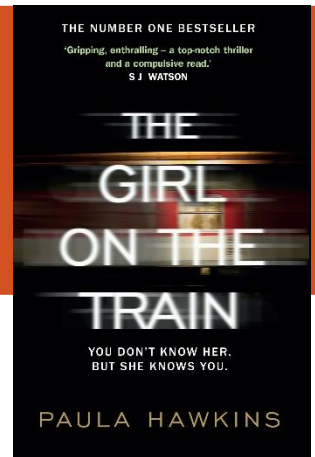




# The Girl on the Train

Paula Hawkins



## Author Background

Paula Hawkins (born 26 August 1972) was born and raised in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). Her father was an economics professor and financial journalist.

Hawkins read philosophy, politics and economics at Keble College, University of Oxford. She worked as a journalist for *The Times*, reporting on business as well as doing freelance work for other publications. Her first book was *The Money Goddess*, providing financial advice for women.

Starting around 2009, Hawkins wrote romantic comedy fiction under the name Amy Silver, completing four novels including *Confessions of a Reluctant Recessionista*. She did not, however, achieve any commercial breakthrough until she challenged herself to write a darker, more serious story. The result was a complex thriller, her best-selling novel *The Girl on the Train* (2015). The novel took her six months, writing full-time, to complete, at a time when she was in a difficult financial situation and had to borrow from her father. The novel was adapted into a film in 2016.

She lives in South London.

## Book Summary

Rachel catches the same commuter train every morning. She knows it will wait at the same signal each time, overlooking a row of back gardens. She has even started to feel like she knows the people who live in one of the houses. 'Jess and Jason', she calls them. Their life – as she sees it – is perfect. If only Rachel could be that happy.

And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough.

Now everything's changed. Now Rachel has a chance to become a part of the lives she's only watched from afar.

Now they'll see; she's much more than just the girl on the train...

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why does Paula Hawkins choose the three narrator characters she chooses—Rachel, Megan, and Anna? What do these three women have in common? How are they different?
- ❖ Rachel is the character we spend the most time with, and at least half the chapters are hers. How would the book be different if Megan or Anna were the primary character?
- ❖ Many people enjoy ‘people-watching. What do you think accounts for this nose, all-too-human impulse?
- ❖ How would you have reacted if you’d seen what Rachel did from her train window? What might she have done differently?
- ❖ Secrets and lies are major themes in the book. Is it ever necessary or justifiable to lie to someone you love? How much is too much to hide from a partner?
- ❖ What about the lies the characters tell themselves? In what ways is Rachel lying to herself? Do all people tell themselves lies to some degree?
- ❖ Can memory lie? If so, what factors might influence it? Consider examples from the book.
- ❖ Who trusts whom in *The Girl on the Train*? Who is deserving of trust? Who appears trustworthy and is actually not?
- ❖ How does the topic of motherhood drive the plot of the story? How do you think motherhood affected the characters’ decisions in *The Girl on the Train*?
- ❖ What did you think of the ending of the book? Did it change how you felt about Rachel, Megan, or any of the other characters?

## References

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