# Men who hate women

by Stieg Larsson · Language: EN

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## Overview

Men who hate women," internationally known as "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," is the first installment in Stieg Larsson's posthumously published Millennium series. It plunges readers into a complex narrative intertwining a cold case mystery with deep-seated societal corruption and violence against women. The story follows Mikael Blomkvist, a disgraced financial journalist, who is hired by aging industrialist Henrik Vanger to investigate the forty-year-old disappearance of his grandniece, Harriet Vanger, from the isolated family estate.

Blomkvist's investigation soon leads him to Lisbeth Salander, a brilliant but deeply troubled computer hacker with a photographic memory and a fierce sense of justice. Salander, initially hired to conduct a background check on Blomkvist, eventually becomes his indispensable research assistant and partner, using her unique skills to uncover hidden truths within the Vanger family's dark history. As they delve deeper, they expose a horrifying pattern of abuse, murder, and Nazi sympathies, revealing that Harriet's disappearance is connected to a much larger and more sinister chain of events.

The book is a powerful exploration of misogyny, corporate malfeasance, and the abuse of power, set against the backdrop of Sweden's seemingly progressive society. It matters not only for its intricate plot and suspenseful twists but also for its creation of Lisbeth Salander, an iconic anti-heroine who challenges conventional notions of victimhood and justice. Larsson's work resonates by exposing the hidden violence beneath the surface of everyday life and the resilience of those who fight back.

## Key Takeaways

- The past often conceals dark family secrets that can resurface with devastating and violent consequences.
- Appearances can be deeply deceptive, and individuals in positions of power may harbor the most heinous intentions.
- Justice can be achieved through unconventional partnerships and a relentless, often dangerous, pursuit of truth.
- The pervasive issue of violence against women is a central theme, highlighting its hidden and systemic nature.

• Even marginalized and traumatized individuals can possess extraordinary intellect and a fierce moral compass.

• Corporate corruption and financial crimes are frequently intertwined with personal atrocities and abuse of power.

• The pursuit of truth often requires challenging established norms and confronting uncomfortable realities.

## Chapter Summaries

**Part 1: The Disgraced Journalist**

Mikael Blomkvist, a prominent financial journalist, is convicted of libel and faces professional ruin. He accepts an unusual offer from wealthy industrialist Henrik Vanger: to investigate the forty-year-old disappearance of Vanger's grandniece, Harriet, from the family's isolated island estate. Blomkvist moves to Hedestad, immersing himself in the Vanger family's complex and often sinister history, believing the killer is a family member.

**Part 2: The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**

Lisbeth Salander, a brilliant but socially alienated hacker working for Milton Security, is tasked with conducting a background check on Blomkvist. Her own life is fraught with trauma, including an abusive legal guardian, Nils Bjurman. Salander's exceptional skills uncover critical information about Blomkvist and the Vanger case, leading her to independently investigate and eventually offer her assistance to Blomkvist.

**Part 3: The Hunt for Harriet**

Blomkvist and Salander form an unlikely partnership, combining his journalistic research with her hacking prowess. They delve deeper into the Vanger family's past, uncovering disturbing connections to Nazism, serial murders, and a pattern of violence against women. Their investigation leads them to suspect a prominent family member, Martin Vanger, Harriet's brother, of involvement in both Harriet's disappearance and other heinous crimes.

**Part 4: The Revelation**

The investigation culminates in a harrowing confrontation where Blomkvist is captured by Martin Vanger, who confesses to a series of ritualistic murders and reveals his sadistic nature. Salander heroically intervenes, saving Blomkvist and exacting brutal revenge on Martin. They finally uncover the truth about Harriet Vanger's disappearance: she fled after killing her abusive father and brother, who were responsible for the murders.

**Epilogue: Aftermath and New Beginnings**

Harriet Vanger is found alive and brought back to Sweden. Blomkvist and Salander expose the full extent of the Vanger family's crimes and clear Blomkvist's name in his libel case by

uncovering financial fraud involving Wennerström. Salander, now wealthy from her own financial exploits, continues her solitary life, while Blomkvist returns to Millennium magazine, forever changed by their partnership.

## Themes

- Violence against women
- Corporate corruption
- Family secrets
- Justice and revenge
- Abuse of power
- Media ethics

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is Men who hate women about?**

"Men who hate women," also known as "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," is a crime thriller about disgraced journalist Mikael Blomkvist and brilliant hacker Lisbeth Salander. They investigate the decades-old disappearance of Harriet Vanger, uncovering a dark history of family secrets, corporate corruption, and serial murders rooted in misogyny.

**Is Men who hate women worth reading?**

Yes, it is widely considered a gripping and impactful read. Larsson's intricate plot, compelling characters like Lisbeth Salander, and unflinching exploration of dark societal themes make it a powerful and memorable experience for fans of crime thrillers and psychological suspense.

