

***My Friends* by Fredrik Backman**

This reading group guide for MY FRIENDS includes an introduction, discussion questions, and ideas for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

Introduction

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Fredrik Backman returns with an unforgettably funny, deeply moving tale of four teenagers whose friendship creates a bond so powerful that it changes a complete stranger's life twenty-five years later.

Topics & Questions for Discussion

1. *My Friends* deals intimately with themes of friendship and loyalty, uniting characters who seem, from the outside, to be more different than alike. What is it that brings them together, and what does that say to you about the enduring power of human connection?
2. Was there a particular character that you identified with more than the others? Why?
3. The artist's painting of the sea plays a pivotal role in the book, as it inspired the group of friends—and later Louisa—toward a common goal. Does art play a different role in the lives of young people than it does in adults? Do you think the painting's significance changes as the friends grow older?
4. What do you think the pier in the painting might symbolize?
5. The setting of the story, a town by the sea, influences the atmosphere and character dynamics. How did the setting impact your experience of reading the book?
6. While being at times delightfully funny and lighthearted, *My Friends* also explores serious topics of loss, grief, and trauma. How did these topics, present from the very beginning, change your perspective of the individual characters as you got to know them?
7. In Chapter 28, Louisa says that her friend Fish read in a book that in Heaven you could choose a moment in life when you felt really good, and then you got to feel like that for all eternity. What would that moment be for you, and what does it say about Fish and Louisa that they are entranced by this idea?
8. Joar's character is perhaps the one that changes the most over the course of the book. Were you surprised to meet him in the latter half of the book? Consider the ways he was different and the ways he was the same.
9. Family dynamics and upbringing greatly influence the personalities, values, and choices of Ted, Joar, Ali, and the artist. Discuss the role of inherited trauma in the lives of these characters. What do they gain and/or lose because of these legacies?
10. The themes of redemption and second chances are present throughout the book. How do these second chances ultimately play out and how do they help to tie up the narrative and character arcs in the book?
11. Fredrik Backman often uses humor and wit to navigate through darker moments in his novels. Discuss some of your favorite moments of humor in *My Friends*. How did they impact your reading experience?
12. Ted, Joar, Ali, and the artist could be considered a "chosen family." How does the concept of home feature throughout the book? Do you think those ideas change as we get older?

13. In chapter 7, the artist thinks to himself, “You have to take [life] for granted. . . . That’s the only courageous thing a person can do.” What do you imagine he means by this?

14. When the artist is telling Ted about his meeting with Louisa in the alley, he says, “She’s one of us!” In what ways is Louisa similar to the artist and his group of childhood friends?

Enhance Your Book Club

1. **Painting Session:** Gather some supplies and have a painting or drawing session inspired by the painting, your favorite scenes, or the characters in the book.

2. **Museum Outing:** Visit a local museum or art gallery to discuss and explore the conversation between art and storytelling. Pick a piece of art and make up a backstory about it.

3. **Beach Day:** Organize a beach or waterside outing for your book club to accompany the discussion and pay particular reference to the setting of the book.