Girl on the Train

A psychological thriller based on the best-selling novel by Paula Hawkins and adapted by Rachel Wagstaff and Duncan Abel

03rd September 2021 – November 2021

English Theatre Frankfurt

Teachers' Resource Pack

This teachers' resource pack includes factual information as well as tasks and topics to be dealt with in the classroom. Cut and paste as you please, and please consult the official programme for additional information. Activities for students are framed for your convenience.

Paula Hawkins

Paula Hawkins is a British author. Originally from Zimbabwe (*1972), where her father was an economics professor and journalist, she moved to London at age seventeen. There, she studied economics, philosophy, and politics at the University of Oxford. After working as a business and economics journalist for fifteen years, Hawkins began to publish romantic fiction in 2009 under the pen name "Amy Silver." Her first four novels did not gain widespread notoriety, but her fifth, The Girl on the Train, which takes on the darker subject matter of domestic violence and alcohol abuse, debuted at #1 on the New York Times Fiction Best Sellers List of 2015.

The characters of *The Girl on the Train*

Rachel Watson
She is the title's girl on the train, the protagonist of the story. She goes every day on the same morning and evening trains, observing the same suburban houses beside the tracks. However, there is one house that she watches every day, naming the people in it, Jess and Jason. She loves this house because it reminds her of her past, perfect life, before her divorce from Tom. However, after witnessing a tryst going on between "Jess" and another man, and "Jess" going missing shortly afterwards, Rachel gets involved in a crime scene related to this house's inhabitants.

Megan Hipwell
Rachel's "Jess", actually called Megan, feels conflicted in her marriage, often seeking comfort in her husband Scott but also finding him overprotective. She has affairs with her therapist and, we later find, with Tom. On a Saturday night in July, she goes missing and days later she is found dead. Much of Megan's trauma comes from the death of her brother Ben and the later death of her child, Libby, who she had while living with a boyfriend named Craig.

Scott Hipwell
Rachel's "Jason", actually called Scott, is suspected of killing Megan because they had a fight prior to her departure and subsequent death. He and Rachel form a friendship and brief sexual relationship when she reveals what she learned about Megan's affair. In the end, he is proven innocent.

Kamal Abdic
Kamal is Megan's, and briefly Rachel's, therapist. He is the man Rachel sees kissing Megan from the train. He and Megan were having an affair, but he suspects it was based on transference, a common occurrence for patients and their therapists. He is suspected of killing Megan due to this romantic link, but he denies this and is set free due to insufficient evidence.

Tom Watson

Tom is Rachel's ex-husband. Tom and Rachel divorced after Rachel grew depressed by their infertility and he began cheating on her with Anna. Though Rachel still very much loves him two years later, she discovers that he was having an affair with Megan during his marriage to Anna and that he was Megan's killer. Tom is a compulsive liar, which he covers with charm and by blaming others, especially the women in his life.

Anna Watson

Anna is Tom's new wife. She hates Rachel and gets annoyed when Tom talks to or about her. Anna is very happy with her life with Tom and their baby girl, and takes pleasure in power. She especially liked being the "other woman" when Tom and Rachel were still married. However, after finding out that Tom lied to and manipulated her just as much as Rachel, she helps Rachel kill Tom, prioritizing her child and herself over him.

Craig McKenzie

Mac was Megan's boyfriend when she was fifteen, though he was twenty-two at the time. Megan met Mac when she ran away following her brother's death and they were very much in love for a while. However, after Megan got pregnant, their relationship did not grow with the changing circumstances, and when the baby died, Craig left her. Megan searches online for Mac later in life but cannot locate him.

Detective Inspector Gaskill

He is one of the detectives working Megan's case. Rachel has a hot and cold relationship with this detective, who sometimes is kind to her and sometimes is more rough in his questioning.

