



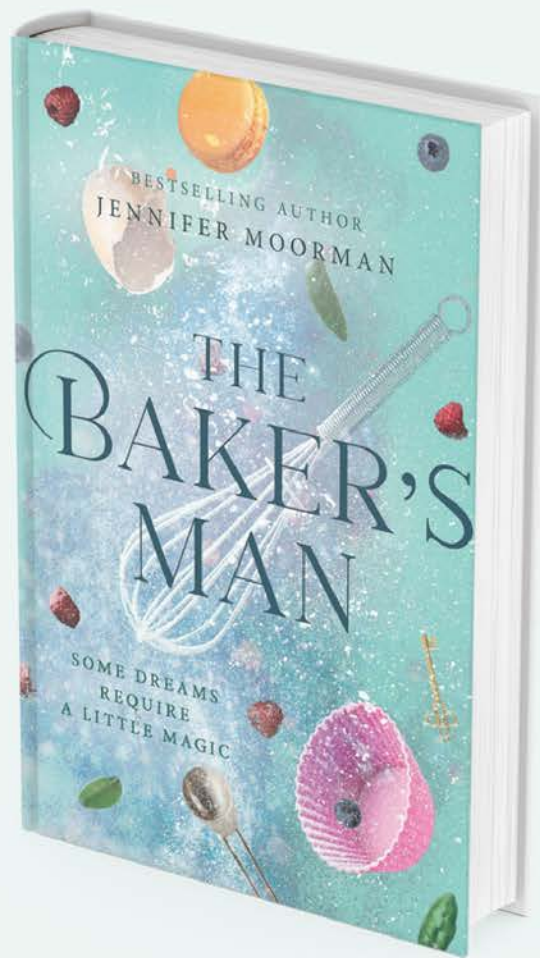
BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
JENNIFER MOORMAN

# THE BAKER'S MAN

SOME DREAMS  
REQUIRE  
A LITTLE MAGIC

READING GROUP GUIDE





This reading group guide for *The Baker's Man* includes an introduction, discussion questions, ideas for enhancing your book club, and bonus material to elevate your experience.

The suggested questions are intended to help you find interesting topics and new perspectives for your discussion.

We hope that this guide will add more magic to your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

In the Southern town of Mystic Water, magic is always in the wind—and in the ovens. Anna O'Brien inherited several gifts from her late Grandma Bea: culinary superpowers, a bakery in a charming Southern town, and a recipe for the perfect man.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Each chapter has its own title. How do each of these titles draw you in to the story? What is your favorite title? If you could recreate any of the dessert titles, which recipe would you try?
2. Magical realism as a genre blends the fantastical with reality. What is your favorite magical element of the story? Which magical element would you love to see unfolding in your own life?
3. The people of Mystic Water believe that Beatrice's and Anna's treats are infused with magical powers. If you could eat a sweet treat that would give you a specific talent or offer you a particular feeling, what talent or feeling would you want and what treat would it be from?
4. If you were given a locked box from a loved one, would you be able to wait years to open it? Why or why not? What if what you found inside was a family secret? Would you be able to keep the secret to yourself? Why or why not?
5. Expectations placed on a person versus following your own dreams is a big theme throughout the novel. Have you ever had a hope or dream that was at odds with what others wanted or expected? Were you able to find a middle ground between the two? How did you find peace with the differences?



**6.** Anna faces great disappointment in her relationship with Baron because he does not consider her feelings when he plans for the future. Because Anna tends to put her own feelings second, do you think she would have been happy going to California with Baron if he had invited her?

**7.** Anna creates Elijah “the dough boy” to fall in love with her. She then worries that he only loves her out of obligation because she created him. As Elijah creates his own life, do you think the love was real or only out of obligation?

**8.** If you had the opportunity to bake the perfect man, what ingredients would you use? What's special to you about these ingredients?

**9.** Female friendships are important in this story and very complicated. What did you think of the friendship between Lily, Tessa, and Anna? How do secrets and their eventual reveal affect these friendships?

**10.** If you were given “magic sugar” to use one time and it would create a desire from your heart, would you use it for yourself or use it to help someone else?

**11.** Would you ever help your friend create a person? Why or why not?

**12.** Even though she thought her intentions were good, Tessa made a bold and reckless decision to use the magic sugar. The results were catastrophic. Could you have ever forgiven Tessa? Why or why not?

# ELEVATE YOUR EXPERIENCE

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1. Search for family recipes (yours or others) and see if you can recreate one of them. Discuss why you chose this recipe and why it was so special to you or to others. Think about why we hand down recipes to people we love. What makes the recipes heartfelt and unique?
2. Host the club meeting in a bakery and talk to the owner and/or bakers and get their perspective on what life is like working in a bakery. Discuss if you'd like to work in a bakery. Why or why not?
3. At different times in the story Anna, Lily, and Tessa all needed encouragement and someone who still loves them even when they're floundering. Share experiences you've had when someone has uplifted you and helped you feel empowered and loved.
4. Learn what else Jennifer is up to online at [jennifermoorman.com](http://jennifermoorman.com).



