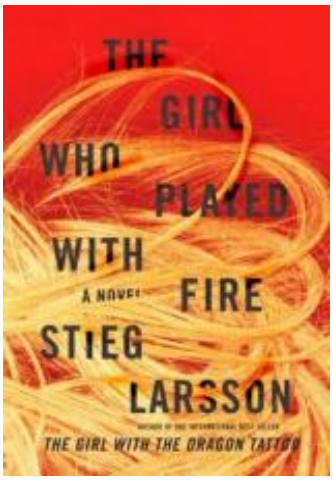
The Girl Who Played With Fire

by Stieg Larsson



About the Book

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.

Discussion Guide

1. Have you read **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**? How did your knowledge --- or lack of knowledge --- about that novel affect your reading of this one?

2. Discuss the prologue. What did you think was going on? At what point did you fully understand it?

3. On page 22, Larsson writes, ?Within mathematics, assertions must always be proven mathematically and expressed in a valid and scientifically correct formula.? What does this have to do with the plot of the novel? Why is Salander so intrigued by mathematics?

4. Outwardly, Salander is supremely self-assured. Why does she have breast augmentation surgery?

5. Ultimately, does Salander?s agreement with Nils Erik Bjurman pay off? In what ways?

6. Revenge is a major theme of the novel. Who seeks it, and what are the results?

7. Discuss gender politics as they affect the plot: the treatment of Salander, Erika Berger, Miriam Wu, and Sonja Modig and the trafficking of Eastern European women. What do you think Larsson was trying to say about the role of women in society?

8. On page 105, Berger thinks about Blomkvist: ?He was a man with such shifting traits that he sometimes appeared to have multiple personalities.? Given that the reader is allowed inside Blomkvist?s head, does this seem like an accurate description to you? How is Berger right in her assessment, and how is she wrong?

9. Twice in the novel, Salander and Blomkvist refer to his assertion that ?friendship is built on two things --- respect and trust.? Who is a true friend to Salander? Is she a true friend to anyone? What about Blomkvist? Is he a good friend to Salander, to Berger, and to others?

10. Discuss the arrangement agreed to by Berger, Blomkvist, and Gregor Beckman. How does this benefit each of them? Does it hurt them?

11. When Dag Svensson and Mia Johansson were murdered, what was your first response? Who did you think was the killer? Who did you think was Bjurman?s killer?

12. Why does Blomkvist give Salander the benefit of the doubt, when so many others don?t?

13. When newspaper articles begin to appear featuring interviews with long-ago acquaintances of Salander, did it change your perception of her character? Discuss the nature of truth in these instances: Is it possible both sides were remembering accurately?

14. Discuss Dr. Peter Teleborian. What role does he play, and why?

15. Why does Berger put off telling Blomkvist about her new job? What will the ramifications of the new job be?

16. On page 323, Salander thinks, ?There are no innocents. There are, however, different degrees of responsibility.? What is the significance of this statement? How does Salander use this notion to guide her actions?

17. On page 463, Blomkvist calls Salander ?the woman who hated men who hate women.? Is this an accurate assessment? How did she end up this way? How does it affect her behavior?

18. In what ways is Salander like her father and half brother? In what ways is she different?

19. Toward the end of the novel, does Blomkvist do the right thing by having Berger deliver only part of the story to Jan Bublanski and Modig? What do you think he should have done?

20. Holger Palmgren tells Dragan Armansky on page 490, ?What happens tonight will happen, no matter what you or I think. It has been written in the stars since [Salander] was born.? Why does he feel this way? Is he right? How does his inaction affect the outcome of the story?

21. Discuss the ending. Were you satisfied? What more, if anything, would you like to have had happen?

22. If Stieg Larsson were still alive, what one question would you most like to ask him?

Author Bio

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 manuscript for THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO, THE GIRL WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE and THE GIRL WHO KICKED THE HORNET?S NEST.

Critical Praise

"Larsson has bottled lightning... Formally at least, **The Girl Who Played with Fire** is a muscle car. But a European engine purrs beneath its hood... It buzzes with ideas [and] fizzes with fury."

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