Sociogram
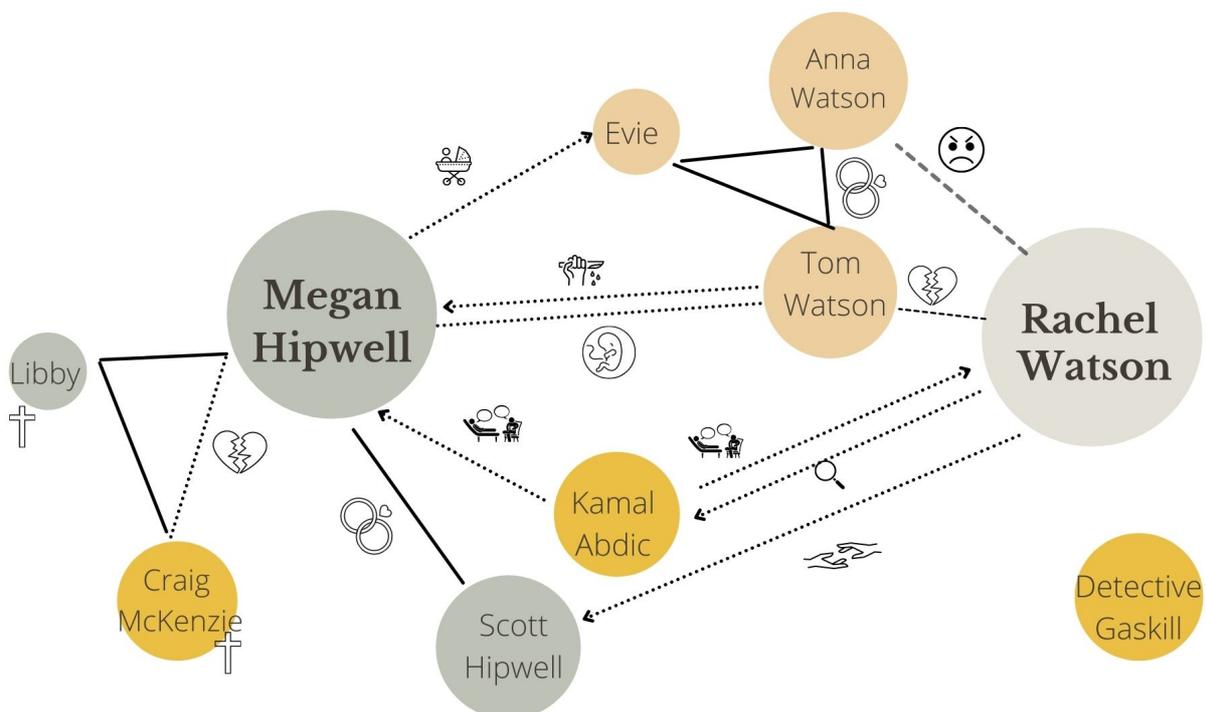
Summary of the Play

The Girl on the train, a psychological thriller adapted by Rachel Wagstaff and Duncan Abel in 2018 based on the novel of the same name written by Paula Hawkins and published in 2015, deals with a young woman, Rachel, struggling with life, who gets tangled up in a murder investigation as a possible witness at first not being able to remember crucial details due to her alcohol addiction. At the end of the play, Rachel reconstructs the circumstances of the crime and convicts her ex-husband Tom of the murder of his neighbour and lover, Megan.

Rachel lives alone after she broke up with her husband. She has no job but every day, she takes the same morning and evening trains, observing the same suburban houses by the tracks. However, there is one house that she cannot wait to see each day. She names the people in it Jess and Jason. She loves this house because it reminds her of her past, perfect life, before she and Tom divorced.

One day, she sees Jess kissing another man.

Shortly after, Rachel wakes up on a Monday morning and notices a deep cut on her head. She cannot remember how she was hurt. She hears the news of a woman named Megan Hipwell who went missing. From the address on the newspaper, she knows that Megan is Jess and recalls the moment she saw her kissing the man. Unable to keep it to herself, she tries to get in contact with Jason, or rather Scott, Megan´s husband, to tell him what she saw. She also makes an appointment with Megan´s therapist, assuming that he must have been the stranger Megan kissed that day.

Since Rachel was seen in the neighborhood the night Megan disappeared, the police want to talk to Rachel but inspector Gaskill quickly realizes that Rachel is an alcoholic and an unreliable witness at best but also is a potential suspect. However, she tells the police about her observation and Gaskill follows the lead and questions Kamal Abdic, Megan´s therapist.

At her appointment with Kamal Abdic, Rachel tries to recover her memory and to find any information to solve the case. Kamal tells her that loss of memory can be self-preservation and that memories can be manipulated or unreliable. Scott and Rachel continue to meet and get closer physically, which causes them both to feel confused and angry. Scott discovers that Rachel has been lying to him all this time - she wasn't a friend of Megan. He also discovers that she has been going to Kamal Abdic and doesn't believe her when she tells him that she was trying to help.

The police release news that Megan is dead and, days later, that she was pregnant.

Eventually, Rachel recovers her entire memory of Saturday night when she was in the underpass. She remembers Tom hitting her, causing her head injury, and taking Megan away in his car. Rachel decides that she must talk to Anna about this, despite their relationship. Anna, in the meantime, finds a secret mobile phone and discovers that Tom is having an affair with someone. When Rachel tells her about Tom, she believes her. However, just as they are about to head to the police, Tom arrives and locks them in the house. Rachel tells him about what she saw, and he at first denies it but then admits that he was having an affair with Megan that he met her that Saturday night. He says he was trying to end it but when he learned that she was pregnant and refusing to get an abortion, he had no choice but to kill her.

Tom now tries to kill or badly hurt Rachel. In self-defense, she kills him by putting the corkscrew in his throat. At the end of the play, Rachel decides to get away from that area for a while and reclaim her sobriety and her life.

Themes

Dependency, addiction and abuse

Throughout *The Girl on the Train*, the protagonist, Rachel Watson, endures a painful and life-threatening battle with alcoholism. But Rachel isn't the only character who struggles with addiction; Rachel, Megan, and Anna—all survivors of Tom Watson's cruelty and abuse—develop patterns of addiction and dependency to cope with or attempt to escape that abuse. Ultimately, by interweaving stories of three women struggling under the weight of different kinds of emotional and physiological dependencies, the play suggests that many women fall into harmful, isolating patterns of addiction and dependency as a response to emotional, psychological, and physical abuse.

