



# Little Libraries

**User Guide**

**He aratohu kaiwhakamahi**



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## Kia ora and welcome to Little Libraries

Little Libraries have been created to support the wonderful work you already do as kaiako nurturing curiosity, imagination and a connection to stories in the tamariki you care for each day.

Early childhood is a magical window when a love of reading can take root and last a lifetime. We know that today's tamariki are growing up in a world full of screens, busy schedules and many demands on whānau time. The role early learning centres play in introducing children to books and storytelling has never been more important.

Each Little Library brings together a collection of beautiful children's books by authors and illustrators from Aotearoa, alongside a modular forest-inspired library designed to spark imagination and storytelling.

Our hope is simple: that these libraries help you help your tamariki discover the joy of stories through books, play, movement, conversation and imagination.

Every kindergarten and early childhood education centre is unique, and we trust that you will shape and use your Little Library in ways that feel natural for your space and the tamariki in your care.

## The Little Libraries kaupapa

Little Libraries is an initiative of The Values Trust, a philanthropic trust focused on climate, creatures and children's literacy.

The project was created in response to growing concerns about declining literacy rates in Aotearoa. Research shows that early childhood is a critical time for building the foundations of language, storytelling and a lifelong relationship with books. Children who read for pleasure tend to do better not only in literacy, but across many areas of learning and wellbeing.

Little Libraries is a small but practical way to support this by placing beautiful, high-quality books directly into early learning environments where tamariki can return to them again and again.

Our goal is to inspire  
100,000 tamariki  
across Aotearoa to fall  
in love with reading.

To support this, Little Libraries are being gifted to early childhood centres around the country, with a focus on communities where access to high-quality books may be limited.

Each library is designed not only as a place to store books, but as a beautiful storytelling environment. Think of it as a small forest of shelves where imagination can flourish.



# The Book Forest

## Meet the Guardians of the Book Forest

Little Libraries are watched over by four friendly guardians from Te Ngahere Pukapuka, the Book Forest. These characters help bring the magic of storytelling to life for tamariki and remind us that stories can grow in many ways, including through books, play, movement, imagination and conversation.

Together they care for the forest of stories and invite children to explore the world of books and protect Te Ngahere Pukapuka, the forest of stories.

### Ako

#### The nurturing moa

Ako represents learning together. Through stories, tamariki and kaiako explore ideas side by side.

### Te Mātauranga

#### The wise tuatara

A guardian of knowledge and curiosity. Te Mātauranga reminds us that stories hold wisdom waiting to be discovered.

### Pito

#### The curious explorer

Pito represents curiosity and adventure. He encourages tamariki to ask questions and discover new stories.

### Pua

#### The girl who blossoms

Pua represents creativity and imagination. She reminds tamariki that stories can grow through drawing, play, movement and their own ideas.



## Stories live in many forms

Stories are not only found in books. In the Book Forest, the guardians remind us that they live in many forms.

Children explore and express stories in many ways through movement, music, drawing, play, conversation and imagination.

You may notice tamariki:

- retelling stories through dramatic play
- using objects or toys as characters
- acting out scenes with friends
- singing or chanting parts of stories
- drawing moments from a story they remember

The Little Libraries are designed to support this wider world of storytelling.

The shapes of the shelves, the books themselves and the space they create are intended to invite children to explore stories in whatever way feels natural to them.

## Tamariki as story makers

One of the most powerful aspects of storytelling is that children are not just listeners; they are storytellers too. Just like Pua and Pito in the Book Forest, tamariki are explorers discovering, creating and sharing stories with others.

As tamariki spend time with books, they begin to:

- retell stories in their own words
- create new characters and adventures
- share stories from their own lives and families
- build stories together with their peers

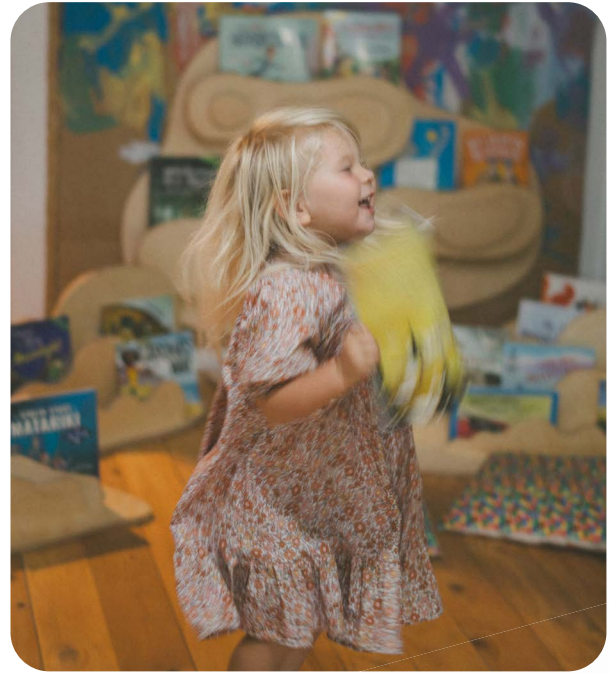
The Little Library can become a stage for these stories to unfold — a forest where children can grow their imagination, confidence and language, while building meaningful connections with others.

