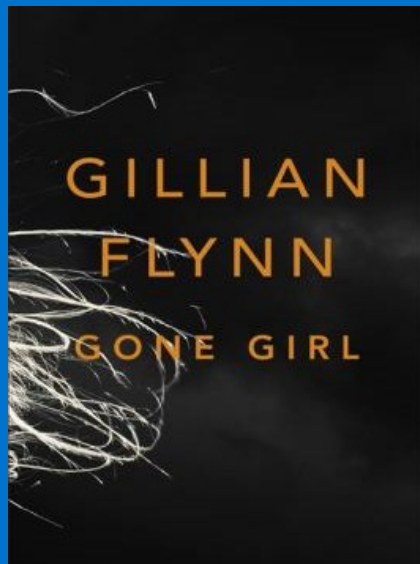


Gone Girl



Author Background

Gillian Flynn

Born: 24 February 1971, Kansas City, Missouri

Lives: Chicago, Illinois

Gillian Flynn's childhood was immersed in books and film. Flynn's parents were both community college professors—her mother taught reading comprehension and her father taught film studies.

As an undergraduate, Flynn attended the University of Kansas where she majored in English and journalism. Flynn later moved to Chicago where she graduated from Northwestern University with a Masters in Journalism. For ten years Flynn worked as a journalist in New York — writing on television and film for *Entertainment Weekly Magazine*.

Flynn's debut novel - *Sharp Objects* - was published in 2006. The literary mystery was awarded two Dagger Awards by Britain's Crime Writers' Association and was a finalist in the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Awards.

Flynn's second novel - *Dark Places* - was lauded as *Publishers' Weekly* Best Book of 2009, a *New Yorker* Reviewers' Favorite and a *New York Times* bestseller. The film adaptation, starring Charlize Theron, was released in 2015.

Published in 2012, *Gone Girl* is Flynn's third novel. First entering the *New York Times* bestseller list in the week in which it was published, *Gone Girl* sold around two million copies in its first year of publication. The film version, starring Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike, was released in 2014. The film adaptation of *Gone Girl* was Flynn's first screenplay.

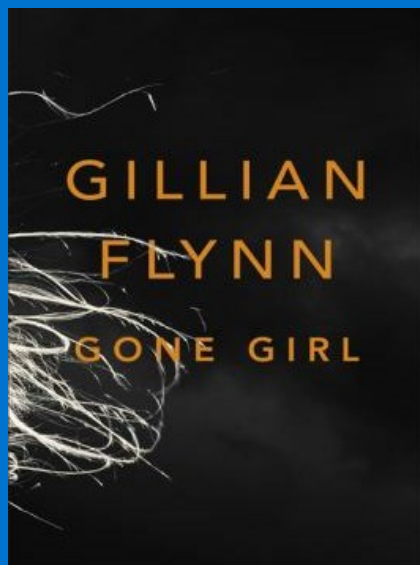
Reflecting on her writing career, Flynn has observed:

"I could not have written a novel if I hadn't been a journalist first, because it taught me that there's no muse that's going to come down and bestow upon you the mood to write. You just have to do it. I'm definitely not precious."

[Interview with *The Guardian*, 4 October 2014]

Source: Author website: <http://gillian-flynn.com> and *The Guardian*.

Gone Girl



Book Summary

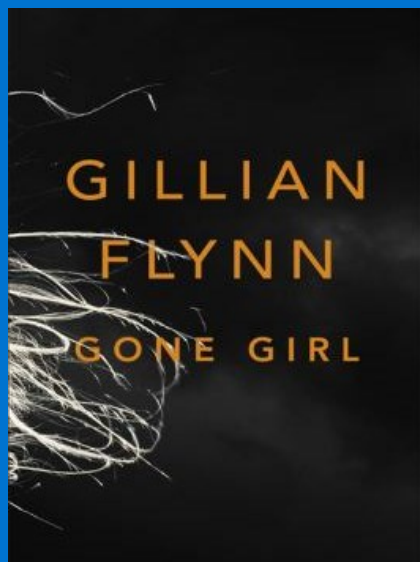
On a warm summer morning in North Carthage, Missouri, it is Nick and Amy Dunne's fifth wedding anniversary. Presents are being wrapped and reservations are being made when Nick's clever and beautiful wife disappears.