The Girl on the Train follows three women who are abused by the men in their lives in the form of what's called *gaslighting*: manipulation through questioning or invalidating a person's sanity. The novel's antagonist-in-disguise, Tom Watson, is an expert at this kind of phycological abuse—yet Hawkins also shows how women at times gaslight themselves by internalizing their struggles—societal pressures, abuse they've suffered, or self-hatred—to the point of self-destruction. Gaslighting degrades a person's sense of self by targeting and destroying the victim's memories.

Motherhood

Throughout *The Girl on the Train*, the three female characters—Rachel, Megan, and Anna—all struggle with motherhood in different ways as they attempt to embody society's idea of a good mother. Rachel feels like a failure as a woman because she cannot have a child. Megan, having botched motherhood once, now finds the idea of caring for a child repugnant and frightful. Anna, who uses motherhood as an outlet for her fears and anxieties about her marriage, smothers and over-parents her daughter, Evie, even as she ignores the dangers that her husband, Tom, poses to them. Through these women's journeys, the story suggests that there is no such thing as a perfect mother—and that to pursue perfection in motherhood actually pushes women toward dangerous behaviors.

Secrets and lies

The Girl on the Train is an intricate and suspenseful modern-day mystery in which none of the main characters—not even the protagonist, Rachel Watson—is particularly reliable. In the world of the novel, truth is constantly obscured, and any information that comes to light is immediately subject to suspicion and uncertainty. Through the creation of this environment, the story ultimately suggests that a relationship, a community, or indeed a society rooted in secrets and lies only breed more secrets and lies, creating a world in which nothing—and no one—can be trusted.[1]

The Genre and its narrator

A **thriller** is a genre of literature, film, and television whose primary feature is that it induces strong feelings of excitement, anxiety, tension, suspense, fear, and other similar emotions in its readers or viewers—in other words, media that **thrills** the audience.

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[1] Vgl. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-girl-on-the-train/themes

Thrillers that focus on <u>characters</u> that have extreme psychological disorders, such as psychopaths and people with split personalities are **psychological thrillers**. These disorders accordingly cause serious <u>personal</u> issues, that eventually lead to conflicts with strangers and other <u>characters</u>. Sometimes, the main character is a psychopath that serves as both the <u>protagonist</u> and the antagonist.

The unreliable narrator

An **unreliable narrator** is a narrator whose credibility is compromised. They can be found in fiction and film and range from children to mature characters. The term was coined in 1961 by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. While unreliable narrators are almost by definition first-person narrators, arguments have been made for the existence of unreliable second- and third-person narrators, especially within the context of film and television, and sometimes also in literature.

Sometimes the narrator's unreliability is made immediately evident. For instance, a story may open with the narrator making a plainly false or delusional claim or admitting to being severely mentally ill, or the story itself may have a frame in which the narrator appears as a character, with clues to the character's unreliability. A more dramatic use of the device delays the revelation until near the story's end. In some cases, the reader discovers that in the foregoing narrative, the narrator had concealed or greatly misrepresented vital pieces of information. Such a twist ending forces readers to reconsider their point of view and experience of the story. In some cases the narrator's unreliability is never fully revealed but only hinted at, leaving readers to wonder how much the narrator should be trusted and how the story should be interpreted.[2]

If the narrator of a story gets caught up in contradictions and the listener thinks something is wrong, then the unreliable narrator is probably to blame. With an unreliable narrator, his story and his actions often diverge. Sometimes his perception is impaired and he is as much in the dark as the listener - for example, because he has lost his memory. The unreliable narrator is not always alone: sometimes several characters tell the same story in completely different ways.

Unreliable narrators are particularly effective in the thriller genre. Without a neutral narrator, the listener himself is called upon to evaluate, interpret, judge. He wants to solve the case himself at some point and know what is really going on or which of the protagonists is telling him lies. The listener becomes the investigator - with witnesses who are not to be trusted.

Thrillers with unreliable narrators are strikingly often female: the characters are often cunning femmes fatales or (apparently) helpless victims, not infrequently invented by female authors. Why do women in particular have a soft spot for cunning, bitterly evil, unreliable narrators? Perhaps women are more cunning by nature. Perhaps they turn their physical inferiority into mental superiority. Perhaps they are - provocatively speaking - simply the better liars?[3]

Signals of unreliable narration

Whichever definition of unreliability one follows, there are a number of signs that constitute or at least hint at a narrator's unreliability. Nünning has suggested to divide these signals into three broad categories.

