



# Book Club in a Bag

## Discussion Questions

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### “The Girl on the Train” by Hannah Hawkins

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 nosy, 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?
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?
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? 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?

The above questions were taken from Penguin Random House (2016). Reader’s Guide: The Girl on the Train. Retrieved from <http://www.penguin.com/read/book-clubs/the-girl-on-the-train/9781594633669>

# Book Club in a Bag

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