

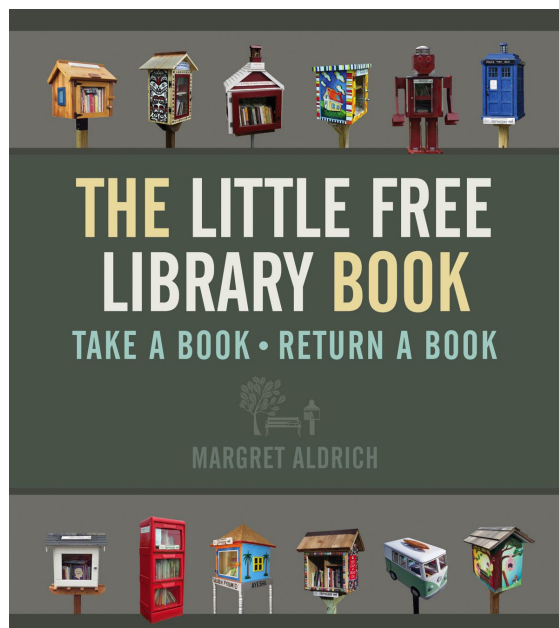
READING GROUP GUIDE

The Little Free Library Book by Margret Aldrich

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SUMMARY



40,000 Little Free Libraries stand in all 50 states and 70 different countries around the world. And through these tiny front-yard book exchanges, big things are happening! Communities are being strengthened, literacy is getting a boost, neighbors are talking again—and people of all ages, ethnicities, and economic standing are taking part.

The Little Free Library Book tells the history of the movement, gathers quirky and poignant stories from owners, provides a resource guide for starting your own Little Free Library, and delights readers with color images of the most creative and inspired LFLs around.

PRAISE

“Literary democracy in action.... Both primer and inspiration, a history and a guide for how to get involved.” —*Los Angeles Times*

"Lovers of books and libraries will adore this title, as will readers interested in folk art or successful grassroots movements. **Be warned, Little Free Libraries are sure to spring up wherever this book is available.**"—*Library Journal*, **starred review**

"LFLs are truly by, of, and for the people. In this well-conceived and delightfully accessible volume, Margret Aldrich traces the inception, staggering growth, and impact of the movement. —*Public Art Review*

"It has to be **one of this country's better exports**.... [Little Free Library's] grassroots story and those of many Little Free Library caretakers are told in Margret Aldrich's delightful new book, *The Little Free Library Book*." —*San Francisco Gate*

"The overarching theme of the book is that **Little Free Libraries draw out our innate humanness and connectedness**, as well as a sense of joy." —*Shareable*

"If you weren't already a devotee of this homegrown project, prepare to become one.... More than just a spot to trade books and maybe meet a neighbor, the libraries function as **pint-sized social justice projects**." —*Star Tribune*

"This is not just a nice book to peruse; it's an inspiration and invitation to **share books and conversation and joy**. Who doesn't like to walk down a street and see what's new in their neighborhood LFL?" —*Shelf Awareness*

"[Margret Aldrich] profiles Little Free Libraries with **distinct creative flair** and the citizen librarians behind them." —*The Capital Times*

"*The Little Free Library Book* is something entirely unique and exciting to read.... In the name of **community building, boundary crossing, and grassroots literacy** for the people, check out the next Little Free Library you come across." —*Hazel + Wren*

"Stewards across the globe can be found within the [Little Free Library Book's] pages, along with **helpful how-to's** for any question you can conjure, **professional blueprints** for building your own LFL, and photos of **some of the coolest Libraries around**." —*The Loft*

"Say what you will about the current state of American society, we've still got some **small pockets of democratic beauty** around our country." —*Secrets of the City*

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. Have you seen a Little Free Library in real life? How did it make you feel when you came across it? What kinds of books did you find inside? Did you take a book or contribute a book while you were there? What book would you most like to find at a Little Free Library?

2. There are Little Free Libraries on every continent except Antarctica. They can be found in places like Australia, India, Iceland, Afghanistan, South Korea, the Philippines, and beyond. Why do you think they have struck a chord all over the world? What are some universal themes that Little Free Libraries represent?

