

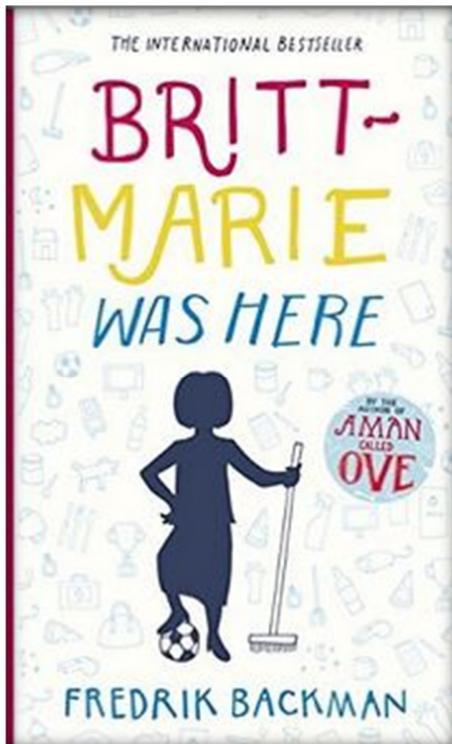


Helping you choose
your next book

LoveReading Reader reviews of **Britt-Marie Was Here** by Fredrik Backman



Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Sarah Harper

Her marriage is over, Britt Marie has a job for the first time in 40 years and is standing on her own two feet in Borg (the back-of-beyond) where nobody seems to follow any of her rules. This is not where she expected to be but life has a funny way of taking you by surprise and, although it appears unlikely, this might just be the best thing that ever happened to both Britt-Marie and the people of Borg.

I'm not new to Fredrik Backman, I'm a big fan of his work however nothing prepared me for how much I absolutely adored 'Britt-Marie Was Here'. There wasn't a single chapter, possibly not even a single page, which didn't make me snort or smile or chuckle or laugh

*out loud at least once. It was so funny and in the most subtle and unobtrusive way that I had a daft grin on my face for most of the book. But this is also a grown-up story about love, loss and discovering who we really are and as such it was touching, poignant and thought provoking too. It's not just the story or writing style, it's every little nuance of the people you meet which make this so special. The cast of characters are priceless, absolutely priceless and Britt-Marie herself is truly inspired. Her unintentional one-liners and interactions with the job-centre girl, the football-playing-kids and the rat are still making me smile now. This is a story with humour, depth and exquisite characters which have been expertly drawn together to form the perfect package. **If you have to read only one book this year, make it this one.***

Sue Broom

The heroine of Fredrik Backman's latest novel is a middle-aged woman who starts out with low self-esteem but firmly fixed views about the right way to do things. Finding herself unexpectedly living alone and friendless, she worries that no-one would notice if she wasn't there at all and starts looking for a job. The job she finds takes her to a small, dilapidated community, hit hard by the recession, its population and businesses shrunk almost to nothing. Not a promising place for a fresh start but, as she spends more time with the people there, Britt-Marie comes to understand what community really means and that she can have a place in it.

'I'm not ready for an unusual life', says Britt-Marie halfway through this novel. She thinks she is not ready to get to know a new person but by the end of the book perhaps she is. That could be the possible new man Sven, or the seemingly transformed previous man Kent, or by the end of the book more likely herself, altered in so many ways by her experiences living in Borg and coming to realise that all the choices she has ever made have been for the sake of someone else.

Realistic and endearing characters, jaunty dialogue and a cracking pace - all contribute to a heart-warming and entertaining tale, not too different in spirit from his first novel 'A Man Called Ove'. Established Backman fans will be delighted with it and I'm sure readers new to his work will be seeking out his back catalogue.

Catherine Bryce

A highly comical novel about how Britt-Marie copes with life and the ups and downs she faces.

This is one book whose character we can all relate to someone we know. Britt-Marie's efforts to cope with life after becoming a widow and unemployed living in a small town in the back of beyond had me laughing on many occasions.