Husband-of-the-Year Nick isn't doing himself any favours with cringe-worthy daydreams about the slope and shape of his wife's head, but passages from Amy's diary reveal the alpha-girl perfectionist could have put anyone dangerously on edge. Under mounting pressure from the police and the media—as well as Amy's fiercely doting parents—the town's golden boy parades an endless series of lies, deceptions, and inappropriate behaviour.

Nick is oddly evasive, and he's definitely bitter—but is he really a killer?

Source: Author website

Gone Girl



Discussion Questions

1. What did you think of Amy and Nick Dunne at first? How did your view of the characters change during the course of the novel? Did you find yourself “picking a side”?

2. Do you find Gillian Flynn's technique of alternating narrators compelling or irritating? Would you have preferred a single narrator?

3. Discuss Amy's description of the enduring myth of the "cool girl" and her conviction that a male counterpart (seemingly flawless to women) does not exist. (Part Two, pages 250 ff.)

4. Experienced audiences of true crime tend to expect each crime to fit a specific mould: a story, a villain, a heroine. How does this phenomenon influence news stories and the criminal justice system? Consider the example of the North Carthage police, and also Tanner Bolt's ongoing advice to Nick.

5. A good mystery writer knows which details to reveal and when to reveal them. How good is Flynn at burying her clues in plain sight? Were you satisfied with the novel's ending?

6. Flynn has said in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*:

“one of my all-time favourite works is Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. I have several little inside jokes, character names, names of the town—little, little references to Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf that no one was supposed to get.”

Did you notice Flynn's “little references” to Edward Albee's play in *Gone Girl*?

7. Have you seen the film version of *Gone Girl*? Did you prefer the book or the film?

Just for fun

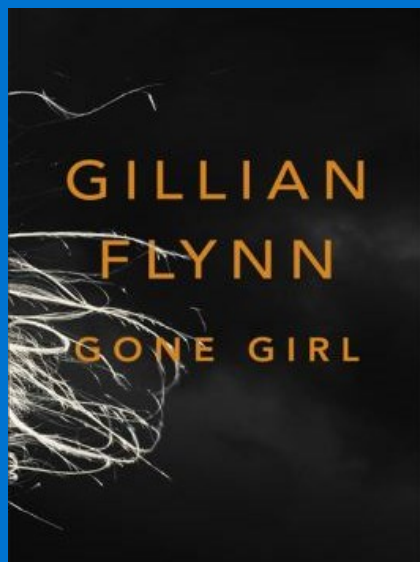
8. One reviewer has said:

“After you seen [sic] the various funhouse reflections of these characters, you'll definitely start wondering what would happen if your family was thrust into the media spotlight during a high profile trial. What would the police dig up? What would you want to hide and why?” [Jenna Cyprus, *Seattle PI*]

What might your family wish to hide from the media spotlight?

Most questions adapted from *Lit Lovers* website and *Penguin Random House*.

Gone Girl



Reviews

Flynn, an extraordinarily good writer, plays her readers with the finesse and delicacy of an expert angler. She wields her unreliable narrators – and just who are they? – to stunning effect, baffling, disturbing and delighting in turn, practically guaranteeing an immediate reread once her terrifying, wonderful conclusion is reached. This American author shook up the thriller scene in

2007 with her debut *Sharp Objects*, nasty and utterly memorable. *Gone Girl*, her third novel, is even better – an early contender for thriller of the year and an absolute must read.

