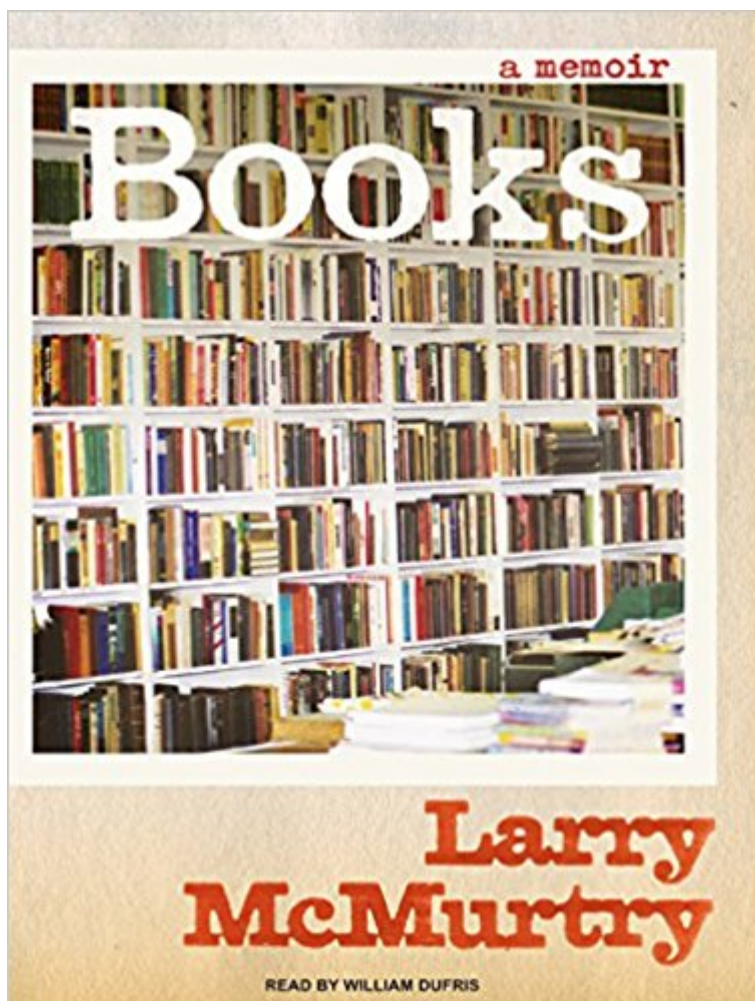


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# Books: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Larry McMurtry is known to be reclusive and extremely private, rarely giving interviews or making public appearances. Audiences are therefore sure to be eager to read this intimate and surprisingly personal memoir of the brilliant writer's love affair with books. McMurtry writes about his life as a boy growing up in a largely bookless world; as a young man devouring the world of literature; as a fledgling writer and family man; and as one of America's most prominent "bookmen," becoming the astute and adventurous collector who would eventually open stores of rare and collectible books in Georgetown, Houston, and his hometown of Archer, Texas. In *Books: A Memoir*, McMurtry gives us a lively look at the eccentrics who collect, sell, or simply lust after rare books. *Books* is like the best kind of diary—full of wonderful anecdotes, amazing characters, great gossip, and shrewd observations about authors, book people, literature, and himself. At once chatty, revealing, and deeply satisfying, *Books* is, like its author, erudite, life-loving, and full of great stories.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best of the Month, July 2008: It wasn't enough for Pulitzer Prize-winning author Larry McMurtry to become one of the most prolific, bestselling, and beloved of American writers. Besides writing nearly forty books, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Lonesome Dove*, he has emerged as one of this nation's greatest bookmen. In *Books: A Memoir*, McMurtry shares with readers his lifelong passion and dogged pursuit of books. In short, gem-like chapters, he paints a fascinating picture of the landscape of American book culture and book selling over a 50-year period. The story is as dusty, musty and crusty as any of McMurtry's fictionalized Westerns, and filled with characters who seem