Britt-Marie will change for no-one or nothing and is always convinced that she is right. As the reader goes through the story you begin to understand the reasons for her being as she is and one can sympathise with her at times. Underneath Britt-Marie is a caring female but she needs the right time and place for this to come to the surface. Her obsession with bicarbonate of soda will forever remain with me!!

This is a really lovely story and as the reader progresses into the book it becomes more enjoyable and it is certainly a book worth

reading. *A little different in story line but one in which the reader won't be disappointed.*

Maz Tucker

A strange book, but a very good one, as the story unfolds, you learn to love Britt Marie's funny ways and you end up cheering for her and the kids she befriends. Great Story. *The Characters are really well written and there is a great plot.*

Angie Rhodes

After reading and loving 'A Man Called Ove', I was excited to read Fredrik's new book, and I was not disappointed.

Britt- Marie likes everything done in a certain way, her cutlery draw is arranged in order, knives and forks with spoons last. She is a little awkward with people she doesn't know and this is because her husband had told her she need not go out, so she stays in doors. But Britt-Marie has dreams and a big heart and now finding herself separated from her husband, no job, and socially awkward, Britt-Marie arrives in Borg.

It is here that she finds her true self and realises she is not as unlovable as she thinks and love can be found where you least expect it!

This is a wonderful book. An uplifting story, full of characters you become fond of. Loved it!!

Katie Hoare

Britt-Marie is a wonderfully warm woman who is rather OCD with regards to making lists, and lists that have been written in a certain way according to importance, either ink or pencil, along with having her dinner at precisely 6pm. She moves to Borg, a rather unloved Swedish town, walking away from her husband Kent, feeling that he does not notice her anymore.

Here, she starts her stay being rather annoying to the woman who is helping her trying to get a job at the employment centre, by pestering her on a daily basis. In the end she is given a post at the community centre, where she becomes the most unlikely coach to a group of youngsters who have their own football team, some have strange names, and are from very different backgrounds to each other, and from Britt-Marie herself.

Britt-Marie does not know anything about football, but forms the most unlikely friendship with the children, and helps them with regards to their own self-esteem, and in turn help educating Britt-Marie.

*Britt-Marie, despite her having traits that can be seen as annoying or frustrating, she is a wonderful character, warm and caring - a woman that you cannot just but like, along with reminding you of someone you will know. **This story flows from the start to end, told with humour, and very well written.***

Rachael Anderson

Hilariously funny, yet deeply moving. Touches all the emotions.

Britt-Marie was a character from Fredrik Backman's second novel 'My Grandmother Sends Her Regards and Apologises'. The little girl, Elsa, the main character within this novel realises that Britt-Marie, whilst rather a fussy, judgemental, uptight 'old bat' is 'not a complete shit'. Britt-Marie was last seen in this novel driving off into the distance. In 'Britt-Marie Was Here', she has left her husband, Kent, and is starting life anew.

Britt-Marie likes cleanliness, routine, and especially an organised cutlery drawer. After searching for employment, she lands a job as a caretaker of a soon to be demolished recreation centre in Borg. Borg is a miserable place, which most people have deserted. Here the people, a range of 'misfits' to say the least, warm to Britt-Marie and eventually her to them.

There is much humour to this novel, be it from the interesting relationship Britt-Marie forms with a local rat to how she comes out with some brilliant, yet seemingly unintentional, one liners. However, there is also heartbreak and Backman makes sure this isn't just another fluffy, rose tinted story, it has meaning and is truly uplifting.

This is a wonderful novel. *I think Fredrik Backman is an excellent, truly observant author. His work is imaginative, different from mainstream literary works, rather quirky. He writes about what initially seems a rather unpleasant, irritating woman, yet sees her humanity and makes her a heroine. I cannot wait for his next novel. I will definitely be buying it.*

