



A Reading Group Guide to:

***Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen***

By Arin Andrews

**About the Book**

In this first-of-its-kind memoir, Arin Andrews details the journey that led him to make the life-transforming decision to undergo gender reassignment as a high school junior. In his captivatingly witty, honest voice, Arin reveals the challenges he faced as a boy in a girl's body, the humiliation and anger he felt after getting kicked out of his private school, and all the changes—both mental and physical—he experienced once his transition began.

*Some Assembly Required* is a true coming-of-age story about knocking down obstacles and embracing family, friendship, and first love. But more than that, it is a reminder that self-acceptance does not come ready-made with a manual and spare parts. Rather, some assembly is always required.

**Prereading Discussion Questions**

1. What role does gender play in our society?
2. What role does self-acceptance play in a person's happiness?

**Discussion Questions**

1. Arin begins his memoir by telling the reader about his night at the prom. How does this set the stage for his story? Why do you think he chose to open with this event?
2. Describe Arin's relationship with Darian. How does it change him?
3. Why did Arin's mother forbid him from having any contact with Darian? How did that affect Arin and his mother's relationship? How about his relationship with Darian?
4. What is Arin's stance on religion? How does it affect his school life? His personal life?
5. Describe Arin's reaction to starting his menstrual cycle. Why does he feel this way?
6. Arin tells the reader how happy he felt when he became a member of Civil Air Patrol (CAP). What are some of the reasons that he felt comfortable being a part of this group?
7. Why does Arin get kicked out of school? How does his mother react to his expulsion? How

would you react? How do you think the school should have handled the situation? Was expelling Arin the right thing to do?

8. Discuss the importance of Arin's discovery of Skylarkeleven and his initial research on being transgender.

9. Discuss the role that the OpenArms Youth Project (OYP) plays in Arin's life and how it affects his feelings of self-worth.

10. Taylor tells Arin and his mother about the Native American concept of "Two-Spirit." Why does this really hit home for Arin's mother? How does it change her feelings toward Arin being transgender?

11. Katie Rain Hill plays a major role in Arin's life, beginning as soon as Arin reads the piece about her in *Tulsa World*. Describe their relationship and discuss the different phases they go through as a couple.

12. What is the significance of the name "Arin," and why do you think it clicked for both Arin and his mother?

13. Discuss the importance of the cruise that Arin takes with his family.

14. How does Arin's relationship with his mother change throughout his memoir? Compare and contrast Arin's transformation with his mother's own transformation.

15. Why do you think Arin and Katie chose to make their relationship so public?

16. How does Katie's sex reassignment surgery change her relationship with Arin?

17. What impact does Arin and Katie's breakup have on Arin? How does his subsequent relationship with Austin change his attitude about love?

18. Discuss the significance of Arin being awarded the Carolyn Wagner Youth Leadership Award. How does it help symbolize his journey?

19. Discuss the importance of Arin's family's support and how it helped shape him.

20. Explain the title of the memoir and discuss how it can be applied to Arin's life.

### **Activities and Further Research**

1. Each chapter in *Some Assembly Required* opens with a photo of Arin. Go back and examine each photo, then discuss how these photos help tell his story and illustrate his transformation.

2. The book ends with Arin accepting the Carolyn Wagner Youth Leadership Award, right before he makes his speech. What do you think Arin said? Write the acceptance speech you

think he might have given.

3. Watch some of Arin's video diary entries on his YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/Rockclimber712>. Discuss the differences between reading about Arin's journey and watching him describe it in person.
4. Write a short essay in response to the principal of Lincoln Christian School kicking Arin out of school. Give your opinion on whether you agree or disagree with the principal's decision and explain why.
5. Explore the LGBTQ support groups that are available in your community. Create a brochure that you could hand out to a peer who is looking for LGBTQ support.
6. Brainstorm ways that you can help your peers understand what it means to be transgender. Create a pamphlet that might help someone unfamiliar with the term appreciate what it means.
7. Create a soundtrack for Arin's life, using each song or piece of music to convey his emotions during the different phases he went through.
8. Write five things that you learned about being transgender from reading Arin's memoir. Then discuss if your point of view on being transgender has changed and why.
9. Write a letter to Arin describing how you feel about his memoir and what parts of the book made the biggest impact on you. Explain why.
10. Read Katie Rain Hill's memoir, *Rethinking Normal*. As you're reading, think about the similarities and differences between Katie's and Arin's journeys and the challenges they both faced. Discuss your findings.

*Guide written by Laura Swerdloff Moreno, a teacher in New York City.*

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