# How to use your Little Library

## What you receive

Each Little Library includes:

- A modular forest-inspired kitset library, including tree, shrub and rock shelving units
- A curated collection of award-winning children's books from Aotearoa
- Assembly instructions for the kitset
- This user guide
- Access to ancillary resources connected to many of the books in the collection
- Invitations to future Little Libraries resources and updates



We aim to continue building a growing ecosystem of storytelling and literacy resources to support kaiako and tamariki using Little Libraries.



## Creating a story space

The Little Library kitset has been designed to be flexible and adaptable so that it can work within many different early learning environments.

Based on feedback from kaiako, we've redesigned the main tree shelf so it can sit comfortably against a wall. This helps keep it sturdy and ensures it doesn't take up too much space in busy learning areas.

You may choose to place the pieces together to form a small storytelling corner, or spread them throughout the room as part of different learning spaces.

Wherever it lives, the library works best when it feels like an inviting and accessible place where tamariki can:

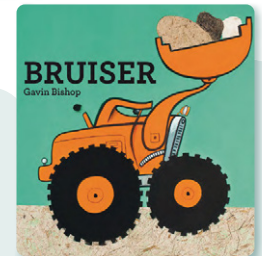
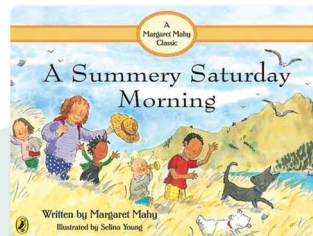
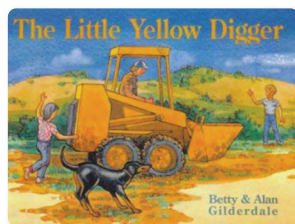
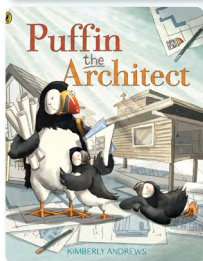
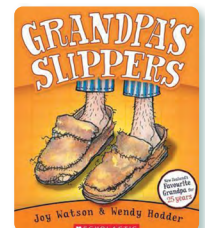
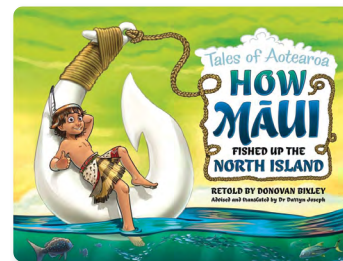
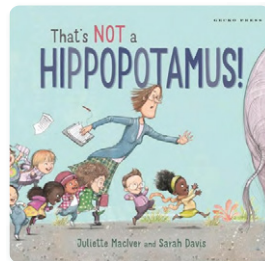
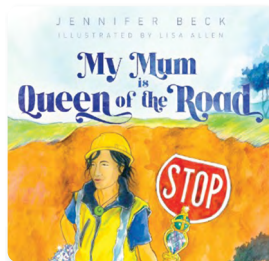
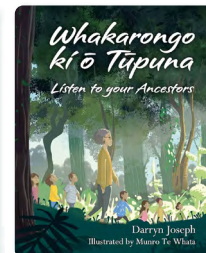
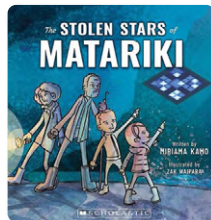
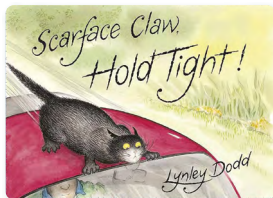
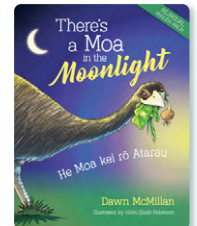
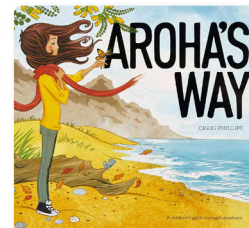
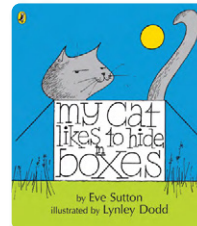
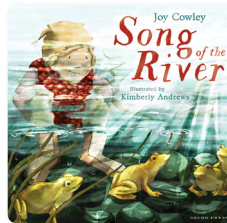
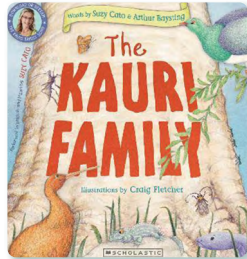
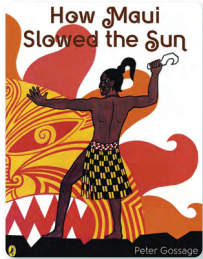
- browse books independently
- gather for shared reading
- act out stories
- invent stories of their own