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[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unreliable_narrator
[3] https://magazin.audible.de/unzuverlaessige-erzaehler/Unreliable narrators

- Intratextual signs such as the narrator contradicting himself, having gaps in memory, or lying to other characters
- Extratextual signs such as contradicting the reader's general world knowledge or impossibilities (within the parameters of logic)
- Reader's literary competence. This includes the reader's knowledge about literary types (e.g. stock characters that reappear over centuries), knowledge about literary genres and its conventions or stylistic devices[4]

These can be further expanded into the following characteristics:

- Obvious contradictions in which the narrator becomes entangled and other inconsistencies in his narrative;

- Contradictions between a narrator's statements and actions;

- Contradictions between the narrator's self-characterisation and the way other characters characterise him/her;

- contradictions between the narrator's rendering of events on the one hand and his explanations and interpretations on the other;

- verbal expressions and body language of other characters contradict or correct the narrator;

- different versions of the same events are presented, with the narrator's version not necessarily being the valid one;

- Exaggerated speaker reference: large number of first-person statements by the narrator;

- exaggerated reference to the addressee: the narrator often addresses the reader directly or deliberately tries to steer the reader's perception of the events;

- linguistic signals of subjectivity and emotionality: rhetorical devices that reveal that the narrator is very much emotionally involved (e.g. exclamations, ellipses, interpolations, repetitions, rule-breaking);

- Narrator makes conspicuous references to his credibility (e.g. to affirm it: "You won't believe it, but...");

- Narrator admits his lack of credibility (e.g. gaps in memory, partiality, repression or desire to forget);

- Signals in the title, subtitle, preface, footnote etc. (if these can be traced back to the author);

- grave contradiction between the narrator's attitude/worldview and that of the reader; excessive objectivity;

- unnecessary amount of information, far too little information or lack of context of the information given;

- excessive judgementalism; this is recognisable, for example, in judgemental adjectives or an accumulation of adjectives expressing attitudes at all).[5]

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[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unreliable_narrator

[5] (nach: Nünning, Ansgar F.: Reconceptualizing Unreliable Narration: Synthesizing Cognitive and Rhetorical Approaches. In: Phelan, James; Rabinowitz, Peter J. (Hrsg.): A Companion to Narrative, (Blackwell) Oxford 2005, S. 89-107, ergänzt um Merkmale (mit * markiert) aus ders.: Unreliable Narration zur Einführung: Grundzüge einer kognitiv-

The unreliable narrator in The Girl on the Train

The unreliable narrator is a narrative strategy that is mainly used in prose narratives and is therefore particularly noticeable in the narrative behaviour of the novel. But in the theatre adaptation too, we learn about Megan's murder through the eyes of the main character, Rachel, and follow her insights and wanderings. Since in the play, too, her fragmentary memory is the basis of our growth in knowledge, the question of the main character's reliability can also be raised here.

The main character, Rachel, is revealed to be an alcoholic almost immediately even before she talks to Tom in the first scene. The nature of her problem becomes clear at the very beginning when Rachel is sitting in her room surrounded by empty bottles and dirty glasses and has already started drinking.

Her substance abuse problem leads her to be unable to remember a key night, negatively affects her relationships, and makes her appear weak-willed. All of these cause Rachel to be untrustworthy and therefore unreliable. In addition, Rachel is obsessed with her ex-husband. She calls him throughout the book, usually when drunk. Having an unreliable main character like Rachel can heighten the mystery of a novel. Readers may find it more difficult to guess who committed the crime when the person discovering and interpreting the clues can't be trusted either

narratologischen Theorie und Analyse unglaubwürdigen Erzählens. In: Ders. (Hrsg.): Unreliable Narration. Studien zur Theorie und Praxis unglaubwürdigen Erzählens in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur, (wvt) Trier 1998, S. 3-39).

Activities

pre-watching activities

Working with the novel - Getting to know the main character.

The novel *The Girl on the Train* starts with 2 short paragraphs. One starts with the beginning of a nursery rhyme.

a) Read the paragraph and talk about its content to your neighbor. What do you know for sure?
b) Come up with ideas what might have happened. Also discuss, who the second person could be.
c) Analyze the role of the nursery rhyme at the beginning and what it means that the bleeding person cannot continue past the third line.[6]
d) If you do not know yet: Look up the word magpie. What kind of animal is this?
e) Collect everything you know about magpies. Think and talk about why the bleeding person thinks that their sounds are bad tidings[7].

> One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl. Three for a girl. I'm stuck on three, I just can't get any further. My head is thick with sounds, my mouth thick with blood. Three for a girl. I can hear the magpies, they're laughing, mocking me, a raucous cackling. A tiding. Bad tidings. I can see them now, black against the sun. Not the birds, something else. Someone's coming. Someone is speaking to me. Now look. Now look what you made me do.

f) After the first two paragraphs not assigned to a person, Rachel's narration begins. Read the first two chapters. Highlight passages about her character and the circumstances she lives in.
g) Talk to a partner, compare and gather your combined insights in a list.

Friday, 5 July 2013

Morning

There is clothing on the side of the train tracks. Light-blue cloth — a shirt, perhaps — jumbled up with something dirty white. It's probably rubbish, part of a load fly-tipped into the scrubby little wood up the bank. It could have been left behind by the engineers who work this part of the track, they're here often enough. Or it could be something else. My mother used to tell me that I had an overactive imagination; Tom said that too. I can't help it, I catch sight of these discarded scraps, a dirty T-shirt or a lonesome shoe, and all I can think of is the other shoe, and the feet that fitted into them. The train jolts and scrapes and screeches back into motion, the little pile of clothes disappears from view and we trundle on towards London, moving at a brisk jogger's pace, Someone in the seat behind me gives

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[6] One for sorrow,
Two for joy,
Three for a girl,
Four for a boy,
Five for silver,
Six for gold,
Seven for a secret never to be told,
magpie, magpie why do you sigh
I sit alone while the world goes by.

