

## About the Book

If you could design a city that would be both a great place to live and good for the planet, what would it look like? Today, more than half the world's population lives in cities. Many of those cities face big challenges, including the climate crisis, food insecurity and rapid population growth, but they are also places where innovation can thrive.

Peek into the past to see how cities have changed through time, and explore what could make them more sustainable and welcoming today and for tomorrow.



photo credit: Dave Clendenan

## About the Author

Megan Clendenan has lived in cities of all sizes and loves to explore new neighborhoods on foot. She has worked for women's rights, mental health and youth empowerment nonprofit organizations as well as for an environmental law group. Megan is the author of *Fresh Air, Clean Water*, part of the Orca Think series; co-author of *Design Like Nature*, part of the Orca Footprints series; and the author of *Offbeat*, a novel for young readers. Megan lives near Vancouver, British Columbia, with her family.

## Discussion Questions

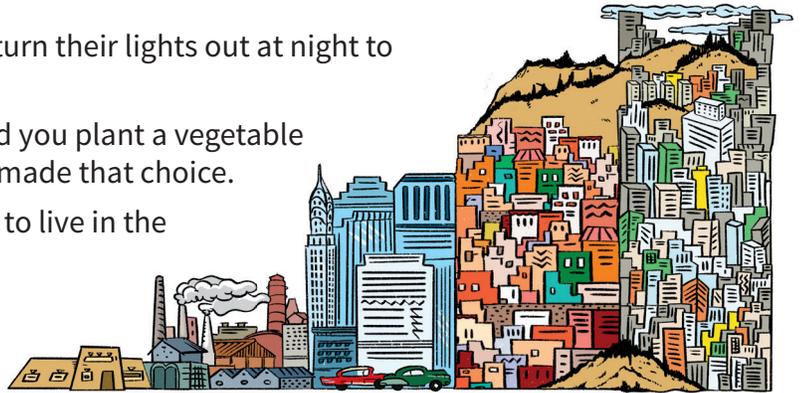
1. Did you learn anything new about cities by reading this book? If so, what was it?
2. What do you like best about where you live? What would you want to change?
3. Which city featured in the "If You Lived Here" sections of the book would you choose to live in? Why?
4. In Chapter 1, the book discusses inequalities in cities. Have you noticed anything in your city or neighborhood that might not be fair to everyone?



# CITIES

## Discussion and Activity Guide | 2

5. On page 30, the author asks, “Who is the city for, anyway?” What is she referring to? What is the case in your town or city?
6. If you could choose, how would you like to travel around your city? Why did you make this choice?
7. On page 32, the book describes an intersection with no signs and no lights. Do you think this would work in your town or city? Why or why not?
8. Do you know how the water in your city or town is cleaned for drinking? Research your local water management system to find out.
9. Describe how the city can “soak up the storm” (page 44) by planting trees and other shrubs. Why is this important?
10. Do you think the idea of the “circular economy” (page 48) is a good way to reduce city waste? Why or why not?
11. Do streetlights make you feel safe at night?
12. Do you think city skyscrapers should have to turn their lights out at night to conserve energy? Why or why not?
13. If you could choose any location, where would you plant a vegetable garden in your city or town? Explain why you made that choice.
14. Do you think farm animals should be allowed to live in the city? Why or why not?



## Writing Exercises

### Take action

Here's your chance to write a letter to your mayor and make a difference as a citizen of a city. Choose one of the following two scenarios that are based on city issues described in the book. Write a practice letter to the Mayor to make your case on what action you feel the city should take and why.

- a) You just found out that the park near your home, which includes a soccer field, playground and basketball courts, is going to be replaced by a building and a parking lot.
- b) You just found out that vegetable gardens aren't allowed on front lawns in your neighborhood.

### Comparing the past and the future

1. The book discusses cities through time. What are some of the ideas from the past that you would like to see used in your town or city today? Explain why.
2. What would you like to imagine is the future of your city? What innovation would make your city or town more welcoming or sustainable? Suggest one future idea for each of the five chapter topics: city design, transportation, water and waste, power and light, and food.

### Share your thoughts

The book is titled, *Cities: How Humans Live Together*. Do you think people can share cities in an equitable way? Why or why not?



## Interactive Activities

### Mapping what goes where

City planners have a lot of decisions to make. What should go in a neighborhood? Houses and apartments? A grocery store? What about a school and a park nearby? What goes where? Draw a detailed map of your city.

### Is your city a sponge?

Walk around your community and write observations. What's natural and what's concrete? Are there gardens planted in boulevards? Next to sidewalks? Are there trees along the streets? Do you think your city would be able to soak up a big storm?

### Searching for services

Underneath your feet, hidden in the shrubs or hanging above you, there are city services everywhere. Walk around your block with a notebook and pencil and your observation skills turned up high. Count electrical boxes and sewer covers. How are they labeled? What do they look like? Look for garbage or recycling cans. What else do you see?

### Build your own city farm

Imagine a green space near where you live. It might be your backyard, your schoolyard or a nearby community park. Now imagine what it would look like as an urban farm! What would you plant? Would you choose to have animals? Beehives? Grab a notebook and sketch out what your city farm would look like.

