



# The Headmaster's Wife

*Thomas Christopher Greene*

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## **The Headmaster's Wife** Thomas Christopher Greene

Inspired by a personal loss, Greene explores the way that tragedy and time assail one man's memories of his life and loves.

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.

## **The Headmaster's Wife Details**

Date : Published February 25th 2014 by Thomas Dunne Books

ISBN : 9781250038944

Author : Thomas Christopher Greene

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# From Reader Review The Headmaster's Wife for online ebook

## Annet says

*A layered story of love, unbearable loss, and grief.*

Wonderful read. Tragic ... unexpected turn of events in the course of the story. A sad story really... beautifully written. Scenery of Eastern Canada beautifully described.

Easy flowing read, once you start, you just want to move on and get to the outcome. Intriguing... Story seems quite logical, until it takes a turn.... 4.5. Recommended!

And thanks to Goodreads and my Goodreads friends, for I found this book here.... what a grand source of books GR is!

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, marriage, 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...

*What seems to be a deceptively simple story about the headmaster of a New England boarding school and his wife, facing late middle age and growing apart over differences of opinion on their teenage son, morphed into a haunting, mysterious page-turner.... A meditation on longing in all of life's stages.... - Concord Monitor*

*Nothing is what is appears in this brilliant story of a life gone awry... The book is, at its core, a trenchant examination of one family's terrible loss and how the aftermath of tragedy can make or break a person's soul...- Publisher's Weekly*

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## Mardee says

Excellent! Worthy tale and so well told. I love Mr. Greene's writing and will look for his previous books now. This would make a great movie!

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## Ladybug Lynn says

Most reviews say that the book is about grief and loss. While that is true, it is more a story of our choices and justifications for those choices and how they lead to grief. Elizabeth's (the titular Headmaster's Wife) life is heartbreaking not because of the big thing that is revealed in the book but because of the bad choices she makes. Choices she makes for comfort and out of loneliness instead of belief in those decisions. So sad. Read the book for the examination of a life not lived to the full potential and not for any twists- twists that are telegraphed early to the observant reader.

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## **Sarah says**

This book has a lot of shallow things going for it: attractive cover, interesting sounding premise (hello it's set at a boarding school in Vermont), good author blurbs, double spaced text on smallish pages to make you think you're a really good and fast reader.... but then it falls flat in all the important ways. I thought it was pretty obvious from the start that Arthur is an unreliable narrator, and there's just nothing subtle in the story. I didn't care about any of the characters-- not in the "I think these are bad people" care but "I'm not getting anything of substance from any of this" care.

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## **Linda says**

This book is cleverly written!! I found it unusual in the fact there was no build up to the story, the beginning places you slap dab in the middle of it. The prose is sparse but beautiful. Hard to put down! I will definitely read more of Mr. Greene's books.

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## **Suzanne says**

I could not put it down! This was a gripping novel about how we deal with grief and what it does to tear us apart. As I got into the first part of the book, I wasn't sure I liked the way it was going, but it was written so well, I could stop reading. Then...smack, about halfway through it takes a turn I was not expecting at all. It ended up being a great read, and offers a lot of food for thought on what might have been if just any one of the circumstances for the main characters had been different...we never know how the seeds we plant in our early years will end up harvesting later in life...

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## **Diane S ? says**

There is no doubt that the weather here the last few days made the setting for this book really stand out. Fallish, cool weather, back to school and this story that takes place at an insular prep school the Northeast.

Loved how the author drops the reader right into the middle of the story and how aware we are of that but not of what has actually happened. Quite a jolt with the surprise at the end of the first part.

The closed world of a live in school, where expectations are passed from father to son. A staying in place, in a way not really growing up, and out, a world and community all its own. Relationships made, marriages, children, things said between a man and woman and what happens when one is lost. Played everything the right way and still floundered.

Found this to be quite good, writing is straightforward but evocative, setting and tone perfect for the story. Whether you like the characters or not doesn't really matter, it is a story of a relationship, loosing ones moors and trying to find a new way when the old is no longer viable.