**Rather than being just another bookshelf, the Little Library can become a place where stories come alive.**

# How to use your Little Library

## The books in your Little Library



**In the Book Forest,  
every story grows on  
a different branch.**

The books included in your Little Library have been carefully selected in collaboration with Storylines Trust, who champion children's literature in Aotearoa.

Together they reflect the richness and diversity of stories created here — stories of place, whānau, imagination and the natural world.

These stories invite tamariki to explore many different worlds and ways of seeing.

Some of the books in this collection are supported by ancillary resources and storytelling ideas, which are provided with your kitset and available through the Little Libraries website.

## Caring for your Little Library

Little Libraries are designed to be robust and long-lasting, and each book is covered to help protect it. With a little care, the library and its books will stay beautiful for years to come.

Some centres choose to:

- rotate books occasionally to keep the selection feeling fresh
- keep the shelving tidy so books are easy to see and explore
- involve tamariki in helping return books to the shelves
- encourage gentle handling of books
- set aside damaged books for repair

Many kaiako also enjoy inviting children to take responsibility for the library, getting them to help care for the books and keep the space welcoming for everyone.

## Our literacy whānau

Little Libraries exist within a wider community of organisations working to support children's literacy in Aotearoa. We are deeply grateful to the partners who have helped shape and support this project.

Together, these partners form a growing community committed to supporting children's literacy and storytelling.



### The Values Trust

A philanthropic trust supporting climate, creatures and children's literacy in Aotearoa.

[valuestrust.co.nz](http://valuestrust.co.nz)



### Storylines Trust

Champions children's literature created by New Zealand writers and illustrators.

[storylines.org.nz](http://storylines.org.nz)



### Public Libraries

Supporting communities across the country with free access to books, programmes and events.

[publiclibraries.org.nz](http://publiclibraries.org.nz)



### Wheelers Books

Helping schools and learning centres access high-quality books and resources.

[wheelers.co.nz](http://wheelers.co.nz)



### Storytime Foundation

Providing free books and literacy resources to families across Aotearoa.

[storytime.org.nz](http://storytime.org.nz)



### Play'n'Learn

Designing innovative furniture and learning environments for early childhood education.

[playnlearn.co.nz](http://playnlearn.co.nz)



### Duffy Books in Homes

Working to break the cycle of booklessness for children across New Zealand.

[booksinhomes.org.nz](http://booksinhomes.org.nz)



### Point Research

Supporting the project through research and evaluation.

[point.co.nz](http://point.co.nz)



### Kindello

Helping whānau find early learning centres for their tamariki.

[kindello.com](http://kindello.com)



### Enrich

Fostering oral language, literacy and numeracy to strengthen communication, relationships and social-emotional skills.

[enquiries@enrichlanguage.nz](mailto:enquiries@enrichlanguage.nz)

## Our friends at Public Libraries

While we love the idea of small libraries living inside early learning centres, we also want to celebrate the wonderful public libraries across Aotearoa.

Public libraries are welcoming community spaces where tamariki and their whānau can explore books, stories and activities together. Many offer free access to books, storytime sessions, songs, rhymes and community events.

Some centres and kindergartens encourage families to explore their local library by:

- sharing information about nearby libraries with whānau
- talking about library visits during mat time or storytelling sessions
- organising a visit to the local library

For some families, visiting the library may be a new experience. A small invitation from a trusted kaiako can make a big difference.



## Find Your Local Library

The Public Libraries website has a great resource for finding your closest Library:

[loveyourlibrary.org.nz/find-your-local-library](https://www.loveyourlibrary.org.nz/find-your-local-library)



# Stay Connected

Little Libraries is an evolving project, and we are excited to continue learning alongside educators like you.

Over time we will share:

- Ancillary resources connected to the books in your library
- Storytelling ideas and inspiration from centres around Aotearoa
- Updates and opportunities to connect with the wider Little Libraries community.



## We welcome feedback

If you have feedback, ideas or stories from your centre, we would love to hear from you.

[kiaora@littlelibraries.co.nz](mailto:kiaora@littlelibraries.co.nz)

**Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō koutou**

*Seek after wisdom for the sake of your wellbeing*





Little  
Libraries