3. Little Free Libraries can be used to provide books in areas where book access is limited. In New Jersey, a Little Free Library was built as a place to share books after Hurricane Sandy destroyed the public library (p. 174). In Ghana, Little Free Libraries are being installed by the Books for Africa organization (p. 200). And in the tiny town of Carrizozo, New Mexico, thirteen Little Free Libraries are being erected to serve as a miniature Library system, since the nearest public library is miles away (p. 171). Why do you think book access is important? What happens when children don't have access to books?

4. Aldrich shares stories of how Little Free Libraries have helped build stronger, more connected communities. Why do you think these Little Libraries are able to bring people together? What are some of your favorite community-building activities? Examples: gathering with neighbors at the coffee shop on the corner, playing on a pick-up softball league, volunteering at a local civic organization, etc.

5. Spencer Collins is a nine-year-old boy from Leawood, Kansas, whose Little Free Library was declared illegal by the city government (p. 156). What is your reaction to that decision? Why do you think he received such an outpouring of support from around the world? What's something that you've had to stand up for, the way Spencer stood up for his Library?

6. Kelly Pajek of *Public Art Dialogue* says, "Little Free Libraries tie, in the best circumstances, to public art. There's an element of surprise. It's something that you can publicly engage with—you're not being told that it's hands off, or that you can't participate—you're encouraged to be part of it" (p. 18). Do you think Little Free Libraries qualify as public art? Why or why not?

7. Little Free Libraries have been built to look like everything from log cabins and Victorian mansions to robots, roosters, and Volkswagen buses. What are some of your favorite Little Free Libraries featured in the book? What do you think would be a good design for a Little Free Library? If you were going to build one for your front yard, what would it look like?

8. Do you have a Little Free Library? Share your experiences of being a Little Free Library steward. How has the Library had an impact on you, your family, or your neighborhood? Does your Library have a lot of patrons? How do you encourage people to use it? Have you had any poignant (or funny!) interactions because of the Library?

9. Little Free Libraries have been used to share more than books. Some stewards have included other items in their Libraries, like seeds for the garden, poems for patrons to take home, or a sketchbook for neighbors to draw artwork. Can you think of other innovative ways Little Free Libraries might be used?

10. Do you think your neighborhood would benefit from having a Little Free Library? Why or why not? Who do you think the Library's patrons would be? What kinds of books would be most popular? How could you involve your community in starting a Little Free Library?

HOW TO START A LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

If your book club is ready to *share* books, in addition to *reading* books, consider starting a Little Free Library! You can do it: Members of the Roundtable Book Club and Women's Book Club in Oxford, Mississippi, worked together to sponsor several Little Free Libraries in their community. (Read more about them [here](#).)

This is the rundown of what you need to know to start your very own Little Free Library, from choosing the perfect spot to filling it with books (p. 35). Visit littlefreelibrary.org for more information.

Step 1: Pick a location. Many stewards choose to plant their Little Free Library in their front yard, close to a sidewalk and pedestrian traffic. Others have found public places that could benefit from a Library, such as parks, schoolyards, hospital waiting rooms, and apartment lobbies. If your Library will stand outside your property, be sure to get the location approved before breaking ground.

Step 2: Get a Library. There are several ways to go about getting a Little Free Library. You can build one yourself, hire someone locally to build one for you, or purchase one through the [Little Free Library online catalog](#).

Step 3: Make it official. [Register](#) your Library at littlefreelibrary.org. Once you've registered, the organization will send you an official charter sign engraved with a unique charter number, an informational kit, and more. You're now part of a global network devoted to growing community and literacy around the world.

Step 4: Get the word out. Once your Library is [installed](#) and stocked with books, get your community involved! Invite friends, family, and neighbors to a grand opening ceremony. Send your local newspaper, radio stations, and TV stations a press release. Use social media to share photos and updates. And be sure to follow Little Free Library's [blog](#) for insider tips and resources. (See p. 54 for more ideas.)

Step 5: Put it on the world map. Add your Little Free Library's location (and photo!) to the official [world map](#). The map is an impressive resource for discovering where Little Free Libraries can be found, near and far.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margret Aldrich is the author of *The Little Free Library Book* (Coffee House Press, 2015), a critically-acclaimed guide to the global book-sharing movement. Margret has published her work with *The Atlantic*, *The Huffington Post*, *Experience Life*, and others, and she is a regular contributor to *Book Riot*. A former editor at *Utne Reader* and longtime book editor, Margret officially joined the Little Free Library nonprofit organization in 2016 as the media relations and program manager. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband, two entertaining young boys, and a Little Free Library.