

First, we were in your community. Now, we're in your ears. Unlike Black Canary from DC Comics, we will not use this ability against you. This is Pager, a podcast brought to you by the West Bend Community Memorial Library. It's like talking to your favorite librarian when you're both REALLY good at social distancing. I'm your host, Hannah, young adult services librarian and audio enthusiast. Thanks for tuning in to Pager.

In this month's episode, I'd like to talk a bit about one of my favorite authors, and then a lot about superheroes. The author in question is Fredrik Backman, who first came to my attention in 2014 with the English release of his novel *A Man Called Ove*. Ove is a textbook curmudgeon. He has staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. But behind the cranky exterior there is a story and a sadness. So when one November morning a chatty young couple with two chatty young daughters move in next door and accidentally flatten Ove's mailbox, it is the lead-in to a comical and heartwarming tale of unkempt cats, unexpected friendship, and the ancient art of backing up a U-Haul. All of which will change one cranky old man those around him forever. I absolutely loved this book - I laughed, I cried, I shared quotes on social media - but really liking just one book by an author isn't enough to make them a favorite, in my opinion.

As you may know, NHL hockey is back, and I've been thoroughly enjoying the chaos that is the road to the Stanley Cup, bubble-style. I've been a hockey fan for as long as I can remember, and worked in sexual assault victim advocacy in college, so in 2017 when Fredrik Backman's book *Beartown* was published, I couldn't get my hands on it fast enough. *Beartown* tells the story of a small town in Sweden that folks who don't live there insist is dying. Locals hope that if their junior hockey team performs well enough, the opening of a prestigious hockey academy will breathe new life into their economy. Those hopes are derailed, however, when the star of the hockey team rapes a classmate at a party, and his victim has the courage to share her story. I'm a small-town girl myself, and I am still not over how real every single character in *Beartown* feels to me. The way I picture the book in my head, every character has the face of someone I knew in high school. It hit so close to home, and handles some very difficult subject matter with an amazing amount of humanity. *Beartown* and its sequel, *Us Against You*, remain some of my favorite books I've ever read - even if they're so true-to-life that they're sometimes painful.

I just finished another book by the same author, called *My Grandmother Asked Me To Tell You She's Sorry*, and now that I'm done with it, I've read every single book by Backman, including his shorter novellas. It's not super rare that an author catches my attention like that, but I'm the young adult services librarian, so I'm usually hung up on some YA author or other. What really draws me to these books is their overwhelming kindness. It's so apparent from the text that Backman really believes in the good in people. Even when characters do something I consider absolutely reprehensible, he reveals why they act the way they act, what motivates them, and makes you contemplate why they made the choices they made. It's been helpful for me to remember that I don't know why people act in ways other than what I assume is common sense. Someone who disagrees with me might not be selfish; perhaps they don't have all the information about a contentious topic. When folks react with anger, maybe that's how they

handle their own fear. It doesn't necessarily make people good, or right, or excuse them from the consequences of their actions, but it is helpful, for me at least, to try to treat other people with grace.

In *My Grandmother Asked Me To Tell You She's Sorry*, our plucky young heroine, Elsa, is seven years old. Elsa is precocious, old for her age, and has a tough time making friends at school because she's so different. As such, her best friend is her grandmother, and together the two go on fabulous imaginary adventures, and speak in a secret language all their own. Elsa knows that many adults find her grandmother difficult - including her own mother, who is often exasperated by Granny's antics. When Granny dies, she leaves Elsa with a quest: to track down people Granny has wronged, and apologize to them on her behalf. Elsa's journey features drunks, monsters, attack dogs, and old crones, but also to important truths about fairy tales, and family, bravery, and human nature.

Elsa is *very* into fictional heroes. She is eternally shocked that there are people who haven't read - or worse, don't like - Harry Potter, but she is also fascinated by comic book heroes like Spider-Man and the X-Men. "Grow up and be different and don't let anyone tell you not to be different, because all superheroes are different," Granny tells Elsa. "All the best people are different - look at superheroes. After all, if superpowers were normal, everyone would have them," Elsa parrots later. "Improbable tragedies create improbable superheroes," they muse, and "Every seven-year-old deserves a superhero. That's just how it is." Elsa and her granny dare to be different, just like the comic book heroes Elsa admires.

I've found myself with superheroes on the brain these days. Superheroes are brave, they stand up for what's right, and lots of them wear masks to protect themselves and their loved ones! If you're new to comics and not sure where to start, the popular superhero series at the West Bend Library - including Spider-Man, the X-Men, Deadpool, the Avengers, Batman, Wonder Woman, and more - are helpfully labeled so you know where each series begins. Most comic books also include background on the characters and events, so you can often pick up pretty much anywhere and fill in the rest when you have time.

If you're tired of Western superheroes, consider picking up the manga series *My Hero Academia*. Though the author is Japanese, he clearly has a deep love for Western superheroes, and it's fun to see echoes of my favorites in the manga, as well as its anime adaptation. *My Hero Academia* is set in a world where most of the human population has gained the ability to develop unusual abilities, called "Quirks". Quirks usually manifest in children by the age of four, and there are infinite types of Quirks, so it is extremely unlikely to find two people who have the exact same power. Most people have mundane Quirks, but some folks can use their Quirks to become Heroes, who try to help those in need. Of course, some individuals use their Quirks for selfish and criminal purposes, so plenty of Hero work involves combatting Villains.

