

☐☐ Books Like *The Secret History*: Dark Academia, Obsession & Literary Thrills

The Secret History by Donna Tartt is a masterclass in literary suspense — a haunting blend of academia, obsession, beauty, and murder. If you've finished it and are looking for more books that explore the same dark corners of intellect and morality, you're in the right place.

In this post, we're diving into the best **books like *The Secret History*** — rich in atmosphere, layered with secrets, and perfect for fans of **dark academia**, morally gray characters, and beautifully twisted plots.

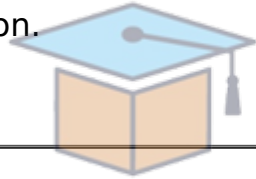
☐☐ Why Is *The Secret History* So Popular?

Before exploring similar reads, here's why readers love *The Secret History*:

- **Elite academic setting** with classical influences
- **Psychological complexity** and a focus on moral ambiguity

- **Murder mystery with a twist** — the story is about *why* it happened, not who did it
- **Dark, elegant prose** and unforgettable characters

This novel isn't just about a crime; it's about the human psyche and the dangers of unchecked obsession.



Summaryer

▣ 1. *If We Were Villains* by M.L. Rio



Summaryer

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☐ 1. *If We Were Villains* by M.L. Rio

Perfect for fans of: Shakespeare, theater students, and friendships gone wrong

Summary:

At an elite arts conservatory, a group of seven Shakespearean actors is torn apart when a murder occurs. Ten years later, one of them is finally ready to reveal the truth.

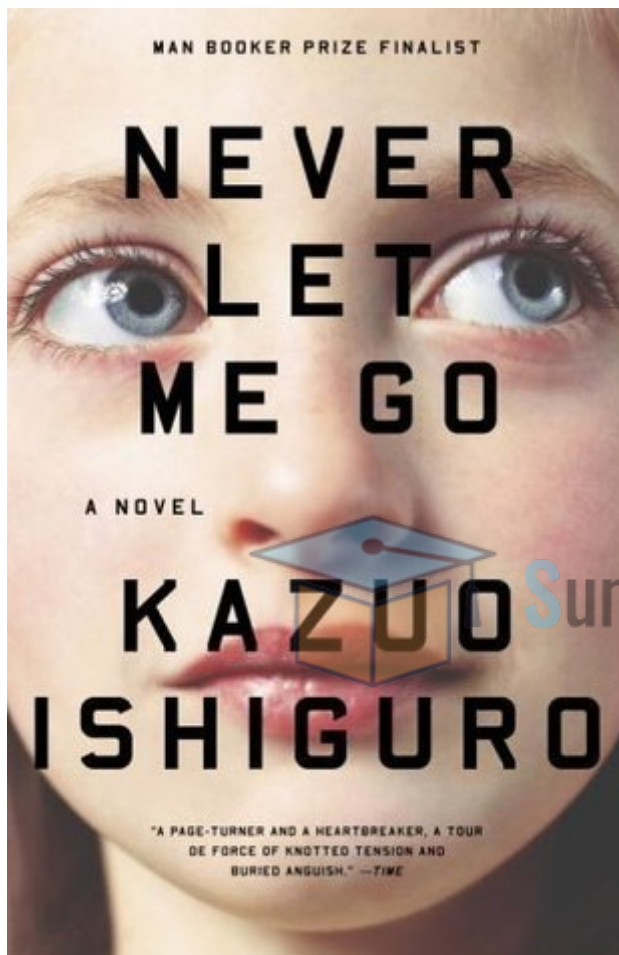


Summaryer

Why read it:

This is perhaps the closest literary cousin to *The Secret History*. Dark academia setting? Check. Obsessive friendships? Check. Tragic beauty and spiraling consequences? Absolutely.

☐ 2. *Bunny* by Mona Awad



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Perfect for fans of: Surrealism, satire, and twisted girl groups

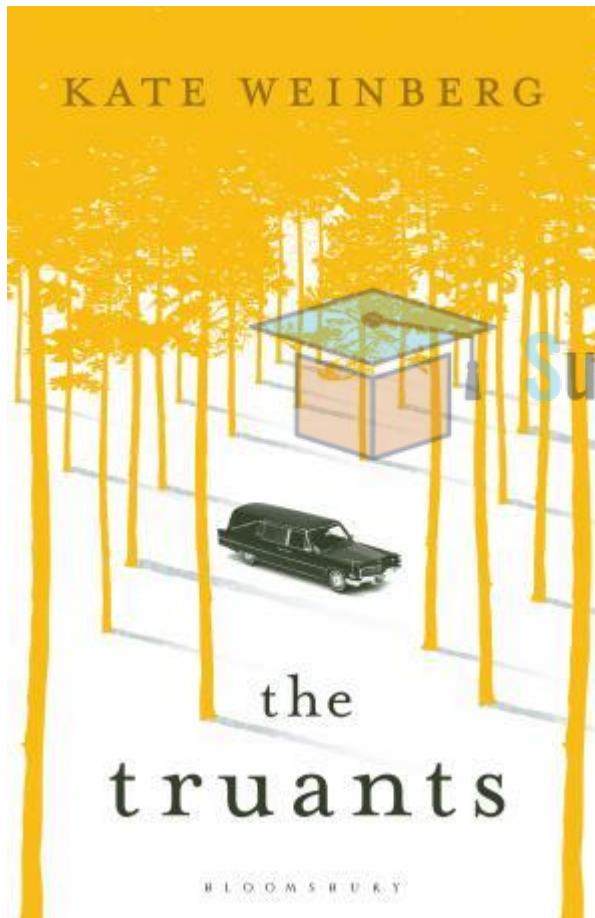
Summary:

