

# Reading Group Gold

## *If I Forget You*

Thomas Christopher Greene

### ABOUT THE BOOK

"Thomas Christopher Greene's *If I Forget You* is the most moving and beautifully-written love story I've read since *Cold Mountain*."—Howard Frank Mosher, author of *God's Kingdom*

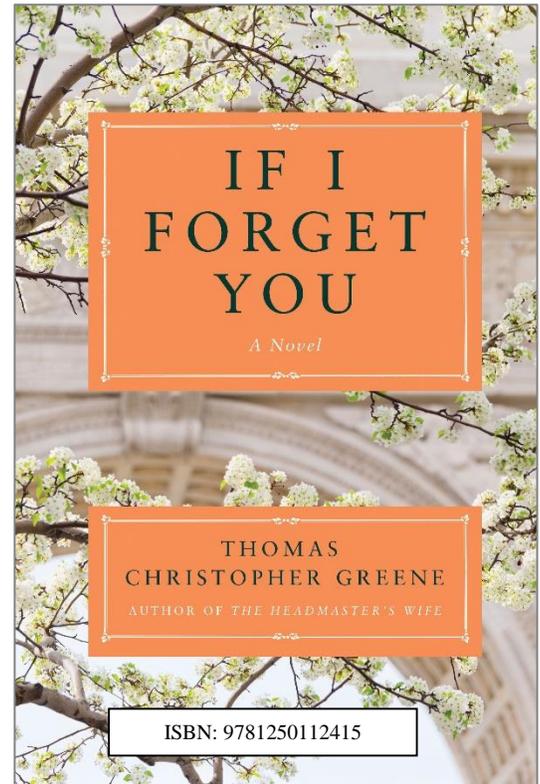
Deeply affecting and compulsively readable, *The Headmaster's Wife* was a breakout book for Thomas Christopher Greene. Now, Greene returns with a beautifully written, emotional new novel perfect for his growing audience.

Twenty-one years after they were driven apart by circumstances beyond their control, two former lovers have a chance encounter on a Manhattan street. What follows is a tense, suspenseful exploration of the many facets of enduring love. Told from altering points of view through time, *If I Forget You* tells the story of Henry Gold, a poet whose rise from poverty embodies the American dream, and Margot Fuller, the daughter of a prominent, wealthy family, and their unlikely, star-crossed love affair, complete with the secrets they carry when they find each other for the second time.

Written in lyrical prose, *If I Forget You* is at once a great love story, a novel of marriage, manners, and family, a meditation on the nature of art, a moving elegy to what it means to love and to lose, and how the choices we make can change our lives forever.

### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Margot and Henry both try to break from their backgrounds when they go to college. Margot wants a life distinct from her wealthy family, and Henry seeks a world beyond his working class neighborhood in Providence. In what ways do you think they achieve these goals? In what ways do they remain tethered to their pasts?
2. Were you surprised by Margot's behavior following the incident between her father and Henry? Why or why not? How do you think you would have reacted if you were in her situation?



3. When he's young, Henry's mother tells him, "Henry Gold, don't ever let anyone tell you you can't do something." Henry is haunted by those words as he later reflects, "Many years ago, someone told him how to do things, and he didn't fight like he should have." Do you think Henry could have made different decisions and changed his fate with Margot? If so, what could he have done?
4. Artistic endeavors—poetry and painting—play central roles for Henry and Margot, yet they pursue their interests in very different ways. Henry's "raw ambition," his desire "to do great things with words" is one of the primary reasons Margot is first drawn to him. She, on the other hand, is "always making light of her love of painting if anyone asks, as if it could only possibly be a hobby and not something ever carefully considered." Why do you think Margot treats her painting as a kind of frivolity, rather than a legitimate pursuit, until much later in adulthood?
5. In what ways do you think Mr. Fuller contributed to the demise of Margot and Henry's young relationship? Do you think he is to blame? Why or why not?
6. When reflecting on his past with Margot, his failed marriage, and the urgency with which he loves his daughter, Henry purports, "For this is the great paradox of life, isn't it? The more you love someone, the more that person will eventually break your heart?" What's your reaction to that theory? If Henry said those words to you, how would you respond?
7. In what ways do you think Henry and Margot change from past to present? How do you see these changes influence their relationship in 2012?
8. Fatherhood plays an important in the novel. How do the fathers in the story—Mr. Fuller, Mr. Gold, Henry—approach their roles differently? Are there similarities?
9. What do you think about Margot's choice to keep Alex's paternity a secret? Do you think she made the right decision given her circumstances, or should she have told Henry? Chad? Alex?
10. Did you find the ending satisfying? Why or why not? How else do you think the novel could have ended?
11. The entire novel is written in the present tense, even the portions that take place in the past. In what ways might this narrative choice have affected your interpretation of the novel?

*Guide written by Laura Chasen*



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