## BEA'S BAKERY

### CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

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*These classic cookies are one of Anna's childhood favorites. Nothing finds your smile and warms your heart faster than a straight-from-the-oven chocolate chip cookie. The slightly crunchy outside gives way to the gooey, melty center. One bite will have you wholeheartedly believing that everything is going to be okay.*

**Prep Time:** 20 minutes

**Baking Time:** 20 minutes

**Total:** 1 hour 40 minutes

**Yield:** 16 cookies

#### Ingredients

3 cups bread flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, chilled and sliced into  
tablespoon-size  
pieces

1 cup light brown sugar

1 cup granulated sugar

2 eggs, chilled

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1 cup dark chocolate chips

1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips





## Directions

1. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cold butter on medium speed, about 1 minute. Add brown sugar and granulated sugar, then beat until incorporated.
3. Add eggs, one at a time, beating about 30 seconds after each addition. Add vanilla. Mix on medium-low speed until the mixture is blended. Turn off mixer, then add the dry ingredients.
4. Mix on low speed just until the dough comes together. Turn off mixer, and fold in chocolate chips by hand using a rubber spatula.
5. Drop the dough onto a parchment-lined sheet tray in 1/2-cup mounds. Place the tray in the freezer and freeze for 1 hour.
6. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
7. Bake straight from the freezer until still slightly under baked in the middle but golden brown around the edges and beginning to brown on top, about 20 minutes.
8. Cool the cookies on the tray for 5 minutes before cooling completely on a wire rack.

# TWILIGHT BROWNIES

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*These decadent brownies help you view life from a higher perspective. They put your heart and mind at peace and quiet your thoughts, letting your creative spirit sparkle through you. Perfect for stargazing.*

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Baking Time:** 20 minutes

**Cooling Time:** 10 minutes

**Total:** 40 minutes

**Yield:** 9 square brownies

## Ingredients

1/2 cup flour

1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter

3/4 cup sugar

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

2 eggs at room temperature

1/2 cup bittersweet chocolate chunks

1 teaspoon Himalayan Pink Salt or flake salt

2 teaspoons turbinado sugar





## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray with cooking spray or line an 8-inch baking pan with parchment.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, and salt. Set aside.
3. Melt the butter in a medium bowl using the microwave in 20-second increments until just melted, about 40 seconds.
4. Whisk in the sugar and vanilla until incorporated.
5. Whisk in the eggs, one at a time, until smooth.
6. Using a rubber spatula fold in the flour mixture until a few streaks of dry ingredients remain. Add the chocolate and fold a few more strokes to incorporate.
7. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and sprinkle with the flake salt and turbinado sugar. Bake for 20–25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with just a few moist crumbs. Allow to cool completely in the pan.



## A conversation with Jennifer Moorman



### Interview by Hank Phillippi Ryan

**Q:** Was the title of your book, *The Baker's Man*, always the title?

**A:** Yes, this has always been the title.

**Q:** Who's the main character of your book—and was that always their name?

**A:** Anna O'Brien is the heroine, and I always knew that would be her name. Fun fact: Years ago, in college, we played a game where everyone had to choose what their name would be in they went into the Witness Protection Program, and Anna O'Brien is the name I chose.



**Q: At the start of the book, what's the character's goal?**

**A:** Anna tells everyone she wants to marry Baron (one day), start a family, buy a nice house, and run the bakery in Mystic Water. This is what she feels is the “right” thing to do and what is expected of her. This goal makes sense to her and to those around her. The pros of sticking with the goal means she keeps her family happy, especially her mama, and she keeps the town fed with great treats. This goal also allows her to stay close to her childhood friends, but the con is that this goal means she's living someone else's idea of what her life should be.

**Q: What was the core idea for this novel—a plot point? a theme?—and where did it come from?**

**A:** I had just finished rereading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I was struck again by how significantly your life would change, for better or worse, by creating a living being. At the same time I was discovering I had a love for baking. Because of this new skill, I wondered what would happen if a baker made a man out of dough, and the recipe for *The Baker's Man* came to life. This novel is an endearing story of family, love, and following your heart, along with touches of humor and heartache. If you don't already believe in magic, you will when you settle into Mystic Water, meet the town's quirky, lovable residents, and learn how choosing your dreams isn't always easy when other hearts and lives are involved. But being true to yourself and following your heart is always the right path.

**Q: At what point did you come up with the final version of the first line? What is it?**

**A:** I came up with the first line fairly early in the rough draft—probably at the very start—because it was important to me to introduce readers to the whimsy and the small town right away.



**First line:** The older generation of townspeople in Mystic Water, Georgia, still talked about that night in late July when the southbound train carrying sugar cane and cotton was late because the on-duty conductor had eloped instead of going into work.

**Q: Did you know the ending of the book when you started?**

**A:** I thought I did, ha! But it evolved during the writing process, and I'm so thankful I didn't stick with the original ending.

**Q: What's something in this book that you've never done before?**

**A:** I've never owned a bakery (although I used to dream about it), and I've never created a man out of dough (yet!).

**Q: How do you want readers to feel when they close the book?**

**A:** I hope readers feel uplifted, hopeful, and surrounded by the magic of the everyday. I hope they see that anything is possible, and love is the most powerful force in the universe.

**Q: What did you learn from this book? About writing, or life, or the writing life?**

**A:** I learned a lot of recipes! I learned how to persevere through failures, both baking and life, and that I can always try again and start over. Everything is temporary, even mishaps or detours. Writing fills my heart with so much joy, so writing this book helped me realize that, which then helped me better understand myself. When I wasn't writing, I didn't feel like me. So, "not writing" isn't a thing for me anymore. I'm always writing or crafting something! Writing this novel set me on a path toward my happiness and wholeness, and I am continuously grateful.



1 cup flour

2 cups sugar

1 stick butter?



buy more eggs  
call Mama

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Dearest Elijah,

I don't know that soul mates exist  
or that true love finds everyone,  
but I've heard anything is possible.  
I'd be willing to give love another  
try if you are.

