marie Faxin as a gift because he knows it's something she loves. This shows that they appreciate Britt Marie for being supportive of Ben.

Before the kids start their soccer practice, they wait for Britt Marie to give them a pep talk and toss the ball to them. Then she tries to think of something motivating to say and, in her awkward way, tells them: "Try not to get too dirty", which reflects her genuine care for the children.

CHARACTER ANALYZER

MONICA

Banks was a happy go lucky girl that loves playing soccer more than anything in her life.

Together, Bank and her father created a bond as coach and player, they share a journey where she developed into a talented athlete and eventually joined the national soccer team. However, her professional aspirations were cut short due to the loss of her eyesight.

Determined to leave soccer behind, she left Borg and traveled to different places before she was no longer able to see it.

Bank returned to Borg for her father's funeral and to sell his home. No longer passionate about soccer, she was simply going through the motions of life with a bitter outlook.

Bank maintains a dismissive attitude toward Britt Marie's attempts to coach the children's recreation center team. Her drinking is also tied to this behavior, as she uses it to numb the frustration of her disability.

From the Book

In the old days, Bank loved soccer. Love more than life.

Why is the jersey yellow? I was under the impression that soccer jerseys in Borg are white. National team.

She was in London, Lisbon, Paris. Maybe Bank wants to see the world before completely blind.

You want some good advice? That team can't play. "Nothing you do will make any difference".

WORD ARTIST

MARIANA

Scene Description: Recreation Center

I am in the Recreation Center in Borg. The building is old and quiet, with worn walls and simple furniture, but it feels warm and welcoming. The walls are full of nostalgic memories, with photos of soccer teams and moments from the past.

I see Britt-Marie carefully cleaning the room from top to bottom. She straightens the pictures of soccer balls on the walls, making sure everything is perfectly organized.

I smell strong cleaning products in the air. The room is very quiet, and I only hear the soft sounds of cleaning echoing through the large space.

Even though the building is old, I can imagine children playing soccer here, laughing and forgetting their problems for a while. The place feels calm and meaningful, like an important part of the town where people come together. For Britt-Marie, it is also a place where she feels useful and part of something important.

CONNECTION MAKER

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BANU

Borg is a dying town. People are leaving, houses have "For Sale" signs, businesses are closing. Sven's wife left because she said Borg was "a place where you came to die, not live." But Ben's mother says there's "another Borg" to the people who haven't given up yet. (chapters 18-20)

When I read about Borg in chapters 18-20, I immediately thought of Hatay, Turkey, after the devastating earthquake on February 6, 2023

Nearly one year after the earthquake, I visited Hatay and saw something remarkably similar: the city was almost abandoned, with most survivors having left, but a few people were still there, trying to continue their lives despite the trauma and destruction.

In both places, most people choose to leave, but some refuse to give up. I saw that same resilience in Hatay, where a few survivors stayed, not only because the city had a future, but also because they refused to let hope die completely. This connection shows that whether a place dies slowly from economic collapse like Borg, or suddenly from natural disaster like Hatay, the human response is universal: some people flee to survive, while others stay to rebuild, and both choices require courage.

Through Britt-Marie's journey in Borg and my experience witnessing Hatay's aftermath, both stories prove that a place is alive as long as someone still believes it's worth saving.

CONNECTION MAKER

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MONICA

Some recreational hockey programs have coaches, but when there aren't enough, volunteer parents usually take over. In 2016, our son Aaron, who was 13 yrs old joined the Americans team in Allen, Texas. My husband, along with another parents, became the coaches.

At this level, the goal is to let them play, develop their skills during practice, and enjoy the game as much as possible. Managing competitiveness is challenging because skill levels vary so much. To help the team thrive, you have to focus on balancing the players.

My husband implemented dry-land training (off-ice) to help the boys build strength. He gave every player the opportunity to play special plays like power plays and penalty kills. He wanted them to understand the speed of the game, learn to trust themselves, and most importantly trust their teammates. Implementing these strategies significantly improve, the team's endurance and cohesion.

The season culminated in a championship victory, after a successful playoff run.