like they stepped out of central casting. Whether you love McMurtry, books, bookstores or a combination thereof, you'll find something to love in *Books: A Memoir*. Settle in with a cuppa coffee and let McMurtry kindle your passion for physical books. --Lauren Nemroff --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Despite McMurtry's well-deserved reputation as a writer, including a Pulitzer Prize and more than a handful of best sellers, critics are unsure about his latest effort. They cite it as an uneven volume that glosses over some important characters and anecdotes (or, conversely, delves a bit too much into the details of book collecting) and doesn't advance its purported mission of offering a memoir of the reticent author's life in books. Some of the vignettes seem to have been dashed off almost as an afterthought, though McMurtry's style can be an acquired taste. Still, even if *Books* doesn't transcend its limited subject matter and won't win over many readers not already familiar with McMurtry's story, devotees will enjoy digging alongside the bookman, thrilling to the next great discovery. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I enjoyed the short chapters of this. Each essay was short, so it kept the book moving right along. However, they were so disjointed, that neither theme nor chronology seemed to flow from one to the other. This desperately needed a good editor. Many asides here could have been cleared up with a simple Google search (and yes, this has been written since the advent of Google, as he mentions throughout) in reference to geography, family connections, history, etc. Fans of McMurtry will likely enjoy his voice and stories, but unless you're a book buyer/book seller/fine books collector, there's little here to interest. I wearied a bit of the (unimpressive, as I'm apparently not in tune with fine book collecting) name-dropping. Lists of stock, blocks of purchase, books, bookstores purchased from were dull. There were a few mentions and gems among the essays here, and the second half gets a little better than the first as he begins to talk about more general books, rather than collector's interests (such as inscriptions, etc. that make books more or less valuable). But this is easily skipable. I'm glad it only took me a few hours to complete, because it would not have been worth any more time.

McMurtry is not only a prolific author but is also a prolific reader. In the aptly named *Books* he discusses his early days as a reader, starting with a box of books left him by a family member. McMurtry examines bookstores big and small he has frequented. Often his travels seem

more to explore stores than for his business as author. He remembers favorite titles and favorite authors in his past, and laments the closing of so many little shops from New York to Los Angeles and Seattle to Houston. McMurry has fulfilled his reading dreams by buying and filling several buildings with books in his native Archer City, Texas. His inventory runs to tens of thousands of titles in every category of the Dewey Decimal System.

Larry McMurry is a legend in his own right, but for those enthusiasts of bookselling lore such as myself, he takes on a unique significance. Being the author of *Cadillac Jack* (A modern, fictitious A.S.W. Rosenbach, in my meek opinion), we are well aware of McMurry's insights into the world of secondhand and antiquarian book sellers. Here, in *Books: A Memoir*, he invites us to take a small peek at the titles in the collection of his experience and knowledge. I give it 4 stars only because of its formatting. McMurry has a habit of rambling that can sometimes be taxing to follow. However, this is somewhat remedied by his short chapters, which are convenient for the reader on the go. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

Mr. McMurry had a richness of knowledge and experiences as a book-dealer and bookstore owner, but he just skimmed along, throwing out names, both well known and those within the book world, but rarely stopping and going deeply enough into any anecdote to feel a part of it. It could have been much more enjoyable and more memorable if he had focussed on fewer people and experiences and offered a bit more of his own feelings and reactions and those of interesting friends and colleagues.

Even with 47 reviews on this book as I write this....I can not help but contribute my two cents. This book is non fiction and Larry McMurry bares his soul as a book lover, book seller, "scout" and author in these pages. From his early childhood and those first 19 books as a gift...to his current operation in Archer City Texas..."book city"...with hundreds of thousands of QUALITY books...he explains it all. He explains it all in this book, which is akin to sitting across the kitchen table with him, perhaps in Archer City, drinking coffee while he relates in fine story telling fashion...his experiences in becoming a book buyer, book collector, book seller, author and human being. I also was very familiar with Barber's Book Store and Brian Perkins of Ft. Worth, whose stock Larry bought out around 1998. Mr. McMurry and myself have shared a lot of the same stomping grounds...as I spent much of my life in Ft. Worth (and 6 yrs in Lubbock), in Texas terms, a hop skip and jump from his hometown and bookcity of Archer City. Also I spent a couple of years in Alexandria, VA at the same

time Larry was starting his bookshop in Georgetown, MD...again just a few miles from where I was at the same time. As a lover of books, collector of books and long time student of books, I completely enjoyed this writing. Thanks Mr. McMurtry...thanks a LOT! I absorbed it all and will place the book on a special spot in my shelves, beside books by John Graves, A.C. Greene, J. Frank Dobie, and Ben K. Green.

I found this book fascinating -- though McMurty seems to kind of drift off towards the end as it brings us into the present (at the time the book was written). A lot of us our "book lovers," but McMurty took it to a whole other level. This has nothing really to do with his life as a writer, but his life as a book collector, which blossomed into a bookstore and then warehouse, and how he became a "hunter" and collector of treasured books. If you are one of those people who are involved in selling books on - or any other place for that matter - this is a must read.

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