book discussion kits

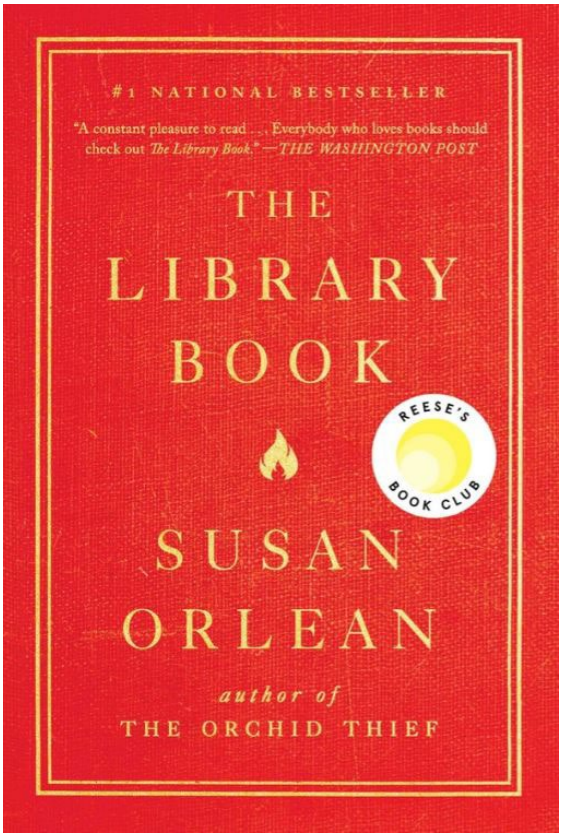
The Library Book
by Susan Orlean

Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

The Library Book by Susan Orlean

Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestion



Book summary

On the morning of April 28, 1986, a fire alarm sounded in the Los Angeles Public Library. The fire was disastrous: it reached two thousand degrees and burned for more than seven hours. By the time it was extinguished, it had consumed four hundred thousand books and damaged seven hundred thousand more. Investigators descended on the scene, but more than thirty years later, the mystery remains: Did someone purposefully set fire to the library—and if so, who?

Weaving her lifelong love of books and reading into an investigation of the fire, award-winning New Yorker reporter and New York Times bestselling author Susan Orlean delivers a "delightful…reflection on the past, present, and future of libraries in America" (*New York magazine*) that manages to tell

also available to download from Libby

the broader story of libraries and librarians in a way that has never been done before.

In the "exquisitely written, consistently entertaining" (*The New York Times*) *The Library Book*, Orlean chronicles the LAPL fire and its aftermath to showcase the larger, crucial role that libraries play in our lives; delves into the evolution of libraries; brings each department of the library to vivid life; studies arson and attempts to burn a copy of a book herself; and reexamines the case of Harry Peak, the blond-haired actor long suspected of setting fire to the LAPL more than thirty years ago.

Source: Simon and Schuster.
(https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Library-Book/Susan-Orlean/9781476740195)

The Library Book

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Meet the author

Susan Orlean has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 1992. She is the New York Times bestselling author of seven books, including *The Library Book*, *Rin Tin Tin*, *Saturday Night*, and *The Orchid Thief*, which was made into the Academy Award–winning film *Adaptation*. She lives with her family and her animals in Los Angeles and may be reached at SusanOrlean.com and on Twitter @SusanOrlean.



Source: Simon and Schuster. (https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Library-Book/Susan-Orlean/9781476740195)

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Discussion questions

1. What has your relationship with libraries been throughout your life? Can you share some library memories from childhood to adulthood?
2. Were you at all familiar with the Los Angeles library fire? Or any library fire?
3. How would you describe the fire's impact on the community? How about the community's rebuilding efforts?
4. In chapter 5, Orlean writes that books "take on a kind of human vitality." What role do books play in your life and home, and do you anthropomorphize them? Have you ever wrestled with the idea of giving books away or otherwise disowning them?
5. What is your impression of John Szabo? How does his career inform and shape your understanding of what librarians do?
6. Libraries today are more than just a building filled with books. How has your local branch evolved? Are you able to chart these changes and gauge their success within the community?
7. *The Library Book* confronts the issue of street people patronizing the library. Is this an issue in your hometown? How do you feel about the L.A. library's involvement, handling of the issue, and the notion of inclusion?
8. Andrew Carnegie is perhaps the most famous supporter and benefactor of libraries. Can you name a modern equivalent who is using his or her largesse to underwrite public works? Is it more important for the public sector to have big benefactors or overall community support?
9. What was your initial impression of Harry Peak? Did it change throughout the investigation?
10. What was your reaction to the Mary Jones and Charles Lummis saga? Can you cite any similar examples from history or the present?
11. Each of the head librarians discussed in The Library Book brought certain qualities to the position. What ideas and initiatives did you like? Did you disagree with any?
12. *The Library Book* chronicles the history of the Los Angeles Public Library from its origins to the present day. How were the library's ups and downs

reflective of the city's ups and down? Are libraries a fair barometer to judge the mood of a city or town?

13. Chapter 30 discusses a range of initiatives undertaken by international libraries and librarians. Do you have a favorite example that you would like to see replicated at your local library?

Source: Simon and Schuster.
(https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Library-Book/Susan-Orlean/9781476740195)

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Recipes

Caramel Popcorn



The secret to a great caramel popcorn that's evenly coated with caramel with a thin, crispy coating of caramel (rather that globs of sticky caramel) is baking soda and baking the popcorn to dry it out. This caramel corn stays crispy for 2+ weeks!!!

For the popcorn

- 1/4 cup (60ml) vegetable oil (not required if air popping with a popcorn maker)
- 1/3 cup popping corn (10 cups popcorn, Note 1 for lighter caramel coverage)
- Use 1/3 cup kernels for full caramel coverage (very sweet, like candy pieces), 3/4 cup for "normal"
- You need 10 cups of popcorn.

For the caramel

- 100g / 7 tbsp butter, unsalted
- 1 cup (220g) brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 cup (170g) corn syrup, light (sub glucose or honey)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp baking soda

Preheat oven to 110°C/230°F.

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add sugar, corn syrup and salt. Stir until just combined. When it starts to bubble, simmer for 4 minutes - DO NOT

STIR! Remove from heat then quickly whisk in vanilla and baking soda. When you stop whisking, the caramel will foam and increase in volume. Quickly pour straight over popcorn, toss until caramel cools and starts to harden.

Spread popcorn on 2 baking trays. Bake for 45 minutes, tossing every 10 minutes or so. Caramel will remelt for the first 2-3 tosses - tossing coats popcorn more evenly with caramel. (If using glucose or honey, bake further 15 minutes).

Remove from oven, leave to cool. Gently break into pieces and serve. Stays crisp 2 - 3 weeks!

Source: recipetineats (https://www.recipetineats.com/salted-caramel-popcorn/)

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