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## **Jennifer Masterson says**

4 and 3/4 Stars! "The Headmaster's Wife" is truly a great and unique read. It twists and turns like a thriller but deals with grief and loss at the same time. I've never read anything like this. I don't want to give away too much because it is best to go into this novel not knowing anything. I never would have read this but two people outside of Goodreads had recommended it to me. The first time someone told me about it I saw the cover and passed. I'm big on covers and the cover is so blah and made me think it was going to be boring. Then someone else told me to read it and I took it as a sign. I'm so glad I did. It's not boring in the least!!!

It is also so beautifully written. At times almost poetic. I highly recommend it!!!

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## **Bonnie Brody says**

The Headmaster's Wife by Thomas Christopher Greene is written in a beautiful style that makes the reading of this book compelling. Greene has a way with words that hooks the reader from the first pages. The plot, however, is not as well-considered as I would have liked and I was disappointed by the denouement. It seemed like a *deus ex machina*, and not at all realistic.

The book starts out with Arthur Winthrop, Headmaster of The Lancaster School in Vermont, a prestigious boarding school, found wandering naked in Central Park. What was he doing out there? The police are interested in his story and as it unravels it becomes obvious that parts of Arthur's mind are confused. He tells the story of a marriage that has soured over the years, with lost intimacy and increased distance between him and his wife Elizabeth. At the same time, Arthur becomes obsessively enamored of a new transfer student named Betsy Pappas. He is willing to risk all for a relationship with her. As the story of Betsy and Arthur unfurls, I found myself gripping the pages for more. However, something felt amiss to me and as the second half of the story fills in the pieces, I found out why.

Arthur and Elizabeth have a son named Ethan who Arthur had hoped would follow in his family's footsteps and become Headmaster of Lancaster School some day. However, upon graduation, and right after 9/11, Ethan joins the army and goes to Iraq. Arthur is furious and Elizabeth is torn up with fear. Ethan is a good person but is not the son that Arthur had hoped he'd be. Elizabeth has tried to protect him from the world but has to let him go.

I found the second half of the book as interesting as the first half. However, I also found it to be implausible towards the end. I don't want to give any spoilers so I will leave it at that. This is a good literary page-turner that leaves something to be desired - like a jigsaw puzzle with two or three missing pieces or pieces that don't fit in. I enjoyed the experience of reading it but hoped for something more.

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## **Carolyn says**

This is a beautifully told story of love and loss and the choices we make in life. It opens with the Headmaster of a prestigious but insular Vermont school, Arthur Winthrop, being found wandering naked in New York's

Central Park. Taken into custody by the police he slowly tells them how his life has spiraled out of control due to an obsessive love affair. Half way through the book, the story switches to the Headmaster's wife Elizabeth and we gradually learn more of her and Arthur's stories and what has brought them to this point. The atmosphere of the school was well conveyed, not just as a beautiful place in Vermont but as a suffocating, closed environment where behaviour must be correct and conventional. I enjoyed the way the author skillfully morphed the novel from what appeared to be a story of forbidden love to one that was much more complex, at the same time totally our feelings towards Arthur. 4.5★

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### **Maria says**

The Headmaster's Wife is about love, class, family, and expectations, but it is ultimately a story about how people grieve. A novel in three parts, the first part is told from the point of view of Arthur Winthrop, headmaster of an elite prep school in Vermont called Lancaster. The second part of the story is told from the point of view of his wife, Elizabeth, and she presents a slightly different version of events for us to consider. The third and final part is the denouement, and it manages to be both sad and hopeful. Which feels right, because life is often simultaneously sad and hopeful.

I won't share points of the plot because I don't want to spoil the experience of reading the book, but Thomas Christopher Greene has created a remarkably convincing unreliable narrator. Not since reading Chuck Palahniuk's Fight Club have I been so surprised to discover the difference between the events as they are presented and the 'truth' of the novel's reality.

I believe fans of John Irving and Wally Lamb and Richard Russo would appreciate this book a great deal.

Lastly, I like to read author acknowledgments at the close. Mr. Greene's acknowledgments made me cry - even harder than the conclusion to his beautiful story.

The ones that love us never truly leave us.

