

PICADOR

Reading Group Gold

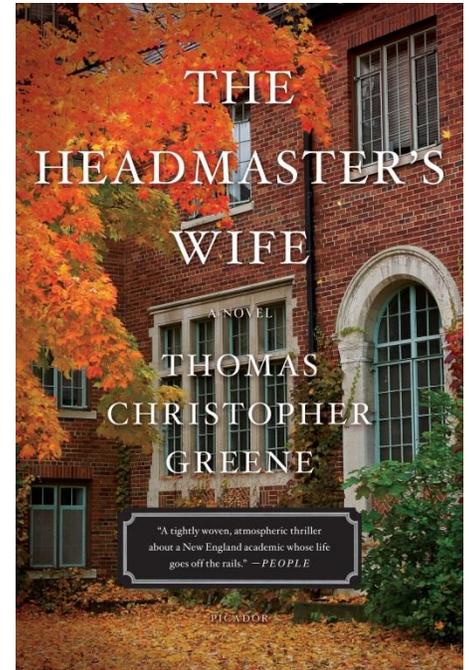
The Headmaster's Wife

By Thomas Christopher Greene

“Part of a grand literary tradition . . . Greene’s plot has the tight, relentless pacing of a fine detective novel . . . Deeply felt . . . and utterly absorbing.”

—*The Washington Post*

Like his father before him, Arthur Winthrop is the headmaster of Vermont’s elite Lancaster School. It is the place he feels has given him his life, but is also the site of his undoing as events spiral out of his control. Found wandering naked in Central Park, he begins to tell his story to the police, but his memories collide into one another, and the true nature of things, a narrative of love, of marriage, of family, and of a tragedy Arthur does not know how to address emerges. Luminous and atmospheric, bringing to life the tight-knit enclave of a quintessential New England boarding school, the novel is part mystery, part love story, and an exploration of the ties of place and family. Beautifully written and compulsively readable, *The Headmaster’s Wife* stands as a moving elegy to the power of love as an antidote to grief.



1. What did you think were the central themes of the book, and how did they resonate with you?
2. The novel explores the taboo subject of a teacher-student affair. What did you think of the author’s handling of this?
3. ‘Maybe, I think, this is what love is.’ There are several varieties of love portrayed in the book: passionate affairs, marriage and parental love. Discuss the depiction of love in all of its forms.
4. The river is described as ‘timeless and uncaring’. Explore the symbolic resonance of water in the book and what it means to the characters.
5. How did your opinion of the headmaster and his wife change throughout the course of the novel? Did you understand them more having encountered both points of view?
6. ‘Time is malleable. Memory fails. Memory changes.’ Discuss the representation of time and memory throughout the pages of the book.
7. What do you think the structure of the novel brought to your reading experience? Did the narrative switch surprise you?

8. Ethan's death has a profound effect upon his parents' lives. Explore the theme of loss and grief in the book.
9. What did you think of the author's representation of the boarding school culture at Lancaster? Has it altered any of the views you currently hold?
10. Were you satisfied with the ending of the novel? Which character did you sympathize with most, and why?

About the Author

THOMAS CHRISTOPHER GREENE is the author of three previous novels: *Mirror Lake*, *I'll Never be Long Gone*, and *Envious Moon*. His fiction has been translated into eleven languages and has won many awards and honors. In 2007, Tom founded the Vermont College of Fine Arts, a top fine arts college, making him the youngest college president in America at that time. He lives in Montpelier, VT, with his family.

Join the discussion online:

www.facebook.com/PicadorBookClub



PICADOR
BOOK CLUB

Reading Group Guide written by St. Martin's Press