Samantha, a grad student in a prestigious writing program, is drawn into a strange clique of hyper-feminine girls who call each other "Bunny" — and reality starts to blur.

Why read it:

Bunny explores alienation, creativity, and madness in a highly original, disturbing way. It's *The Secret History* meets *Heathers* with a dose of magical realism.

☐☐ 3. *The Likeness* by Tana French



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Perfect for fans of: Identity mysteries and psychological thrillers

Summary:

Detective Cassie Maddox investigates a murder victim who looks exactly like her. To solve the case, she goes undercover, infiltrating a close-knit academic friend group.

Why read it:

Rich prose and an eerie campus setting make this a must-read. Like Tarrt's novel, it's more about *why* people do terrible things than catching the criminal.

▣▣ 4. *A Deadly Education* by Naomi Novik



Summaryer

A
DEADLY
EDUCATION



Summer
A NOVEL



Lesson One of The Scholomance

NAOMI NOVIK

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF UPROOTED

▣ 4. *A Deadly Education* by Naomi Novik

Perfect for fans of: Dark magic and morally complex heroines

Summary:

Set in a brutal magical school, El is a powerful sorceress trying not to turn evil while surviving a place designed to kill its students.



Why read it:

Though fantasy, the academic intensity and dark tone match *The Secret History*. El's voice is sharp, cynical, and deeply human — just like Richard's introspection in Tartt's novel.

▣ 5. *The Truants* by Kate Weinberg



NEW YORK TIMES

“One of the most
voices in crime writing

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▣ 5. *The Truants* by Kate Weinberg

Perfect for fans of: Literary obsession and romantic betrayal

Summary:

Jess falls under the influence of a magnetic literature professor and a mysterious new friend — but lies and betrayal simmer beneath the surface.



Why read it:

With nods to *The Secret History*, this novel captures the seductive pull of academia and the danger of romanticized intellectualism.

▣ 6. *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

We Love You, Bun



A Novel



▣ 6. *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

Perfect for fans of: Quiet psychological horror and tragic inevitability

Summary:

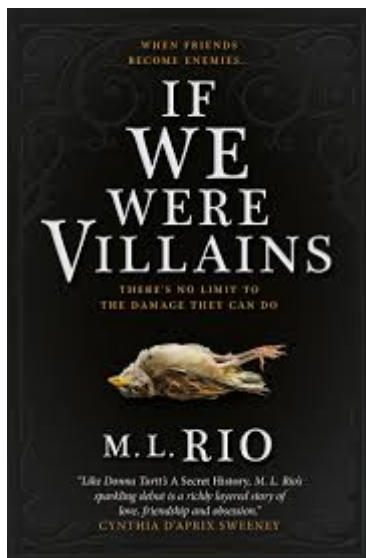
At a secluded boarding school, students are raised for a dark purpose. The story slowly reveals their fate, their humanity, and the emotional cost of compliance.



Why read it:

While not a murder mystery, it shares *The Secret History*'s slow tension, emotional gravity, and haunting moral themes.

▣ 7. *The Secret Place* by Tana French



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Perfect for fans of: Teenage dynamics and layered mysteries

Summary:

When a boy is murdered at an all-girls school, a cryptic note appears a year later — reopening the case. The truth lies hidden in teenage cliques and power games.

Why read it:

Complex characters, school setting, and emotional manipulation make this another dark and satisfying read for *Secret History* fans.



☐☐ What These Books Have in Common with *The Secret History*

Here's what you'll find in all of these reads:

- ☐☐ **Academically elite or isolated settings**
- ☐☐ **Morally ambiguous characters**
- ☐☐ **Existential and psychological themes**
- 🖋️ **Beautiful, immersive prose**

-  **Slow-building tension with explosive reveals**


Whether you're craving something eerie, intellectual, or emotionally intense, these books will deliver the same haunting experience as *The Secret History*.



Final Thoughts: Where Dark Academia Meets Psychological Suspense

Books like *The Secret History* offer more than thrilling plots — they offer a world. One filled with beauty and ruin, intellect and arrogance, ambition and decay.

If you're looking to **dive back into a beautifully dark and deeply intellectual story**, these books will satisfy your literary hunger — and leave you thinking long after the last page.

 **Have you read any of these books? Which one are you adding to your TBR next?**