**How does Men who hate women end?**

Spoiler: The investigation reveals Harriet Vanger fled after killing her abusive father and brother. Blomkvist is captured by Martin Vanger, who confesses to serial murders, but Salander saves him and exacts revenge. They expose the Vanger family's crimes and clear Blomkvist's name, while Salander gains wealth and continues her solitary life.

**Who should read Men who hate women?**

Readers who enjoy dark, complex crime thrillers, mysteries with strong social commentary, and unconventional protagonists will appreciate this book. It's suitable for those comfortable with mature themes of violence, abuse, and corruption, and who are looking for a thought-provoking and suspenseful narrative.

**How long does it take to read Men who hate women?**

Given its length and detailed plot, "Men who hate women" typically takes an average reader around 10 to 12 hours (approximately 600-720 minutes) to read. It is a substantial book that rewards focused attention.

## Best Quotes

**“She was a survivor, not a victim.”**

This line encapsulates Lisbeth Salander's indomitable spirit. Despite enduring horrific abuse and systemic failures, she refuses to be defined by her suffering. It highlights her agency, resilience, and determination to fight back against injustice, making her one of the most iconic characters in modern literature and a symbol of strength.

**“He was a man who hated women. And he had been doing it for a very long time.”**

This line directly refers to Martin Vanger, revealing the core motivation behind the decades of violence against women in the Vanger family. It underscores the book's central theme, reflected in its original Swedish title, and sets the stage for the dark discoveries Mikael and Lisbeth make about the pervasive misogyny driving the crimes.

## Questions & Answers

**What is the original Swedish title of "The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo" and what does it mean?**

The original Swedish title is "Män som hatar kvinnor," which translates directly to "Men Who Hate Women." This title reflects the book's central theme of misogyny and violence against women, which is a driving force behind many of the crimes and injustices depicted throughout the narrative, particularly the Vanger family's dark secrets and Lisbeth Salander's personal history of abuse and her subsequent fight for justice.

**Who is Mikael Blomkvist and what is his profession?**

Mikael Blomkvist is an investigative journalist and co-owner of the magazine Millennium. At the start of the book, he has just lost a libel case against financier Hans-Erik Wennerström, damaging his reputation. He is known for his integrity and dedication to uncovering the truth, which leads him to accept Henrik Vanger's offer to investigate Harriet Vanger's forty-year-old disappearance.

**Who is Lisbeth Salander and what are her key characteristics?**

Lisbeth Salander is a brilliant but deeply troubled computer hacker with a photographic memory and a history of institutionalization. She is fiercely independent, anti-social, and possesses a strong, albeit unconventional, sense of justice, particularly for abused women. Her distinctive appearance, including tattoos and piercings, reflects her rebellious nature, and she often uses her hacking skills to exact revenge on those who harm others.

**What is the central mystery Mikael Blomkvist is hired to solve?**

Mikael Blomkvist is hired by Henrik Vanger, a wealthy industrialist, to investigate the forty-year-old disappearance and presumed murder of his grandniece, Harriet Vanger. Henrik believes a member of his own dysfunctional family is responsible and wants Mikael to uncover the truth before he dies, offering a substantial fee and information to clear Mikael's name.

**How do Mikael Blomkvist and Lisbeth Salander initially come into contact?**

Lisbeth Salander is initially hired by Dirch Frode, Henrik Vanger's lawyer, to conduct a comprehensive background check on Mikael Blomkvist for Henrik. Her detailed and insightful report impresses Henrik. Later, when Mikael struggles with the Vanger case, Lisbeth independently offers her assistance after recognizing patterns in his research and seeing a connection to her own interests in justice.

**What is the significance of the dried pressed flowers found in Harriet Vanger's diary?**

The dried pressed flowers in Harriet Vanger's diary are crucial clues. Each flower is accompanied by a biblical verse and a date, initially appearing to be a personal code. Mikael and Lisbeth later realize these entries correspond to dates and locations of brutal murders of women, indicating Harriet was documenting a serial killer's activities, likely within her own family, before her disappearance.

**Who is Martin Vanger and what is his role in the story?**

Spoiler: Martin Vanger is Harriet's brother and the current CEO of theager Corporation. He initially appears helpful and charming to Mikael but is later revealed to be the serial killer responsible for the murders documented in Harriet's diary, continuing the horrific legacy of his father. He also attempts to kill Mikael when his crimes are exposed, highlighting his extreme depravity.

**What happens to Lisbeth Salander's legal guardian, Nils Bjurman?**

Spoiler: Nils Bjurman, Lisbeth's new legal guardian, abuses his power by sexually assaulting and raping her. Lisbeth, in a meticulously planned act of revenge, incapacitates him, tattoos a message on his body detailing his crimes, and blackmails him into giving her complete control over her finances and never contacting her again, ensuring he can never harm her or anyone else again.