Edel Waugh

Britt-Marie a loyal wife up until the time she found out her husband was up to

no good. Keeping house for many years and looking after his children were part of daily life so when the kids grew up and her husband was a swine Britt-Marie finds herself at a bit of a crossroads in her life with a bottle of disinfectant close to hand. Britt -Marie is 63, has very exact ideas about how things should be and she does not like to stray far from those ideas. Headstrong and determined, she is in desperate need to change her life before she fears she will fade from this world without anyone noticing. Life, death and friendship are the main topics in the story and there were many moments I spent smiling and sobbing throughout the book. The author makes you think about the important things in life like family, friends, life and death in such a way that you keep thinking about the story long after you have finished. **I recommend this book to everyone, it's another remarkable story from this brilliant author.**

<http://edelwaugh.blogspot.ie/2016/03/britt-marie-was-here-by-fredrick.html?m=1>

Lorraine Blencoe

*More of a slow-burning read than 'My Grandmother Sends Her Regards' but equally as heart-warming and compulsive. Britt-Marie suddenly finds herself having to deal with the realities of the world after she splits up with the husband she has relied upon. This means moving and getting a job. She unwittingly finds herself as the coach of a football team full of disenfranchised youngsters. The author draws the characters so beautifully they become the reader's friends. **Backman takes the reader on a journey of discovery and assimilation into life not just for Britt-Marie. Just a fantastic read from a fantastic writer.***

Nicola Edwards

A fantastic read with quirky characters and unexpected friendships written by a very talented author!

I had heard a lot of hype about Fredrik Backman's previous book, 'A Man called Ove', so I was very excited to read this book from the same author.

Britt-Marie is very set in her ways and the cutlery drawer has to be forks, knives, spoons and no other way is acceptable. Dinner time has to be at 6pm. Although her life is full of routine, her world has recently been turned upside down by a change in her home circumstances. This results in her needing to get a job for the first time in forty years, which results in some very interesting and

funny consequences.

The author has a unique way of making you relate to Britt-Marie and empathising with her from the start. I actually grew to really like her character and her quirky ways! My only criticism was one of the names she gave the characters, "Somebody". This got quite confusing and I would have preferred her to have been given a proper name.

Overall, a very enjoyable read, fascinating characters and a great story line. I now need to read some more by this author!

Yvonne Richardson

*I loved this book! Frederik Bachman really knows how to draw you in and almost feel the emotions of the main character. Britt-Marie herself is quite unusual and complex. Her ideals and responses to situations were vividly felt throughout the book. I found myself at times wanting to shout at the other character's to tell them what she was struggling herself to say. All of the characters within the book were a curiosity. Despite her awkwardness she managed to get under the skin of all she met, initially irritating them but ultimately was respected and loved by all around her. At time's I even wanted to hug her. **A remarkable woman, witty and with a heart bigger than life itself. I would recommend this to anyone. I even found myself liking football!***

A joy to read. Would be perfect holiday read and great for a bookclub.

Emily Wright

'Britt- Marie Was Here' encompasses the joy and sadness of everyday life, wherever you live and whoever you are, to create a charmingly quirky novel with a big heart.

Britt- Marie has spent a lifetime looking after others, so when she finds herself unexpectedly seeking a job she feels out of her depth. Britt- Marie becomes the caretaker at Borg's recreation centre; this suits her well as Britt- Marie loves cleaning. The job also involves coaching the youth football team, a role Britt- Marie is less suited to. She dislikes football, and children are complicated, messy creatures. However, as the residents of Borg take Britt- Marie to their hearts, and vice versa, she discovers that not all problems can be solved with bicarbonate of soda. Sometimes in life people and things demand to be loved with a passion that not even Britt- Marie knows she is capable of.

I found it impossible not to take the character of Britt- Marie into my heart. At the start of the book Britt- Marie's loneliness and constraints made for heartrending reading. As I got to know her better, truly seeing the generous soul within this memorable lady, she slipped into my heart without me even realising it.

Fredrik Backman's perceptiveness brings this touching and heartfelt novel to life. I truly enjoyed my time spent in Borg with its residents and I finished the book hoping against hope that not quite all of Britt- Marie's life would be lived for others.

Lynette McCann

On first starting this book, I thought if you didn't laugh, you would cry, then I really got into Britt- Marie. She is a lovable character, leaving her mark everywhere.

