

Marlborough Public Library Adult Book Club

January 16 or 18, 2024

Anxious People by Fredrik Backman

Questions abridged from: <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/anxious-people/guide>

1. The man on the bridge tells the boy, “Do you know what the worst thing about being a parent is? That you’re always judged by your worst moments.... Parents are defined by their mistakes.” Do you think this statement is true? Does social media make it more likely to be the case these days? Is the bank robber a bad parent?
2. Zara tells her psychologist, “your generation don’t want to study a subject, they want to study themselves.” Is she speaking of millennials? Why are boomers and millennials so critical of each other? How do they see the world differently?
3. Nadia (the psychologist), James (the police officer), Zara and Estelle all have stories tied in some way to the bridge. What does the bridge represent to each of them? Has the bridge’s meaning changed for them by the end of the book? If so, how?
4. Anna-Lena compares her and Roger’s marriage to a shark that can’t breathe unless it is moving the whole time: “People need a project...if we didn’t keep moving, our marriage wouldn’t get any oxygen. So we buy and renovate and sell.” Why does Anna-Lena think that a project is the one thing keeping their marriage from falling apart? What surprised you about their history as individuals and as a couple? How have they underestimated each other, despite having been together for so many years?
5. Estelle says her book-swapping moments with her neighbor were “an affair.” Do you agree? What counts as an affair if there’s no physical relationship involved? What book would you give as a present to a crush?
6. At the start of *Anxious People*, the author tells us, “This story is about a lot of things, but mostly about idiots.” In what ways are these characters acting like idiots? At the end of the book, do you think that’s still a fair description of them? Are we all, by virtue of being human, inclined to act like idiots from time to time?
7. *Anxious People* is very much a character study. How did your feelings about these characters change over the course of the book? Who is your favorite character and why? Which character surprised you the most and why?