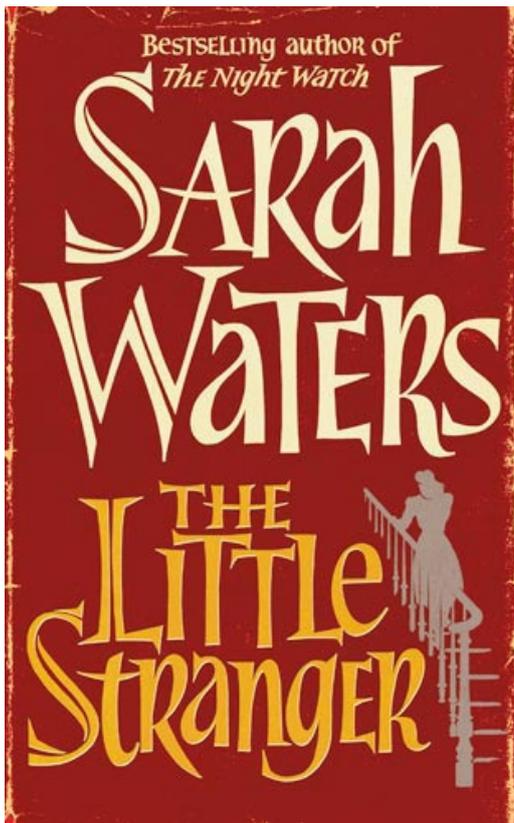


## Reader's Guide



### Other books by Sarah Waters

*Tipping the Velvet* (1998)

*Affinity* (1999)

*Fingersmith* (2002)

*The Night Watch* (2006)

# The Little Stranger

## Sarah Waters

Published by Virago

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## About the author

Sarah Waters was born in July 1966 in Neyland, Pembrokeshire and went to the University of Kent. Her first book, the Victorian lesbian novel *Tipping the Velvet* won a Betty Trask Award in 1999 and was adapted into a three part television serial, taking the same title, on BBC2 in 2002. *Fingersmith*, published in 2002 was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize as well as the Orange Prize. This was also televised as a serial on BBC1 in 2005. Sarah Waters lives in London.

## The Little Stranger

When Dr Faraday is urgently called to Hundreds Hall, he is both curious and nostalgic. Nearly thirty years before, he had visited the house with his mother, who had once worked there as a maid. As an ten-year-old boy, he had been deeply impressed by the grandness of the house and of the Ayres family. But as he approaches the Hall on an unusually hot summer afternoon in 1947, Dr Faraday immediately recognises that much has changed there, as it has virtually everywhere in post war Britain. The crumbling house and its overgrown gardens are badly in need of maintenance, and the Ayres family is clearly struggling to maintain some semblance of their former way of life as well-respected country gentry.

So begins Dr Faraday's friendship with the remaining Ayres family (the dowager Mrs Ayres, the spinster daughter, Caroline and the son and heir to the estate, Roderick), a relationship complicated by his lingering class resentments, by his growing attraction to Caroline and more importantly, by the oddness and drama of events that begin to occur in the house as the hot summer gives way to a dark and gloomy winter.

## Discussion points

Do you think that Dr Faraday is a reliable narrator?

Which characters, narrative strands and metaphors in *The Little Stranger* reflect the changes in post war British society?

Sarah Waters when asked what type of experience she hopes readers have in reading this novel said '*I hope they'll be compelled by the story and absorbed by the world of the book, stimulated by the ideas - and perhaps a bit spooked, too*'. Was she successful?

Who or what do you think is the 'little stranger'?

What role do you think social class plays in this novel?

## Themed reading

*Alias Grace* Margaret Atwood  
*The Turn of the Screw* Henry James  
*The Franchise Affair* Josephine Tey

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