[7] Unglück, Hiobsbotschaft

a sigh of helpless initiation; the 8.04 slow train from Ashbury to Euston can test the patience of the most seasoned commuter. The journey is supposed to take fifty-four minutes, but it rarely does: this section of the track is ancient, decrepit, beset with signaling problems and never-ending engineering works.

The train crawls along; it judders past warehouses and water towers, bridges and sheds, past modest Victorian houses, their backs turned squarely to the track. My head leaning against the carriage window, I watch these houses roll past me like a tracking shot in a film. I as others do not; even their owners probably see them from this perspective. Twice a day, I view into other lives, just for a moment. There's comforting about the sight of strangers safe at Someone's phone is ringing, an incongruously joyful and upbeat song. They're slow to answer, it jingles on and on around me. I can feel my fellow commuters shift in their seats, rustle their newspapers, tap at their computers. The train lurches and sways around the bend, slowing as it approaches a red signal. I try not to look up, I try to read the free newspaper I was handed on my way into the station, but the words blur in front of my eyes, nothing holds my interest. In my head I can still see that little pile of clothes lying at the edge of the track, abandoned.

Evening

The pre-mixed gin and tonic fizzes up over the lip of the can as I bring it to my mouth and sip. Tangy and cold, the taste of my first ever holiday with Tom, a fishing village on the Basque coast in 2005. In the mornings we'd swim the half-mile to the little island in the bay, make love on secret hidden beaches; in the afternoons we'd sit at a bar drinking strong, bitter gin and tonics, watching swarms of beach footballers playing chaotic 25-a-side games on the low-tide sands.

I take another sip, and another; the can's already half empty but it's OK, I have three more in the plastic bag at my feet. It's Friday, so I don't have to feel guilty about drinking on the train. TGIF[8]. The fun starts here.

It's going to be a lovely weekend, that's what they're telling us. Beautiful sunshine, cloudless skies. In the old days we might have driven to Corly Wood with a picnic and the papers, spent all afternoon lying on a blanket in dappled sunlight, drinking wine. We might have barbecued out back with friends, or gone to the Rose and sat in the beer garden, faces flushing with sun and alcohol as the afternoon went on, weaving home, arm in arm, falling asleep on the sofa.

Beautiful sunshine, cloudless skies, no one to play with, nothing to do. Living like this, the way I'm living at the moment, is harder in the summer when there is so much daylight, so little cover of darkness, when everyone is out and about, being flagrantly, aggressively happy. It's exhausting, and it makes you feel bad if you're not joining in.

The weekend stretches out ahead of me, forty-eight empty hours to fill. I lift the can to my mouth again, but there's not a drop left.

You have read the first two chapters of *The Girl on the Train* and have met the protagonist and narrator of the story, Rachel Watson. In the course of the novel as well as the play Rachel becomes entangled in a murder investigation. She is a possible witness and we learn about the progress of this investigation through her eyes.

h) Read the first two chapters again and examine the text for clues regarding the reliability of the narrator. What information points to the narrator's (un)reliability?

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[8] Thank God it´s Friday.

Use a different pen than before to highlight passages and take notes.

i) Discuss with your partner and subsequently in class whether Rachel is a reliable narrator and we as a reader can trust her. [9]

Working with a Sociogram – analyzing the complex structure of relationships in The Girl on the Train

a) Analyze the Sociogram of *The Girl on the Train*.
b) Choose a partner and explain the complex relationships of the characters to each other. Take turns and discuss the possible meaning of symbols, different kinds of lines, proximity and distance.

