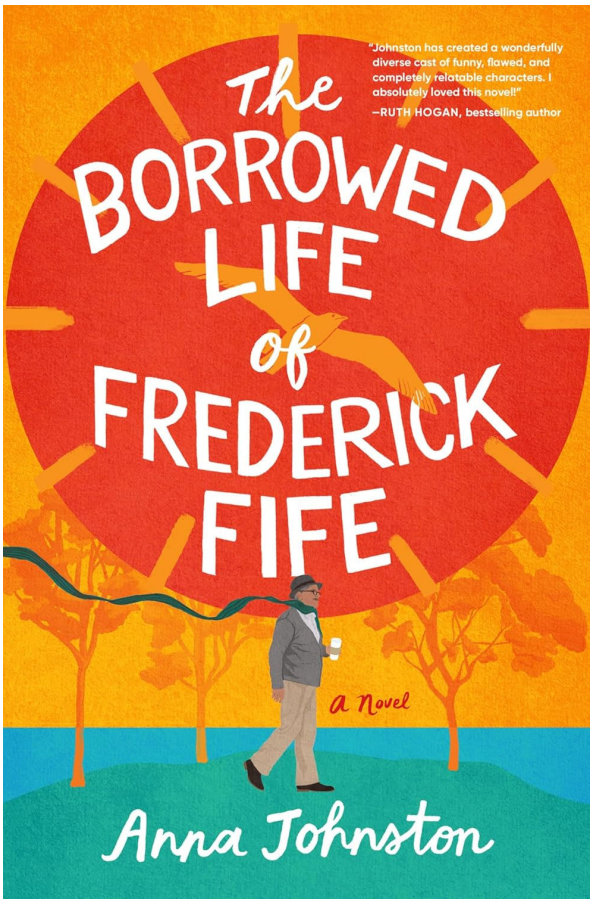


Book Summary

A warm, life-affirming novel that The Washington Post described as "an uplifting distraction from the negative news cycle."

“A funny, heartfelt story about found family and seeing the silver lining in life. Fans of A Man Called Ove and Remarkably Bright Creatures will especially enjoy this new novel.”—Library Journal

A zany case of mistaken identity allows a lonely old man one last chance to be part of a family.

“Would you mind terribly, old boy, if I borrowed the rest of your life? I promise I’ll take excellent care of it.”

Frederick Fife was born with an extra helping of kindness in his heart. If he borrowed your car, he’d return it washed with a full tank of gas. The problem is there’s nobody left in Fred’s life to borrow from. At eighty-two, he’s desperately lonely, broke, and on the brink of homelessness. But Fred’s luck changes when, in a bizarre case of mistaken identity, he takes the place of grumpy Bernard Greer at the local nursing home. Now he has warm meals in his belly and a roof over his head—as long as his poker face is in better shape than his prostate and that his look-alike never turns up.

Denise Simms is stuck breathing the same disappointing air again and again. A middle-aged mom and caregiver at Bernard's facility, her crumbling marriage and daughter's health concerns are suffocating her joy for life. Wounded by her two-faced husband, she vows never to let a man deceive her again.

As Fred walks in Bernard’s shoes, he leaves a trail of kindness behind him, fueling Denise's suspicions about his true identity. When unexpected truths are revealed, Fred and Denise rediscover their sense of purpose and learn how to return a broken life to mint condition.

Bittersweet and remarkably perceptive, The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife is a hilarious, feel-good, clever novel about grief, forgiveness, redemption, and finding family.A #1 bestseller on *The New York Times, USA*

Discussion Questions

1. Did you enjoy this book? Would you recommend it to a friend?
2. Which nursing home resident was your favorite and your least favorite? Which nursing home worker was your favorite and your least favorite? Explain.
3. The daughter had to come to grips with lots of her perceptions. Other than the daughter, which character experienced the most growth and change? Explain.
4. Discuss the author's writing style. How effective was the writer's use of humor in keeping the tone positive? Examples?
5. Did you find all the characters believable? Which ones were too exaggerated for credibility?
6. Most of the characters seem to be struggling with their personal lives(i.e. addictions, anger, bitterness, grief) Discuss how the author ties these characters together into a cohesive story.
7. Did you find the setting (nursing home) depressing? Why or why not?
8. Were there other aspects of plot or characters that made you feel sad?
9. Were you surprised about the ending? How would you have ended this book?
10. What were the central themes of the story and how effectively did the author explore them? (Ex. Everyone, no matter age, circumstance, personal history, or actions, is capable of love --T or F?)

About the Author (Debut author)

Anna Johnston is a former baby, aspiring octogenarian and emerging Australian author with a love for the heartfelt and hilarious. She lives in Melbourne where she lives joyously with her husband and daughters by the beach. Anna left an imminent career in medicine to follow her heart into her grandfather's nursing home where she became the activities coordinator, taking great delight in shaking up the usual program. Anna also developed an award-winning local government program teaching older widowed men how to cook. When injury left her unable to continue working in aged care, she began to write about it, channeling her love for older people onto the page. During the pandemic, Anna completed several novel writing courses with the Australian Writers' Centre, where her debut novel, *The Borrowed Life of Bernard Fife*, was born. Anna has enjoyed a lifelong passion for positive ageing, creative writing, theatre, screenplay, and all things Australiana.

Author Q&A from the publisher

Interview with the Anna Johnston: from the Nerd Daily (creator Elise Dumpleton)

BookClub Guide from Plainfield Area Public Library



Read-A-Likes (Novelist)

1.	***The unlikely pilgrimage of Harold Fry*** Joyce, Rachel **Reason:** Elderly men find a second chance for happiness in both moving novels. -- Kaitlin Conner
2.	***Remarkably bright creatures*** Van Pelt, Shelby **Reason:** Both feel-good and life-affirming novels star lonely aging characters who find new purpose in the unlikeliest of ways -- via a case of mistaken identity (The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife) and a friendship with an octopus (Remarkably Bright Creatures). -- Kaitlin Conner
3.	***The story of Arthur Truluv*** Berg, Elizabeth **Reason:** These books have the theme "coping with death"; the genre "relationship fiction"; and the subjects "octogenarians," "widowers," and "loneliness."
4.	***Again and again*** Evison, Jonathan **Reason:** These books have the appeal factors sweet and moving, and they have the theme "second act"; and the subjects "octogenarians," "nursing homes," and "seniors."

5.	***The Christmas cottage*** Bunn, T. Davis, 1952- **Reason:** These books have the genre "relationship fiction"; and the subjects "deception," "second chances," and "betrayal."
6.	***Being Henry Applebee*** Reynolds, Celia **Reason:** These books have the theme "second act"; the genre "relationship fiction"; and the subjects "octogenarians," "loneliness," and "nursing homes."
7.	***Eddie Winston is looking for love*** Cronin, Marianne **Reason:** These books have the appeal factors sweet, and they have the genre "relationship fiction"; and the subjects "octogenarians," "loneliness," and "nursing homes."
8.	***The love story of Missy Carmichael*** Morrey, Beth **Reason:** These books have the theme "second act"; the genre "relationship fiction"; and the subjects "widowers," "loneliness," and "nursing homes."
9.	***Road trip to miracles*** Pugh, Sueann **Reason:** These books have the appeal factors sweet, and they have the theme "second act"; and the subjects "octogenarians," "widowers," and "aging."