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## Book Club Kit Discussion Guide

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*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*  
by  
Stieg Larsson  
(New York: Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, 2009)

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### **Author:**

Stieg Larsson, who lived in Sweden, was the editor in chief of the magazine *Expo* and a leading expert on antidemocratic, right-wing extremist, and Nazi organizations. He died in 2004, shortly after delivering the manuscripts for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*. [From Random House]

### **Summary:**

Mikael Blomkvist, crusading journalist and publisher of the magazine *Millennium*, has decided to run a story that will expose an extensive sex trafficking operation between eastern Europe and Sweden, implicating well-known and highly placed members of Swedish society, business, and government.

But he has no idea just how explosive the story will be until, on the eve of publication, the two investigating reporters are murdered. And even more shocking for Blomkvist: the fingerprints found on the murder weapon belong to Lisbeth Salander—the troubled, wise-beyond-her-years genius hacker who came to his aid in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and who now becomes the focus and fierce heart of *The Girl Who Played with Fire*.

As Blomkvist, alone in his belief in Salander's innocence, plunges into an investigation of the slayings, Salander herself is drawn into a murderous hunt in which she is the prey, and which compels her to revisit her dark past in an effort to settle with it once and for all. [From Random House]

### **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 from Barnes & Noble]

**Further Reading:**

Mankell, Henning. *The Man Who Smiled*. New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2006.

Eriksson, Kjell. *The Princess of Burundi*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Minotaur, 2006.

Nesser, Hakan. *Borkmann's Point*. New York: Pantheon Books, c2006.

Smith, Tom Rob. *Child 44*. New York: Grand Central Pub., 2008.