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Unputdownable.

This word is not in every dictionary, but it is one that booksellers often use—and the one we use to describe our Barnes & Noble Recommends selections. Nothing gives us more pleasure than recommending books that we have read and loved, and finding unputdownable books gives us the greatest pleasure of all. ✦ Barnes & Noble Recommends provides us with the opportunity to share such books with you. Each is chosen by a group of our discriminating and independent-minded booksellers from across the country. All of these novels are riveting reads as well as books worthy of stimulating discussion and those you'll want to recommend to friends and relatives—as is our newest selection: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson. Our previous selections include:

The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield

The Double Bind by Chris Bohjalian

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid

Stormy Weather by Paulette Jiles

Garden Spells by Sarah Addison Allen

The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox by Maggie O'Farrell

Belong to Me by Marisa de los Santos

Child 44 by Tom Rob Smith

America America by Ethan Canin

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows



The Bestselling International Sensation: A Thriller You'll Never Forget.

An engrossing debut thriller, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* has been an international sensation and a bestseller in its native Sweden and throughout Europe. It features an unforgettable heroine: a brilliant, punk-goth 24-year-old computer hacker and private investigator named Lisbeth Salander. Together with Mikael Blomkvist, a financial journalist on a most unusual assignment, she tracks a serial killer through a dangerous maze of business,



political, and family secrets. ✦ The intricate tale begins when Blomkvist is convicted of libeling top Swedish industrialist Hans-Erik Wennerström. Unable to prove his innocence, Blomkvist prepares to leave his position at *Millennium*, the magazine he co-founded that is now financially threatened by the verdict. But a summons from Wennerström's rival, the aging tycoon Henrik Vanger, presents an option he couldn't have imagined: in exchange for Blomkvist's writing the Vanger family history, Vanger promises to back *Millennium* financially and deliver incriminating evidence of

Wennerström's crooked dealings. ✦ But that's not all. The closets of the Vanger clan are littered with skeletons, and his new patron wants Blomkvist to set one at rest: the disappearance—forty years ago—of Vanger's 16-year-old grandniece, Harriet. Intrigued by the cold case that was never solved despite multiple investigations, Blomkvist begins to dig for new evidence on an island north of Stockholm. ✦ He is soon joined by Salander, a pierced, tattooed, and phenomenally gifted freelance



investigator who was originally hired by Vanger to vet Blomkvist's reputation. A victim of assault and harrowing abuse, Salander is driven by a relentless will and an astonishing capability for merciless retribution. ♦ Larsson's narrative unfolds with mounting suspense, detailing the duo's intellectual ingenuity and increasing courage as they expose hidden cultures of right-wing fanaticism and misogyny and reveal the moral bankruptcy of big capital. As they race across Europe and on to Australia to trap their prey before another woman is tortured and killed, the reader is held in breathless anticipation until the novel's unforeseen conclusion.

♦ You see, Harriet was very special. She was introverted—like her brother—and as a teenager she became wrapped up in religion, unlike anyone else in the family. But she had a clear talent and she was tremendously intelligent. She had both morals and backbone. When she was fourteen or fifteen I was convinced she was the one—and not her brother or any of the mediocre cousins, nephews, and nieces around me—who was destined to run the Vanger business one day, or at least play a central role in it.

“So what happened?”

“Now we come to the real reason I want to hire you. I want to find out who in the family murdered Harriet, and who since then has spent almost 40 years trying to drive me insane.”

