

## Donna Tartt Biography

**Donna Tartt** is known for her preference for solitude, being a sharp dresser, and taking an average of 10 years to write her books. When asked if she might speed that up, she says she's tried, but did not enjoy the process, so that's not going to happen any time soon. She thinks she would be happy with 5 novels total.

There are scant details on Tartt's life, and she prefers it that way. In the few interviews she has given, conversation is focused on the craft of writing and the value she places on reading and writing literature. She feels that reading should be fun and that writing is even more fun because it allows deep transformative thought. She speaks passionately of the ability of literature to transform and allow readers to not only experience new worlds but to examine moral questions and character's motivations.

Here though, are some biographical details. She was born in 1963 in a small town in Mississippi. Growing up, her father was a rockabilly musician and her mother worked in the library. Both were avid readers. As a teenager she worked in the library as well, and she enjoys writing in public libraries as she gets a wealth of inspiration for her characters while watching people walk by. She lives alone and likes it that way.

She started at University of Mississippi, but transferred to Bennington at the suggestion of a mentor there. She studied classics and honed her skills with a writing community she describes as supportive and interested in helping each other grow, unlike other writing programs that are cut throat and in which aspiring writers are competitive with each other to the detriment of developing their writing.

As will be mentioned more in the critical paper, many high level literary critics have panned her books, but the public hasn't. She has achieved great success as a writer, and describes what a surprise it was to her to have her first novel received so well because writers work alone, in their own world, and have no idea what people will think of the novel when they put it out there for public consumption.

She cites Stephen King and Charles Dickens as two of her most favorite authors as they invite the reader in. She likes the idea of suspense by letting the reader see the trouble at the beginning of the work when the characters don't. She quotes Alfred Hitchcock in saying that suspense isn't built by somebody tossing a bomb at people, rather it's created by showing characters speaking at a table where there's a bomb underneath that the characters don't know about. When she was 21 a publisher told her that no woman has ever written a successful novel from a male point of view. She proved him wrong by publishing first the *Secret History* in 1992, then the *Goldfinch* in 2013.

- 2003 [WH Smith Literary Award](#) – *The Little Friend*
- 2003 [Orange Prize for Fiction](#) shortlist – *The Little Friend*
- 2013 [National Book Critics Circle Award](#) (fiction) shortlist – *The Goldfinch*<sup>[46]</sup>
- 2014 [Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction](#) shortlist – *The Goldfinch*<sup>[47]</sup>
- 2014 [Pulitzer Prize for Fiction](#) – *The Goldfinch*<sup>[48]</sup>
- 2014 [Time 100](#) Most Influential People<sup>[5]</sup>
- 2014 [Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence for Fiction](#) – *The Goldfinch*<sup>[49]</sup>
- [Vanity Fair](#) International Best Dressed List, 2014<sup>[50]</sup>

fashion inspirations: [Louise Brooks](#) and [Harold Chasen](#)<sup>[51][52]</sup>

- 2014 Malaparte Prize (Italy) – *The Goldfinch*

She wrote 3 novels- The Secret History The Secret History is an inverted detective story narrated by one of the six students, Richard Papen, who reflects years later upon the situation that led to the murder of their friend Edmund "Bunny" Corcoran – wherein the events leading up to the murder are revealed sequentially. The novel explores the circumstances and lasting effects of Bunny's death on the academically and socially isolated group of classics students of which he was a part.

The Little Friend is a mystery adventure, centered on a young girl, Harriet Cleve Dufresnes, living in Mississippi in the early 1970s. The story follows Harriet's anxiety surrounding the unexplained death of her brother, Robin, who was killed by hanging in 1964 at the age of nine.[1] As well, the dynamics of Harriet's extended family—particularly her aunts—are a strong focus of the novel, as are the lifestyles and customs of contrasting Southerners.

In an interview with The Guardian in 2002, Tartt described The Little Friend as "a frightening, scary book about children coming into contact with the world of adults in a frightening way." Tartt told the interviewer that The Little Friend was intentionally different from The Secret History, stating: "I wanted to take on a completely different set of technical problems. The Secret History was all from the point of view of Richard, a single camera, but the new book is symphonic, like War And Peace. That's widely thought to be the most difficult form." [1]

In the Goldfinch, Tartt says one idea she explores is the question of “what is the good life?” Is it finding meaningful work? serving community? having love? She feels the good life comes mostly from work for her, and she has become successful beyond her wildest dreams.