Our protagonist, Izuku Midoriya, never manifested a Quirk. However, his bravery and selflessness catch the attention of the #1 most popular hero, All Might, who decides to begin

mentoring Izuku. He ends up at a prestigious school for young aspiring Heroes, working with classmates, struggling with homework, and, of course, dealing with the kind of Villains who think a superhero school is an ideal target for criminal mischief. The characters are compelling, the powers are really cool, and the underlying message is that heroism is much more than the powers you're born with.

I tend to prefer my heroes a little bit out of the mainstream, though. My favorite Avenger is Hawkeye, my favorite X-Man is either Beast or Gambit depending on the day, and I'm more likely to be thinking about Hellboy and his buddies at the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense than the Justice League. I recently revisited a one-shot comic I adore by Hellboy creator Mike Mignola, called *The Amazing Screw-On Head*. If mainstream superheroes aren't for you, consider giving an offbeat character a try!

If you've ever looked at our comic book selection and found it a little bit wanting, you can always make requests! If we don't have it, another library in the Monarch Library System can send it over, easy-peasy. If it's not available in our system, we can look into purchasing a title for you, or procuring it through interlibrary loan - all for free with your library card!

That's pretty much what I've been reading and watching! If you want more recommendations, check out the library's blog - we post staff picks each month - and your YouTube channel, where adult fiction librarian Sara periodically posts recommendations, and I sometimes suggest books, movies, anime, music, and activities for teens.

Have you filled out your Census form yet? It's really important to us that everyone in West Bend gets counted - the Census is used to distribute state and federal funds, including library funding! Filling out the Census form helps us better serve you until 2030 - and beyond! Visit [2020census.gov](http://2020census.gov) to respond before September 30! It's a quick and easy way to help your community.

Need help accessing the Census, or filling it out? You can use our computers and ask us for assistance! We're open Monday-Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Fridays 9:00-6:00, and Saturdays 9:00-1:00. If you have your own device, you can take advantage of our free wi-fi to fill in the form - it reaches the whole block and is on 24/7/365. You can also respond by phone or by mail - visit the website or ask us how!

The Summer Reading Program recently drew to a close, and the librarians have been recovering ever since. Our children's librarian, Miss Terika, has a new grab-and-go craft kit for kids every single week! Supplies are limited, so stop by on Mondays to make sure you get one. One of the activities folks can choose to participate in during Summer Reading is the annual Family Scavenger Hunt. One of this year's items was a library joke, so here are some of my favorites:

Q: Why does the ghost come back to the library every day for more books?

A: Because she goes through them too quickly.

Q: Why did the fish go to the library?

A: To find some book worms!

Q: How do books like to sleep?

A: Between the covers!

Q: What did one library book say to the other?

A: Can I check you out?

Q: What do you call a sunburned librarian?

A: well-red!

Q: What does a mummy do when he goes to the library?

A: He gets wrapped up in a good book!

If you didn't get a chance to enter the Family Scavenger Hunt this year, check back next summer! It's a great activity for the whole family to work on together.

The August Reading Program is still going on! Kids and teens are invited to download or pick up a reading record, then color in one icon for every 20 minutes of reading. When you're done, you will receive a prize bag and scratch off ticket. Scratch off your card and see what you win! It might be a coupon for a free Cousin's sub, a 10" fresh pizza from Eaton's, a \$5 or \$10 gift card, or a few other scratch-off surprises! This program lasts all month, so stop by before August 31 to claim your prizes.

Wednesday, 8/19 @ 6:00 p.m. - Beneficial Backyard Bugs virtual program

Wisconsin is home to 20,000+ insect species—the vast majority of which provide benefits to humans. In this presentation, we'll discuss the many ways in which insects help us out and also take a look at how common these beneficial creatures can be in our own area.

Presenter Patrick (PJ) Liesch is a statewide entomology specialist and director of the University of Wisconsin Insect Diagnostic Lab (IDL). Every year, the IDL handles over 2,400 insect identification requests from Wisconsin's farmers, private industry, university and government agencies, the general public, and other groups. PJ also provides entomology-related outreach throughout the state, including regular appearances on Wisconsin Public Radio. RSVP on Facebook or by contacting Sara at the library to receive the link to attend.

Stay tuned in September for Library Card Sign-Up Month! We'll have promotions, a scavenger hunt with prizes, and more! Next month's episode of Pager will get into more detail about some of the amazing things you can do for free with your library card.

If you notice your returns are on your account a little longer, we are now quarantining items for 4 days! To help us with this procedure, please use the book and media drops - either the outdoor ones at the rear of the building, or the indoor ones on your way in - to return items, rather than

dropping them off at the circulation desk. If you have questions, don't hesitate to call ahead! We can check to see if a book is on the shelf, arrange for someone you trust to pick up your holds, walk you through getting ebooks and digital audiobooks on your phone or tablet, and more!

The library is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Fridays 9:00-6:00, and Saturdays from 9 to 1. Wearing a face covering is now **REQUIRED** while using the library. Our social distancing policy remains in effect - please keep your visits brief, and limit the number of people in your group as much as possible. Please call us if you need help requesting items, or to learn more about your pickup options. Thank you for helping keep our staff and our community safe! For more information, you can: visit us at 630 Poplar Street, call the library at 262-335-5151, check out our website at [westbendlibrary.org](http://westbendlibrary.org), or check us out on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube!

Once again, thanks for tuning into Pager, and for doing your part to keep your community safe. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions! If you want to make a librarian smile, go ahead and subscribe to us wherever you listen to podcasts.