—from *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

About the Author

♦ Born in Västerbotten, northern Sweden, in 1954, Stieg Larsson's professional career bears a striking resemblance to that of Mikael Blomkvist, the protagonist of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Beginning as a graphic designer for the news agency Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (TT), Larsson went on to become the chief editor of *Expo*, the magazine published by the Expo Foundation, an organization which he helped establish in 1995 to combat racism and the Swedish right-wing extremist movement. ♦ Inspired by an old joke shared with a colleague at TT, Larsson started writing *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* at night just for fun. Two other novels, completing the Millennium trilogy, would follow. Describing them as “pension insurance,” Larsson said he enjoyed the process of fiction writing so much that he didn't make contact with a publisher



until he had completed the first two novels and had the third underway. Though Larsson, who died of a heart attack in 2004, did not live to see any of his books in print, all three were published in Scandinavia and continental Europe to great acclaim. ♦ Books two and three in the Millennium trilogy are slated for U.S. publication by Knopf, and the series will be adapted for film by the Swedish production company Yellow Bird, beginning with *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* in 2009.



Get the most out of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* with these reading group discussion questions.

1. Careful observation is the foundation of any successful journalist's or private investigator's career. Discuss how the various characters' outward appearances aligned with their true personalities in this novel.
2. Lisbeth Salander's character is enigmatic and antisocial throughout much of the book. What do you see as the catalyst for the slow emergence of her personality?
3. Lisbeth judges everyone harshly, including herself. What do you think of her assessment of Mikael Blomkvist?
4. While poverty, social injustice, parental abuse, and difficult childhoods are often cited as explanations for criminal behavior, Lisbeth believes in free will and choice. Do you agree?
5. What propels Blomkvist to lay aside his professional ethics and take on the investigation proposed by Vanger?
6. The relationship between Blomkvist and Cecilia is fraught from the beginning. How does Cecilia come to terms with it? What do you think about her decision?
7. How successfully does Larsson develop Lisbeth's connection to her mother? Is there anything about their relationship that helps shed light on Lisbeth's behavior?
8. Were you surprised by the book's portrayal of right-wing fanaticism and violence against women in a country known for its liberal views?
9. Which character's duplicity—or innocence—did you find the most unexpected? Which character was your favorite?
10. Discuss Blomkvist's role in the investigation. Do you feel that he made as important a contribution as Lisbeth? Why or why not?
11. The narrative contained a number of plot twists. Who did you imagine sent the framed flowers to Vanger each year?

Further Reading:

The Man Who Smiled by Henning Mankell

The Princess of Burundi by Kjell Eriksson

Borkmann's Point by Håkan Nesser

Child 44 by Tom Rob Smith

Praise for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

FROM OUR BOOKSELLERS

"Refreshingly intelligent, this fast-paced mystery draws together an odd cast of underdog journalists, secretive industrialists, and a punk hacker with Asperger's to create the strangest—and best—thriller of the year, if not decade. A must-read."

James Tardif, Ellicott City, MD

"An old-fashioned secluded island murder mystery, updated with complex characters and new technology.... Like Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple meet *Cold Case*. Powerful, thrilling, and disturbing."

Jill Borage, St. Louis, MO

"This gritty thriller is packed with deceit, treachery, and plenty of dirty family secrets—enough to fill an entire basement with skeletons."

Elayne Carringer, Devon, PA

"Gripping! I even read at stop lights and while I was brushing my teeth."

Sarah Goodrich, Lexington, KY

FROM REVIEWERS

"As vivid as bloodstains on snow—and a perfect one-volume introduction to the unique strengths of Scandinavian crime fiction."

Lee Child

"What a cracking novel! I haven't read such a stunning thriller debut for years.... Brilliantly written and totally gripping."

Minette Walters

"The ballyhoo is fully justified.... At over 500 pages this hardly sagged.... The novel scores on every front—character, story, atmosphere."

The Times [London]

"A publishing sensation.... Crime fiction has seldom needed to salute and mourn such a stellar talent as Larsson's in the same breath."

The Sunday Times [London]



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— *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* —

List Price \$24.95

Our Price \$17.47

Member Price \$14.97

Share the Experience

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in our moderated online book club.

Log on to www.bn.com/bookclubs throughout October.

Find Out More About Stieg Larsson

Visit www.bn.com/recommends for more information
about the author and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

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www.bn.com/recommends.