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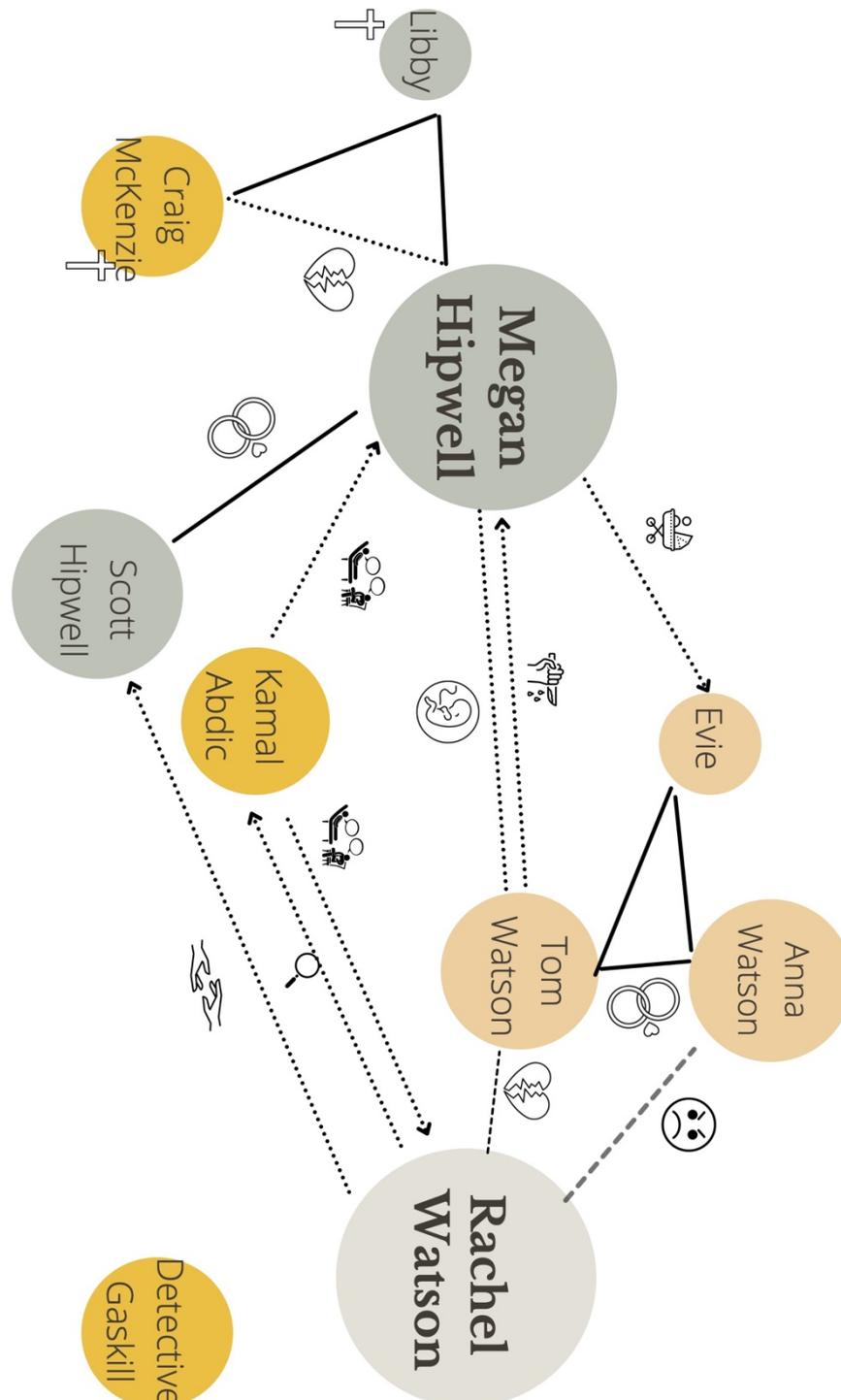
[9] Alternatively, hand in characteristics of an unreliable narrator.

while-watching activities
Quiz – The Girl on the Train

In *The Girl on the Train*, the protagonist Rachel is…?

   a) Still living with her parents
   b) Happily married
   c) An alcoholic

When Tom was still married to Rachel, he…

   a) Was beaten up by Rachel regularly.
   b) manipulated Rachel and drove her into self-doubt and drinking.
   c) Was a loving husband who caught his wife cheating.

Choose the sentence which describes the relationship between the Hipwells and Tom and Anna Watson best?

   a) Megan Hipwell attended a Yoga class with Anna Watson and had an affair with Tom Watson.
   b) Megan Hipwell used to babysit for the Watsons and had an affair with Tom Watson.
   c) Scott Hipwell worked with Anna Watson.

Why does Rachel hate Anna?

   a) Tom used to be married to Rachel but left her for Anna and had a child with his new wife.
   b) Anna raises Rachel´s child and won´t allow her to see the baby.
   c) Anna offends Rachel every chance she gets.

Where is Rachel when she witnesses Megan kissing another man than Scott?

   a) She only imagines the kiss as part of the fantasy-life she made up for this unknown couple she sees every day.
   b) She is in Tom´s and Anna´s garden, trying to kidnap their child Evie.
   c) She is on the train, pretending to go to work.

Why does Rachel concentrate on Megan and Scott when her train comes to a halt?

   a) She stalks Megan because she is in love with her.
   b) She tries to avoid looking at her old home where her ex-husband still lives with his new family. It is next to Meghan´s and Scott´s.
   c) It is the only house nearby.

Why is Rachel involved in Megan´s case?

   a) Rachel was seen in the neighborhood the night Megan disappeared and showed signs of a fight which she could not remember the next day.
   b) She is the inspector´s assistant.
   c) She is the main witness, since she saw Megan kissing her therapist.

Megan was murdered. By whom?

a) By her husband Scott.
b) By Rachel´s ex- and Anna´s husband Tom.
c) By Rachel.

Megan was murdered. Why?

a) Scott murdered her, because he had found out about her affair.
b) Megan was killed by Rachel because Rachel mistook her for Anna.
c) Megan was pregnant and Tom was the father. She wanted to keep the child, but he feared this would endanger his family-life.

Rachel kills Tom at the end of the play…

a) Out of Jealousy.
b) In self-defense.
c) To avenge Megan.

8-10 correct answers	4-8 correct answers	0-3 correct answers
☺☺

Congratulations! You understood a lot! | ☺

Quite good already! Talk to your classmates again about the play, you might tap into new levels of understanding! | ☹

Don´t give up! Talk to your classmates about the parts of the play that are still a bit fuzzy to you. |

a) Visualize the characters´ relationships in a sociogram. Your sociogram should include

Rachel Watson   Anna Watson   Tom Watson   Evie Watson

Megan Hipwell   Scott Hipwell   Kamal Abdic   Detective Inspector Gaskill

Feel free to include more characters, if you remember them.

