



## ***The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins***

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### **About the author:**

Paula Hawkins worked as a journalist for fifteen years before turning her hand to fiction. She is the author of *The Girl on the Train* and *Into the Water*. An international #1 bestseller, *The Girl on the Train* was published in 50 countries and over 40 languages. It has sold over 18 million copies worldwide and has been adapted into a major motion picture. Hawkins was born in Zimbabwe and now lives in London.

Source: Author's website: <http://paulahawkinsbooks.com/bio-paula-hawkins/>

### **About the book**

Three women, three men, connected through marriage or infidelity. Each is to blame for something. But only one is a killer in this #1 New York Times bestselling psychological thriller about human frailty and obsession.

Just what goes on in the houses you pass by every day?

Rachel takes the same commuter train every morning and evening, rattling over the same junctions, flashing past the same townhouses. The train stops at the same signal every day, and she sees the same couple, breakfasting on their roof terrace. Jason and Jess, as she calls them, seem so happy. Then one day Rachel sees someone new in their garden. Soon after, Rachel sees the woman she calls Jess on the news. Jess has disappeared.

Through the ensuing police investigation, Rachel is drawn deeper into the lives of the couple she learns are really Megan and Scott Hipwell. As she befriends Scott, Rachel pieces together what really happened the day Megan disappeared. But when Megan's body is found, Rachel finds herself the chief suspect in the case. Plunged

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into a world of betrayals, secrets and deceptions, Rachel must confront the facts about her own past and her own failed marriage.

A sinister and twisting story that will keep you guessing at every turn, *The Girl on the Train* is a high-speed chase for the truth.

*Source: Publisher's website: Penquin/Random House Canada*

<http://penquinrandomhouse.ca>

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. We all do it—actively watch life around us. In this way, with her own voyeuristic curiosity, Rachel Watson is not so unusual. What do you think accounts for this nose, all-too-human impulse? Is it more extreme in Rachel than in the average person? What is so different about her?
2. How would you have reacted if you'd seen what Rachel did from her train window—a pile of clothes—just before the rumored disappearance of Megan Hipwell? What might you or she have done differently?
3. In both Rachel Watson's and Megan Hipwell's marriages, deep secrets are kept from the husbands. Are these marriages unusual or even extreme in this way? Consider how many relationships rely on half-truths? Is it ever necessary or justifiable to lie to someone you love? How much is too much to hide from a partner?

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4. What about the lies the characters tell to themselves? In what ways is Rachel lying to herself? Do all people tell themselves lies to some degree in order to move on with their lives? Is what Rachel (or any of the other characters) is doing any different from that? How do her lies ultimately affect her and the people around her?

5. A crucial question in *The Girl on the Train* is how much Rachel Watson can trust her own memory. How reliable are her observations? Yet since the relationship between truth and memory is often a slippery one, how objective or “true” can a memory, by definition, really be? Can memory lie? If so, what factors might influence it? Consider examples from the book.

6. One of Rachel’s deepest disappointments, it turns out, is that she can’t have children. Her ex-husband Tom’s second wife Anna is the mother to a young child, Evie. How does Rachel’s inability to conceive precipitate her breakdown? How does the topic of motherhood drive the plot of the story? What do you think Paula Hawkins was trying to say about the ways motherhood can define women’s lives or what we expect from women’s domestic lives, whether as wives, mothers, or unmarried women in general?

7. Think about trust in *The Girl on the Train*. Who trusts whom? Who is deserving of trust? Is Rachel Watson a very trustworthy person? Why or why not? Who appears trustworthy and is actually not? What are the skills we use to make the decision about whether to trust someone we don’t know well?



8. Other characters in the novel make different assumptions about Rachel Watson depending on how or even where they see her. To a certain extent, she understands this and often tries to manipulate their assumptions—by appearing to be a commuter, for instance, going to work every day. Is she successful? To what degree did you make assumptions about Rachel early on based on the facts and appearances you were presented? How did those change over time and why? How did your assumptions about her affect your reading of the central mystery in the book? Did your assumptions about her change over its course? What other characters did you make assumptions about? How did your assumptions affect your interpretation of the plot? Having now finished *The Girl on the Train*, what surprised you the most?

*Source: Publisher's website: Penguin/Random House Canada*

<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/317557/the-girl-on-the-train-by-paula-hawkins/reading-guide>

**Other formats available at Halifax Public Libraries:**

- eBook
- Audiobook (CD)
- Large print

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