Britt-Marie finds herself in a strange town, newly unemployed and alone. She learns as she trudges through life how much there is to find out and she learns quickly, even coaching the local football team as she slowly sorts her life out. She finds love in the strangest places.

Sharon Butler

Not quite the sort of story that I normally read and the underlying theme of football just isn't what I envisaged the book being about. However with perseverance, this book can grow on you.

I have to admit that it took quite a while and perseverance with many chapters before I actually got into this book and wanted to know what happened.

The main character is an older lady called Britt-Marie who has, after 20 years of marriage, has recently separated from her husband – Kent. Never having accomplished much else other than supporting her husband and keeping a good house, she has to discover a new life by herself and ends up in a backwater town called Borg (I originally thought Star Trek, but no).

The silly names of the characters, the constant reference to "somebody" and the overall theme of football just isn't what I enjoy reading. Whilst I can at times relate to the main character - Britt-Marie, half the time whilst I was reading I wanted to just slap her, the other half I wanted to hug her.

It's quite a cliché story and fairly obvious but any book that can create emotion in someone, especially me, deserves recognition and whilst this was not by any stretch of the imagination a favourite read of mine, I have to confess that I had tears in my eyes at the end.

Emma Smith

Britt Marie knows how she likes things, and they must be done in the right way. Coasters must be used, cutlery must be in order and cleanliness is a high priority. You meet Britt-Marie and her husband Kent in Fredrik Backman's previous book 'My Grandmother Sends Her Regards and Apologises' but you don't need to have read that first to really appreciate 'Britt-Marie Was Here'. This book takes a deeper look at who Britt-Marie is, how her past has influenced her as a person, and how she changes after taking a job in a place called Borg. It is quite similar to Fredrik's 'A Man Called Ove', but I found the story explored so much more than the central character.

Borg is a very quiet place where most of the shops and community buildings have closed down due to the financial crisis. Here Britt-Marie meets a strange mix of people and a wonderful bunch of kids who are all trying to get by as best they know how. Britt-Marie came from the city so this quiet and quirky place is quite a shock for her.

As Britt-Marie gets to know the residents, we get to know more about what made her into the person she is today. Britt-Marie isn't someone you love as a character straight away, but gradually as you watch her develop.

*The book shows how Britt-Marie changes Borg, and how Borg changes Britt-Marie. It is full of humour, but also a touching story exploring the lives of each character in turn. Secrets are revealed and heart-breaking stories develop as the community comes together. **Fredrik Backman has a stunning way of making you feel for the characters without overly describing them. Their personalities shine from the page and finishing the book leaves you missing them.***

<https://mrsredsreviews.wordpress.com>

Phyllippa Smithson

Writing at it's very best, this will make you laugh, cry, get angry,

feel good and when you read that final page, you'll want to jump straight back to the start.

Britt-Marie has lived trying to be the person she thinks other's wish her to be and at 63 years old, she finds herself alone and unsure of who she really is – what you soon realise is that she is not your regular child, with an OCD disorder in the extreme. The loss of her beloved sister as a child creates a desperation to make up for the loss on the eyes of her parents but to no avail as eventually her Father does not return and her Mother finds fault in Britt-Marie's very existence.

She leaves her childhood home to enter into a marriage that again removes any sense of her being herself as she succumbs to being the wife of ambitious (yet never quite successful) Kent.

It's when her husband's secret lover phones to inform her that he is in hospital after a heart attack that Britt-Marie finally gives up trying to be there for others and steps into the world alone, she has no-one.

Driven by the realisation that she needs people if only to prove her existence, she seeks a job and, using the most wonderful use of words to stimulate the imagination, Britt-Marie takes up the only position available. She moves to a town in the extreme of the financial economic downturn to do a dead-end job cleaning a soon-to-be-demolished recreation centre in a town that is not dying, it's died. Obsessed with cleaning and household maintenance, she surprisingly finds herself not only accepted by some very dodgy characters but actually grows to have a sense of her own purpose in life and a sense of belonging for the first time in her life, not least as the coach to a rough and tumble youth football team.

Backman is a quality writer and is now on my Premier League of authors.