**How does Lisbeth Salander use her hacking skills to assist Mikael?**

Lisbeth uses her exceptional hacking skills to access confidential databases, private computers, and financial records. She uncovers crucial information about the Vanger family, including hidden bank accounts, past crimes, and the true identities of victims, which Mikael could not have obtained through conventional journalistic methods. Her digital prowess is instrumental in cracking the Harriet Vanger case and exposing the killer.

**What is the ultimate fate of Harriet Vanger?**

Spoiler: Harriet Vanger is not dead but fled the island after being subjected to years of sexual abuse by her father and brother, Martin. She escaped with the help of her cousin Anita and has been living under a new identity in Australia, working on a farm. Mikael eventually finds her and brings her back to Sweden, allowing her to finally reclaim her life.

**What does the title "The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo" refer to?**

The title "The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo" refers to Lisbeth Salander, who has a prominent dragon tattoo on her back. This tattoo is a distinctive physical characteristic that symbolizes her fierce, protective, and often vengeful nature. It reflects her identity as a survivor, a formidable force against injustice, and a unique individual who defies societal norms and expectations.

**How does the book explore the theme of misogyny?**

The book explores misogyny through the systemic abuse and violence perpetrated against women by various male characters, most notably the Vanger family's serial killer and Lisbeth's guardian, Nils Bjurman. It highlights how women are often targets of male aggression, control, and exploitation, and how societal structures can fail to protect them, making Lisbeth's fight for justice particularly poignant and central to the narrative.

**What role does the Millennium magazine play in the story?**

Millennium magazine is Mikael Blomkvist's professional home and a vehicle for investigative journalism. After the Vanger case is solved, the magazine publishes Mikael's exposé on Hans-Erik Wennerström, using Lisbeth's hacked financial data. This publication restores Mikael's reputation and brings down the corrupt financier, demonstrating the power of truth and independent media to hold powerful individuals accountable.

**What is the significance of the "Wasp" alias used by Lisbeth Salander?**

The "Wasp" alias is one of Lisbeth Salander's many online identities, reflecting her sharp intellect and ability to sting those who cross her. It symbolizes her hidden power and her capacity for swift, precise, and often painful retaliation against individuals who commit injustices, particularly those who abuse women. It represents her digital persona, through which she operates with anonymity and formidable skill.

**What lesson can readers take away about justice from this book?**

Readers can learn that justice is often complex, elusive, and sometimes requires unconventional methods, especially when traditional systems fail. The book suggests that while legal justice is important, personal accountability and the pursuit of truth, even through morally ambiguous means like Lisbeth's hacking and revenge, are crucial for confronting deep-seated corruption and violence. It highlights the resilience required to fight for what is right.

**How does Lisbeth Salander's past influence her actions in the present?**

Lisbeth's traumatic past, marked by severe abuse, institutionalization, and a corrupt legal guardianship, profoundly shapes her present actions. It fuels her deep distrust of authority, her fierce independence, and her unwavering determination to protect herself and exact revenge on those who harm the vulnerable, particularly women. Her experiences make her uniquely equipped to understand and fight against the misogynistic crimes she uncovers.

**What is the relationship between Mikael Blomkvist and Lisbeth Salander?**

Mikael and Lisbeth develop a complex, unconventional relationship built on mutual respect, trust, and shared purpose. Initially professional, their collaboration evolves into a deep bond, though it remains largely platonic. Lisbeth admires Mikael's integrity and journalistic drive, and Mikael respects Lisbeth's extraordinary intelligence and unique skills. Their partnership is central to solving the Vanger mystery and exposing corruption, forming the core of the narrative.

**What is the "secret" that Lisbeth Salander uncovers about Wennerström?**

Spoiler: Lisbeth Salander discovers that Hans-Erik Wennerström, the financier who sued Mikael, is involved in extensive illegal activities, including money laundering, drug trafficking, and arms dealing. She hacks into his accounts, gathers irrefutable evidence of his crimes, and ultimately uses this information to help Mikael expose him in Millennium magazine, leading to Wennerström's downfall and the restoration of Mikael's reputation.

**How does the setting of Hedestad and Hedeby Island contribute to the atmosphere of the novel?**

The remote, isolated setting of Hedestad and Hedeby Island creates a claustrophobic and insular atmosphere, perfect for harboring dark family secrets. The harsh Swedish winter landscape further emphasizes the cold, bleak nature of the crimes. The island's isolation allows the Vanger family's history of abuse and murder to remain hidden for decades, fostering a sense of dread and suspicion among its inhabitants and making escape difficult.

**What is the significance of the "dragon tattoo" itself?**

Beyond being a striking visual identifier for Lisbeth Salander, the dragon tattoo symbolizes her inner strength, ferocity, and protective nature. In many cultures, dragons are powerful, mythical creatures associated with wisdom and guardianship, but also with danger and vengeance. For Lisbeth, it represents her transformation from a victim into a formidable force who defends herself and others against injustice, embodying her core identity.