

## Litter Lady Leads: In a Litter-Filled Land

**Martha Goldner**

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*Litter Lady Leads is a playful picture book about the heroism of tending to and beautifying one's environment.*

Martha Goldner's uplifting picture book *Litter Lady Leads* encourages taking care of the environment.

Litter Lady is a caring woman who picks up trash around her community with the pointy end of her cane; she also gives cookies to children at the park. She loves to clean up; she just can't help it. One day, the children notice that Litter Lady looks unwell and doesn't have any cookies for them. They decide to pitch in, lighten her load, and help to make the world a cleaner place.

The spirited narrative builds excited lore around Litter Lady, who emerges as a creature of legends—a mysterious hero in a pea-green coat and horn-rimmed glasses that conceal her eyes. She picks up gum wrappers from train seats, soda cans from the beach, and empty popcorn buckets from movie theaters, the scenes changing with a swift whimsy. Her inspiring single-mindedness contrasts with the children's more selfish initial disappointment over not having cookies, but their attitude transforms to pride when they participate in cleaning. Through their actions, they come to see what Litter Lady sees: the potential for a beautiful world beneath the neglected exterior.

The pencil illustrations are inconsistent, though. Some are too rough: At one point, Litter Lady's face is distorted by distance; at another, a black cloud obscures a damaged tree. Others complement the story better: Litter Lady's hunched form, garbed in bloomers at the beach, is humorous, and the spirals over her glasses when she's overwhelmed by the quantity of trash in the world are evocative.

*Litter Lady Leads* is a playful picture book about cleaning up one's environment; it celebrates those who prioritize the needs of the world above their own.

AIMÉE JODOIN (November 12, 2024)

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