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## Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

### **My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry** by Fredrik Backman

#### Summary

When Elsa's grandmother dies and leaves behind a series of letters apologizing to people she has wronged, Elsa's greatest adventure begins. Her grandmother's instructions lead her to an apartment building full of drunks, monsters, attack dogs, and old crones but also to the truth about fairy tales and kingdoms and a grandmother like no other.

#### Discussion Questions

1. *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry* begins with the pronouncement, "Every seven-year-old deserves a superhero." (page 1) Do you agree? Why is it so important that children have heroes? Who were your heroes when you were a child?
2. Names play a significant part in Elsa's grandmother's stories. How do the various kingdom and heroine names from the Land-of-Almost-Awake (Miamas, Miploris, Mimovas, Wolfheart, the Chosen One, the sea-angel, etc.) inform your understanding of Granny's stories? Did you agree with how their real world counterparts were portrayed in the stories?
3. Elsa's mother grew up in a nontraditional family environment. Do you think this influenced her parenting style with Elsa? In what ways?
4. Were you surprised by the ways in which each of the apartment tenants were connected to the others? Which relationship surprised you the most? Why?
5. Granny is a polarizing figure in *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry*. Describe the way each of the characters reacts to her. Do you think their opinions of her are justified? Why or why not? What did you think of Granny? Do you know anyone like her?
6. Discuss the role that books, especially the Harry Potter novels, play in Elsa's life. Why do you think Elsa relates to the Harry Potter books more than other novels? When you were growing up, were there books you particularly loved? Which ones and why?
7. What did you think of Britt-Marie when you first encountered her? Did she remind you of anyone in your life? Where do you think Britt-Marie goes at the end of the novel?
8. Elsa believes that her "teachers are wrong. [She] has no problems concentrating. She just concentrates on the right things." (page 47) What kinds of things does Elsa concentrate on? How does this create problems for her? Do you think that Elsa is a good student? Why or why not?

9. Which of the characters in *My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry* surprised you the most? Why?
10. Discuss Britt-Marie's marriage to Kent. Did you think they were well suited for each other? Do you think the marriage changed Britt-Marie? How can being in a bad relationship affect someone's personality?
11. Fairy tales can provide a way to teach children some fundamental truths about the world. How do Granny's fairy tales help Elsa understand the world around her? What lessons does Elsa take away from the tales her Granny tells her about life in the land of Miamas?
12. When her grandmother dies, Elsa is of course sad, but she also experiences a wide range of other emotions, including anger. Can you name some of the others? Consider how the loss of a loved one can lead us to have feelings that are much more complicated than sadness.
13. In this book, as in his previous novel *A Man Called Ove*, Fredrik Backman paints a vivid portrait of the relationship between an older person nearing the end of his or her life, and a young child. What can people at the opposite ends of life learn from one another? How are the very old and the very young alike? How are they different? When you were very young, was there an elderly person who played a significant role in your life? What did you learn from them?

Discussion Questions from the publisher  
([http://www.simonandschuster.com/books/My-Grandmother-Asked-Me-to-Tell-You-Shes-Sorry/Fredrik-Backman/9781501115073/reading\\_group\\_guide](http://www.simonandschuster.com/books/My-Grandmother-Asked-Me-to-Tell-You-Shes-Sorry/Fredrik-Backman/9781501115073/reading_group_guide))