Use symbols and different kinds of lines as well as proximity and distance to visualize relationships. You can either complete the draft below or come up with your very own sociogram.
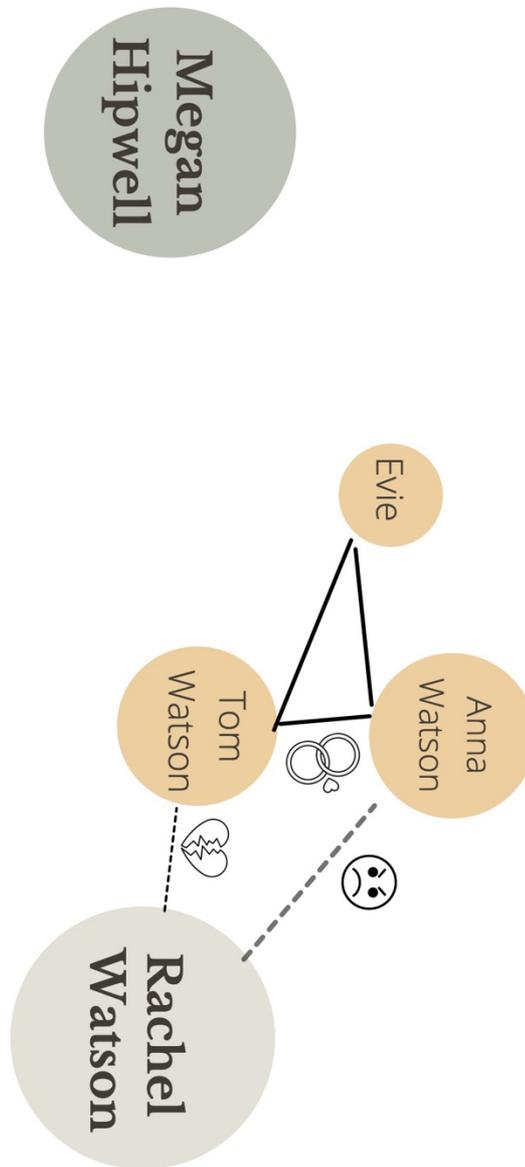
Post-watching activities

The Girl on the Train´s narration is not chronological. Again and again there are flashbacks like the following ones in bold letters.

    a) Read the scenes and talk to your partner about the contents and purposes of the flashbacks in _The Girl on the Train_.

RACHEL: I'm sorry about Saturday. I just wanted to see you. I don't know why your wife has to be such a... sorry.
TOM: It was just one of those things. No one's to blame, But, look, Anna told the police you'd been around
RACHEL: Why? Why would she-
TOM: She just mentioned you. That's all. Not to have done would have looked like she had something to hide.
RACHEL: I didn't see anything.
TOM: Fine, then. Just tell them that. What happened here?
TOM touches RACHEL 's forehead. RACHEL winces.

Lights and sound shift. Chilling.
RACHEL feels a blow to her head.
The sound of a glass bottle smashing,
RACHEL disoriented.

Back to Present.

TOM: Did someone hurt you?
RACHEL: I don´t know.

SCOTT: You know what it's like being married. People argue.
RACHEL: What did you say, Scott?
SCOTT: I said I could kill her.
What haven't you told the police? (…)

 MEGAN enters. (…)
MEGAN: Scott... I've made some mistakes.
SCOTT: What sort of mistakes?
MEGAN: Please don't make this any harder than it has to be.
SCOTT: _(Grabs her arm.)_ What sort of mistakes?
MEGAN: Don't raise your voice. It's not you. It was nothing. It's over now.
SCOTT: You've been seeing someone. Who?
MEGAN: It doesn't matter.
SCOTT: Who have you been fucking? (…) How many? Since we've been together. How many men?
MEGAN: Don't do this.

SCOTT: So there've been more.
MEGAN *reaches for him, tenderly.*
MEGAN: We can move forwards. I know we-
SCOTT: Don't touch me.
MEGAN *reaches again.*
SCOTT *grabs her by the hair (…)*
MEGAN: You're hurting me.
He wrestles her across the room. Pushes her to the ground, His hand on her throat, holding her down. She fights back He doesn't let her go.
SCOTT: I could crush you.
MEGAN: Please-
SCOTT: I could crush you like a fucking insect.

b) Memories play an important role in *The Girl on the Train*. Think about your personal happiest and your saddest memory. Tell either one of them your partner.

c) Think about the influence memories have on your personality. Discuss your ideas in class.

d) Now, read the next excerpt from The Girl on the Train and discuss the value of memory in terms of its reliability and the inner conflict that exists for the protagonist.

e) At the end of the excerpt Kamal says: *Violence clouds the memory. And then you have to reconstruct it. Only, now the memory becomes susceptible to other influences.*
Explain this statement in relation to the play.

