



**Georgetown Township Public Library  
Book Discussion Guide**  
*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*  
Stieg Larsson (2008)

**About This Book**

*The first novel in Stieg Larsson's internationally best-selling Millennium trilogy.*

It's about the disappearance forty years ago of Harriet Vanger, a young scion of one of the wealthiest families in Sweden...and about her octogenarian uncle, determined to know the truth about what he believes was her murder.

It's about Mikael Blomkvist, a crusading journalist recently at the wrong end of a libel case, hired to get to the bottom of Harriet's disappearance...and about Lisbeth Salander, a twenty-four-year-old pierced and tattooed genius hacker possessed of the hard-earned wisdom of someone twice her age—and a terrifying capacity for ruthlessness to go with it—who assists Blomkvist with the investigation. This unlikely team discovers a vein of nearly unfathomable iniquity running through the Vanger family, astonishing corruption in the highest echelons of Swedish industrialism—and an unexpected connection between themselves.

It's a contagiously exciting, stunningly intelligent novel about society at its most hidden, and about the intimate lives of a brilliantly realized cast of characters, all of them forced to face the darker aspects of their world and of their own lives. (*From the publisher.*)

Larsson's Millennium trilogy includes *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

**From:** <http://www.litlovers.com>

**About the Author**

Born in Västerbotten in northern Sweden in 1954, Stieg Larsson had a professional career that bears a striking resemblance to that of the protagonist of his Millennium thrillers, Mikael Blomkvist. 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 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 admitted he started writing the Millennium novels—*The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*—just for fun. 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 and had a third under way.

Though Larsson died of a heart attack in 2004 and never saw any of his books in print, all three were subsequently published in Scandinavia and continental Europe to great acclaim. He left behind the unfinished manuscript for a fourth book in the series. (*From Barnes & Noble.*)

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## Discussion Questions

1. Careful observation is the foundation of any successful journalist's or private investigator's career. Discuss how the various characters' outward appearance aligned with their true personality 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 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 one emerged as your favorite?
10. Discuss Mikael 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?  
(*Questions issued by publisher.*)

**From:** <http://www.litlovers.com>

**Resources for additional information about book discussion choices and authors:**

**Books & Authors** (Access through links to MeL Databases on Library's webpage.)  
<http://bna.galegroup.com/bna/>

**LitLovers.com**  
[www.litlovers.com](http://www.litlovers.com)

**Overbooked.com**  
<http://www.overbooked.com>

**Penguin.com (USA)**  
<http://www.us.penguin.com/static/pages/bookclubs/index.html>

**Reading Group Center**  
<http://reading-group-center.knopfdoubleday.com>

**Reading Group Guides**  
<http://www.readinggroupguides.com>

**Suggested print resources:**

*The Book Club Companion: A Comprehensive Guide to the Reading Group Experience*  
Diana Loevy  
**374.22 Loevy 2006**

*The Book Group Book: A Thoughtful Guide to Forming and Enjoying a Stimulating Book Discussion Group*  
Ellen Slezak (editor)  
**374.22 Book 2000**

*Good Books Lately: The One-Stop Resource for Book Groups and Other Greedy Readers*  
Ellen Moore and Kira Stevens  
**374.22 Moore 2004**

*Read It and Eat: A Month-by-Month Guide to Scintillating Book Club Selections and Mouthwatering Menus*  
Sarah Gardner  
**028.9 Gardner 2005**

*The Reading Group Handbook: Everything You Need to Know, From Choosing Members to Leading Discussions*  
Rachel W. Jacobsohn  
**374.22 Jacobsohn 1994**

*What Do I Read Next?* (Multi-volume set, annual editions)  
Gale Research Inc.  
**R 016.813 What**