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### **Carol says**

[I would have given this 5 stars except it bordered on a novella. No matter how large the publisher's make the font, it's clear that this fantastic little read is no more than a 6 hour pleasure.] But what a pleasure it is!! Greene's offering is a fresh take on the unreliable narrator - just when you thought it couldn't happen. Every character rang true. The pace was perfect. Descriptions are lush. This is a confection worth full-price now. Don't wait.

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### **Susan says**

I recently finished reading "The Headmaster's Wife" by Thomas Christopher Greene. I admit to being somewhat at a loss on how to review this book. This is a book told by multiple voices and it is incumbent on the reader to determine what is true and what is an altered perception of reality. The setting is the elite world of the private New England prep school - Lancaster, in Vermont. Arthur Winthrop is Lancaster's headmaster, a position that his father held before him. When the book opens, Arthur is found wandering naked in Central

Park and after being picked up by the police, he tells them (and us) his story in flashback form; this comprises the first part of the book. He drinks too much, has a indifferent relationship with his wife Elizabeth, who he tells us is obsessed with tennis and possibly her tennis instructor. He is estranged from his only son who is serving in the army in Afghanistan. Arthur becomes obsessed with a student, Becky Pappas, and he begins an affair with her. This Arthur is unlikable and his actions are reprehensible. At this point I wondered how I would finish the book.

In the interest of not revealing any spoilers, I will just say that in the second part of the book, we hear from another point of view and learn that what Arthur views as true is not necessarily so...the cause of Arthur's mental deconstruction was not a surprise to me but the author did reveal the truth eventually, piece by piece.

One of the jacket reviews called "The Headmaster's Wife" is psychologically complex and wickedly fast-paced"; I would say it was somewhat predictable and that I had to push myself to keep reading it. Ultimately I found it to be a sad story about people with sad, not particularly interesting or remarkable lives. The point where a good discussion could be had would be the discussion about how a major life change causes psychological damage in different ways to different people.

I received a copy of this book from the Amazon Vine Program for my honest and unbiased review.

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### **Caitlin says**

*The Headmaster's Wife* begins as what appears to be a rather conventional tale of a headmaster's mid-life crisis involving an affair with a student and the story of his troubled marriage. It was so conventional, in fact, that I wondered why I was continuing to read it, but the writing was so good that it kept me with the story. I am very glad it did because as the reader finishes part one, narrated by the headmaster, and ventures on into parts two and three, narrated by different characters, the novel and its story bloom in completely unconventional ways. With a nod towards *Rashomon*, Mr. Greene amply demonstrates the complexity of all story, the bits and pieces of information that come our way as a story is told through different eyes and voice.

Often books with multiple narrators fall down for me because the voices just aren't different enough - the characters all sound pretty much the same, their point of view isn't radically different, and I am left wondering why the author bothered. Mr. Greene's narration has none of these issues. His characters are deeply realized with their own voices, their own visions, their own sense of self. This mastery deepens the story as Mr. Greene slowly pieces it together leaving the reader with a sense of the larger whole created of its constituent pieces. Smart, moving, funny, deeply felt and told, *The Headmaster's Wife* is one of the best books I've read so far this year. You should read it, too.

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### **Barb says**

This story is divided into three parts; Acrimony, Expectations and After. The headmaster narrates the first part and the other two are narrated in the third person describing events from a different perspective.

When I began reading the headmaster's story I was concerned by what he was doing and worried where the story was headed. By the end of his narrative I was shocked by the events that had unfolded. While reading 'Expectations' and then 'After' the reader gains insight about events described in part one and the story

becomes a very different one.

I don't want to say too much or give anything away that you may not already know from the book jacket or promotional blurb. I do want to say that I was completely engrossed by this book and read it from start to finish in less than 24 hours. The author really nails relationships and emotions and expertly dissects grief (unfortunately this comes from experience).

I think this would make an excellent book club book, I highly recommend it.

Thank you to the Amazon Vine program and St. Martin's Press for making this copy available to me in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Sessygail says**

So, up until the last few pages, I was thinking this would be a four star read. It was well-written and well-crafted...up until the end, where, it seems, the author ran out of interest in telling this story and just abruptly closed it. Very odd.