KAMAL: You have periods of memory loss, and you assume that the blank spaces are filled with you doing something embarrassing, or "worse". Why not something kind or funny or intelligent? Are you capable of kindness? Humour? Intelligence?
RACHEL: Yes.
KAMAL: So, where are those puzzle pieces?
RACHEL struggling to hold it together.
RACHEL: I try my hardest to remember. But my memory tells me one thing and then evidence tells me something else. There was one time, when I was married:

TOM appears, aside.
RACHEL: I got so enraged with my husband...
RACHEL swings for TOM with a golf club, again and again,
TOM ducking each time.
TOM: Don't do this again, Rach. This isn't you! Rachel!
RACHEL: Fuuuuuuck!
RACHEL swings again, wildly, violently. She smacks a hole in the wall.
TOM: You have to control this! Before you really hurt someone.
Beat. TOM holds her.
TOM: I'll look after you. The way I always do.

RACHEL turns back to KAMAL.
RACHEL: I don't remember doing it, but I put a massive dent in the wall. It's there for all to see, what I'd done. But that's not who I am. I know it's not.

KAMAL: Violence clouds the memory. And then you have to reconstruct it. Only, now the memory becomes susceptible to other influences.

f) Throughout The Girl on the Train, symbols play an important role. Find the right definition for symbols:

- A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them
  drowning in money
- A figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by "like" or "as"
  cheeks like roses
- something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance especially: a visible sign of something invisible
  a lion stands for courage

g) Trains are the most important symbol, as they already occur in the title and constantly reoccur within the play. Draw a mind map with ideas what trains are a symbol of in general. Then think about the characters in the play and add to the mind map and explain what trains mean for the characters in the play and why.

Need help? Think about, why, even though, she has lost her job, Rachel takes the train every morning and every evening.
Additionally, there are passages that might also help:

GASKILL: I´ve always been envious of commuters. It´s the trains. I´ve always loved trains.
RACHEL: It´s one of the things I did not know I´d miss about my old life. The trains going past the house at night. Look, I´ve got to…
GASKILL: We used to sit on the banks and watch them as kids. Put apples and conkers on the tracks and watch them explode when the train ran over them. Scary, isnt´t it, that speed of a passing train?

RACHEL: *(Smiles.)* I like the trains. The feeling of getting somewhere. The darkness of a tunnel, turning the to mirrors and the light at the end of it. The speed of the world, standing still. Moving on. Moving on. Not looking back.

h) Another important symbol is the magpie[10]. Collect in class what you know about magpies. This collection may include facts as well as superstitions and connotations.
Think and later discuss with your partner and/or in class, what the magpie is a symbol of in *The Girl on the Train.*

Cannot remember the context the magpie was mentioned in? See below.

The stray magpie in the Hipwells' house causes great chaos because "it shat everywhere" and ensures that Scott cleans the house spotlessly after his wife disappears, thus making himself suspicious. When Megan is found dead, Rachel hears Magpies, children sing the nursery

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[10] Die Elster

rhyme somewhere close by and a dead magpie is found next to Megan. In a later flashback, Magpies sing when Megan goes missing.

Solutions

In *The Girl on the Train*, the protagonist Rachel is…?

   d) Still living with her parents
   e) Happily married
   f) An alcoholic

When Tom was still married to Rachel, he…

   d) Was beaten up by Rachel regularly.
   e) manipulated Rachel and drove her into self-doubt and drinking.
   f) Was a loving husband who caught his wife cheating.

Choose the sentence which describes the relationship between the Hipwells and Tom and Anna Watson best?

a) Megan Hipwell attended a Yoga class with Anna Watson and had an affair with Tom Watson.
b) Megan Hipwell used to babysit for the Watsons and had an affair with Tom Watson.
c) Scott Hipwell worked with Anna Watson.

Why does Rachel hate Anna?

   d) Tom used to be married to Rachel but left her for Anna and had a child with his new wife.
   e) Anna raises Rachel´s child and won´t allow her to see the baby.
   f) Anna offends Rachel every chance she gets.

Where is Rachel when she witnesses Megan kissing another man than Scott?

   d) She only imagines the kiss as part of the fantasy-life she made up for this unknown couple she sees every day.
   e) She is in Tom´s and Anna´s garden, trying to kidnap their child Evie.
   f) She is on the train, pretending to go to work.

Why does Rachel concentrate on Megan and Scott when her train comes to a halt?

   d) She stalks Megan because she is in love with her.
   e) She tries to avoid looking at her old home where her ex-husband still lives with his new family. It is next to Meghan´s and Scott´s.
   f) It is the only house nearby.

Why is Rachel involved in Megan´s case?

   d) Rachel was seen in the neighborhood the night Megan disappeared and showed signs of a fight which she could not remember the next day.
   e) She is the inspector´s assistant.
   f) She is the main witness, since she saw Megan kissing her therapist.

Megan was murdered. By whom?

d) By her husband Scott.
e) By Rachel´s ex- and Anna´s husband Tom.
f) By Rachel.

Megan was murdered. Why?

d) Scott murdered her, because he had found out about her affair.
e) Megan was killed by Rachel because Rachel mistook her for Anna.
f) Megan was pregnant and Tom was the father. She wanted to keep the child, but he feared this would endanger his family-life.

Rachel kills Tom at the end of the play…

d) Out of Jealousy.
e) In self-defense.
f) To avenge Megan.