

# The Paying Guests

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The New York Times bestselling novel that has been called "a tour de force" (Wall Street Journal), "unputdownable" (The Washington Post), "a delicious hothouse of a novel" (USA Today), "effortless" (The Economist), "seductive" (Vanity Fair) and "pitch perfect" (Salon)

"Superb, bewitching...Forget about Fifty Shades of Grey; this novel is one of the most sensual you will ever read, and all without sacrificing either good taste or a "G" rating" - NPR

"One of the year's most engrossing and suspenseful novels...a love affair, a shocking murder, and a flawless ending ... Will keep you sleepless for three nights straight and leave you grasping for another book that can sustain that high." - Entertainment Weekly (A rating)

"Volcanically sexy, sizzingly smart, plenty bloody and just plain irresistible." -USA Today (4 stars)

It is 1922, and London is tense. Ex-servicemen are disillusioned; the out-of-work and the hungry are demanding change. And in South London, in a genteel Camberwell villa—a large, silent house now bereft of brothers, husband, and even servants—life is about to be transformed as impoverished widow Mrs. Wray and her spinster daughter, Frances, are obliged to take in lodgers.

With the arrival of Lilian and Leonard Barber, a modern young couple of the "clerk class," the routines of the house will be shaken up in unexpected ways. Little do the Wrays know just how profoundly their new tenants will alter the course of Frances's life—or, as passions mount and frustration gathers, how far-reaching, and how devastating, the disturbances will be.

Short-listed for the Man Booker Prize three times, Sarah Waters has earned a reputation as one of our greatest writers of historical fiction, and here she has delivered again. A love story, a tension-filled crime story, and a beautifully atmospheric portrait of a fascinating time and place, *The Paying Guests* is Sarah Waters's finest achievement yet.

### An Amazon Best Book of the Month, September 2014:

It is 1922, in a genteel house in a genteel neighborhood just outside of London. Here, the widowed Mrs. Wray and her 26-year-old daughter, Frances, pass each day very much like the day before—with Frances busying herself with household chores, maybe a bit of needlepoint, and her mother nibbling on a lunch of cauliflower cheese while making notes for the parish newsletter. In less skilled hands, such prolonged stage-setting would test even the most patient reader. But in Waters', it's mesmerizing, with every small but evocative detail serving to transport you further into this place and time. Take a deep breath as you're reading, because as soon as you are lulled into the calm cadence of these lives, the Wray's tenants—the "paying guests" they have taken in to help with the bills—turn everything topsy-turvy, and by the novel's conclusion, you have gone from straight-up period piece, to love story, to edge-of-your-seat crime thriller (and not the American kind "with a plot full of holes" that the Wrays suffer through on picture-house Wednesdays). For a story set just after WWI, some of the themes Waters touches on are surprisingly

contemporary. History does repeat itself sometimes, and so it goes for Sarah Waters, with yet another masterful novel. -Erin Kodicek

Sarah Waters is the New York Times bestselling author of *The Paying Guests*, *The Little Stranger*, *The Night Watch*, *Fingersmith*, *Affinity*, and *Tipping the Velvet*. She has three times been short-listed for the Man Booker Prize, has twice been a finalist for the Orange Prize, and was named one of *Granta's* best young British novelists, among other distinctions. Waters lives in London.

#### Other Books

The Paying Guest. Over the course of his literary career, George Gissing emerged as a chronicler of Britain's emerging middle class. In novels such as *New Grub Street*, he took it upon himself to outline the challenges facing this new demographic niche, which he described as "well educated, fairly bred, but without money." *The Paying Guest* explores some of the same themes -- class tensions, intrigue, and the grit beneath the glittering surface of the Victorian era.

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