Alison Flood, *The Guardian*

Gone Girl is this author's third novel, after *Sharp Objects* and *Dark Places*. *Dark Places*, in particular, drew attention from mystery aficionados, but *Gone Girl* is Ms. Flynn's dazzling breakthrough. It is wily, mercurial, subtly layered and populated by characters so well imagined that they're hard to part with — even if, as in Amy's case, they are already departed.

And if you have any doubts about whether Ms. Flynn measures up to Patricia Highsmith's level of discreet malice, go back and look at the small details. Whatever you raced past on a first reading will look completely different the second time around.

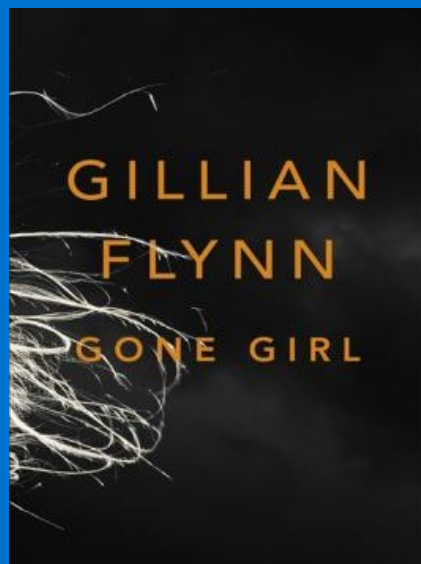
Janet Maslin, *New York Times*

The first half of *Gone Girl* includes some of the most tense prose you will ever get to read. Flynn is masterly at ramping up the drama to painful, almost unreadable levels, with each minor revelation about the police investigation or Amy's backstory pitched perfectly to maximise a response from the reader.

Around halfway through, we find out what has really happened to Amy, or we think we do, as the veracity of some of the earlier narration is thrown into doubt. Some of the tension of the story is inevitably lost, but Flynn cleverly replaces it with a slow-drip revelation of the real mindsets and motivations of her key characters.... Flynn is, without doubt, at the front of the pack of American thriller writers. The characterisation, plot, dialogue, description and social commentary are all razor sharp, snappy and precise without being too stylistically so. This story of a love gone brutally wrong is a painful but utterly compulsive read.

Doug Johnstone, *The Independent*

Gone Girl



Reviews (continued)

Genre-wise, *Gone Girl* is hard to pin down: part psycho-thriller, part literary tour de force, but is it really crime? There is a murder and there are two detectives.... But these characters hardly figure once they've been nailed in Flynn's merciless prose. It's what's going on between the two protagonists that commands the focus. Labels soon become irrelevant.

Gone Girl ups the ante in the he-said-she-said stakes until we really don't know who or what to believe. None of what has gone before will quite prepare you for the most outrageous conclusion to any crime or other fiction I have encountered. This is genre-busting work by a writer who clearly knows the rules but doesn't want to play by them. Bravo.

Sue Turnbull, *Sydney Morning Herald*

Gone Girl is a hall of mirrors where everything is an empty reflection, including the people who live there. That makes it sound like a postmodern exercise in the deconstruction of subjectivity or something like that, which it isn't. Its content may be postmodern, but it takes the form of a thoroughbred thriller about the nature of identity and the terrible secrets that can survive and thrive in even the most intimate relationships. *Gone Girl* begins as a whodunit, but by the end it will have you wondering whether there's any such thing as a who at all.

Lev Grossman, *Time*

One of those rare thrillers whose revelations actually intensify its suspense instead of dissipating it. The final pages are chilling.

Kirkus Review

Flynn's book takes the 1950s ideal of what an American family should be, and she flips it completely on its head. She tears it apart with tweezers and causes the reader to reflect on feminism and how it fits into today's modern family life. ...

Gone Girl does an excellent job at having us scrutinize the gender roles in the modern family, picking apart the aspects that make our society progressive, or not so progressive. Flynn does an excellent job at getting us into the heads of the quintessential dysfunctional family, one that slides down into ruin because the characters are never quite honest with each other.

Jenna Cyprus, *Seattle PI*