

## Borders

What is your favorite month? For Tove Jansson, author and artist, it was August. Tove said, “I love borders. August is the border between summer and autumn. It is the most beautiful month I know.” She went on to talk about other favorite borders, like twilight and the shore. She said, “The border is to be on the way. It is the way that is the most important thing.”

Tove felt strongly that the way was more important than the result. Another way of stating this idea is that the process was more important than the product. In her writing and her art, Tove was always concerned with the process of creation.

Tove started creating at a young age. She was born in Finland in 1914 to parents who were also both artists. Her father was a sculptor and her mother was an illustrator who designed Finnish money and postage stamps. Tove herself worked in many artistic mediums. She was a sculptor and a painter, as well as a cartoonist, illustrator, and author of books for all ages.

Tove is best known for her character Moomintroll. This unique, hippo-like character started out as a political cartoon and eventually starred in a series of children’s books. The characters of Moominland became popular all over the world, inspiring a television show in Japan and a theme park in Finland.

The citizens of Moominland were likely sparked by Tove's own family. Her parents were well known for hosting other artists in their home. They welcomed friends and strangers alike. In Tove's books, the Moomins had all kinds of quirky friends and relations. Sometimes Moomintroll liked the hustle and bustle of his busy community, and other times he wanted to be by himself. Perhaps this is how Tove felt as well.

The setting of Tove's books, Moominvalley, may also have been inspired by her real life. As a child, she spent summers on islands in the Gulf of Finland. When she grew up, she and her partner, Tuulikki, built an island summerhouse where they spent over thirty years together. Tove felt that islands symbolized freedom. The landscape of her books shares much in common with her beloved island home.

Tove was a free spirit who liked to do things her own way. She enjoyed travelling and learning and taking in all forms of art. She also liked being solitary and thoughtful. She lived her life on a border that is perhaps best described by this quote from Moominpappa: "There was the sea - his sea - going past, wave after wave, foaming recklessly, raging furiously, but, somehow, tranquil at the same time. He felt completely alive from the tip of his ears to the tip of his tail."



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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following is NOT an example of a border?
  - a. August
  - b. The shore
  - c. Islands
  - d. Twilight
  
2. In what format did Moomintroll first appear?
  - a. As a political cartoon
  - b. As a sculpture
  - c. As a children's book
  - d. As a postage stamp
  
3. Which of the following influences on Tove's work was NOT discussed in the article?
  - a. Her family welcoming others to their home
  - b. Her summers with her partner at their island house
  - c. Her philosophy about borders
  - d. World War II
  
4. How do you think Tove felt about the Moomin TV show and theme park?
  - a. They were not as good as having the Moomins on money
  - b. They were not as important as the process of creating the Moomins
  - c. They were the best thing that had ever happened to her
  - d. They were like a border

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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