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### **Paul says**

#### **The Headmaster's Wife Simply Stunning**

Like all good stories this has a beginning a middle and an end and have called the three parts; Acrimony, Expectations and After just to help us out. I am sure there will be plenty of people that will try and pigeon hole this book, as literary or psychological thriller but I am adding a new pigeon hole – its bloody good.

Arthur Winthrop is a middle aged headmaster of an elite school in Vermont who is found running naked through New York's Central Park on a cold and snowy day. While in custody he owns up to an even worse crime that like in Lolita the Headmaster had fallen in love with and carried out an illicit affair with a student. Not only that he had had carried out an illicit affair but things worsened when she started dating a student.

What we get is a stunning novel in the first half with its dark undertones of obsessive lust for a schoolgirl and her betrayal at all levels and the whole section is narrated by Arthur making his statement to the police who then looks as guilty as hell. Is he making this confession of his own free will? What is compelling is the narration which seems so dark, obsessive dealing with love, lust, grief, marriage and loss.

The Acrimony hooks you and Expectations winds you in like a salmon on a fly hook totally stunned and enthralled you just want to read on. The obsession that takes hold of Arthur Winthrop also gets under the skin of the read you not want but need to read on as this is a fast paced and complex that is so brilliant in this book. This is everything you want and need to read and gives complete enjoyment to the reader I cannot recommend The Headmaster's Wife highly enough.

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## **Martie Nees Record says**

When the headmaster of a private boarding school, is found wondering naked in Central Park, he is picked up for questioning. It is here that the story of his rise and strange undoing is brought to the reader through his own self narration to the police department. I loved the twist and trying to figure out the twist in the first half of the book. The rest was just an okay read. Because of the interesting journey the author brought me on in the first half. I gave the book three stars.

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## **Lisa Dresdner says**

Oh, so bad, it made me sad. I had been intrigued by reviews of this novel that noted the three different perspectives from which the story is told, how each perspective informs the previous one so that readers gained new understandings of the characters. The reviews were generous. In spite of quickly getting the sense that this novel was not going to go anywhere near where I'd hoped, I kept reading because I really kept hoping for something more. However, this novel is among those that I (sadly) have wasted far too much time on. The first narrator (the headmaster) is not particularly likable: he is arrogant, selfish, and manipulative. While this section was quite lengthy, I reminded myself that the different POVs would likely shed light on this part of the story or the characters and reveal to me why I should care about them and their lives. Unfortunately, the second section is written in a completely dispassionate omniscient voice, and while the unsurprising tragedy of the narrator's life is revealed immediately, smart readers already knew what that event would be and, while we may be sad about the events, the narrative style does not elicit or evoke any sympathy for the characters. The third section brings us back to the present again, and this is where the story begins to turn its focus more directly on the wife of the title. In fact, I'm not even sure why the title emphasizes the wife, because she is merely the rather passive "victim" of her husband's actions, and she's not particularly engaging either. Again, the narrative voice didn't make me care about her any more than I cared about her husband, which is to say that one hour would be too much to waste on this novel so, dear reader, heed my warning and don't bother!

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## **Shannon says**

So, here's me searching through Edelweiss catalog and I come across a book coming in 2019 called *The Perfect Liar* by Thomas Christopher Greene. It sounds amazing and I need it desperately! I send a request and I am asked have I read his book *The Headmasters Wife*. I have not, so I read the blurb real quick and I'm like well, damn I need this too. ONE CLICK!

Holy shizzzz, when I got to 50% I was SHOOK. I was like wait WHAT?!?! I honest to God thought I had it figured out by the prologue. I am even texting my friend, Jamie (hey girl) saying i think I know what's going on. So, I'm just reading through like oh, I so know where this is going. UM NOPE!

The first half of the book is told through the POV of Arthur, the headmaster of a boarding school. I loved his half. It was so interesting and also cringeworthy. I'm saying to myself, Arthur don't you dare!

The second half is told through the eyes of Elizabeth. It gives us more of the back story which I thoroughly enjoyed! I will say I liked the first half a wee bit more but nonetheless I loved this BOOK!!! I loved the story, how it was written and the characters.

I am so excited to get my hands on this authors new book in 2019. I recommend!!! 4.5 Stars fosho!!

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