



Theo of Golden

by Allen Levi

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

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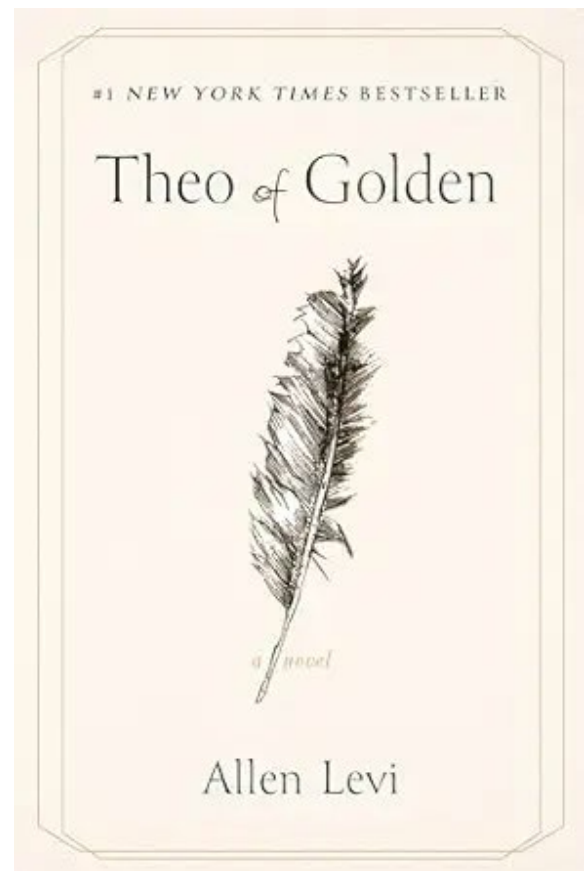
Included in the Kit:

- [Book summary](#)
- [Author biography](#)
- [Discussion questions](#)
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Book summary

One spring morning, a stranger named Theo arrives in the small Southern city of Golden. He doesn't explain much about where he came from or why he's there – but when he visits the local coffeehouse, where pencil portraits of the people of Golden hang on the walls, he begins purchasing them, one at a time, and giving each portrait to the person depicted. In exchange, he asks only for the person's story. And so, portrait by portrait, person by person, secrets are revealed, regrets are shared, and ordinary lives are profoundly altered.

A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, *Theo of Golden* is an unforgettable novel about the power of generosity, the importance of connection, and the quiet miracles that happen when we choose kindness and wonder.



(Source: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Theo-of-Golden/Allen-Levi/9781668236567>)





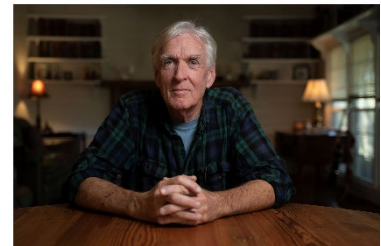
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Meet the Author

Allen grew up in Columbus, Georgia, attended University of Georgia for degrees in English and Law, and worked as an attorney from 1980 to 1990. He left law practice for two years in 1990, moved to Scotland, and, while there, received a degree in Scottish fiction from the University of Edinburgh. He returned home, resumed law practice for three years, and finally ventured into vocational music in 1996.

Since then, he has worked as a travelling musician, sharing his whimsical, thought-provoking band of songwriting and storytelling to audiences across the U.S. He has over twenty albums to his credit, as well as hundreds of other unpublished songs.



In 2014, he published *The Last Sweet Mile*, a memoir of the close friendship he shared with his brother, Gary, who died in 2012. He also wrote and published a children's book, *Oliviatown*, adapted from a song of the same title.

Allen published his first novel, *Theo of Golden*, in 2023.

When not reading or writing, Allen cares for family acreage where he lives with his father, tries to spend time with family nearby, keeps a full schedule of involvement in the small community around him, and dreams of being an artist someday.

(Source: <https://www.allenlevi.com/about>)



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Discussion Questions

1. What was your first impression of Theo? Did that change at all as the story went on? Of all the friendships that Theo forged in the story, which interested you the most as reader? Which revealed the most to you about Theo?
2. What happens next for Asher, Ellen, Simone, and other essential players in the novel? If there were a sequel to the book, focusing on one of the characters other than Theo, which character would you want it to be?
3. Theo insisted on personal presence and participation when he carried out his bestowals. Why do you think Theo was so insistent on doing it the way he did, in person, in secret, one at a time? What did that tell us about him and his perspective on giving?
4. Did you notice that, with only a couple of very minor mentions, technology has no place in the story. Could Theo have engaged with people he met at the Promenade if he had used texting, Zoom calls, or email? Would his invitations have been well received, or as intriguing, if they had been sent in some form other than handwritten letters?
5. Let's imagine for a second you live in Golden, and Asher drew your photo. How would you react if Theo had contacted you to give you the portrait? Would you be open or apprehensive?
6. While exploring Golden, Theo visits a coffee shop where he finds 92 portraits drawn of the people in the town. Why was it important for Theo to purchase these portraits and give them to their subjects? Theo is very particular about the portraits he purchases at first. Why was he so selective, and what was he looking for within each portrait?
7. After Theo's death, it's revealed that Theo was a famous and successful painter. Eventually, Asher learns that his mother had a relationship with Theo. And she returned to Golden pregnant with Asher, and Theo was the father. While she told Theo about Asher, she asked him to stay away. And he did so until years later, when he finally came to Golden. Why did Asher's mother tell Theo to stay away? And why did Theo choose this time period to finally come to Golden? Why did Theo keep so many secrets from the people in the town? Why didn't he tell Asher the truth when he met him?
8. Some view this novel as a Christian story, while others believe it's a narrative that includes religious overtones. What is your impression of how the story presented religion, especially when it comes to Theo?
9. How did Theo cultivate a love of beauty in his own life, whether unintentionally as a boy or intentionally as a man? Identify moments when beauty (through music,



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nature, art) inspired him in some way. Have you had moments like that in your life? How can we encourage a sense of delight and love for beauty in the lives of our children?

10. How did Theo's act of kindness change many in this town for good? Did the story of Theo's life challenge or inspire you to change in any way? How?

(Source: <https://www.allenlevi.com/for-book-clubs> , <https://bookclubchat.com/books/book-club-questions-for-theo-of-golden-by-allen-levi/>)

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Recipes

Espresso Martini Mocktail

Ingredients:

- 4 ounces espresso
- 2 ounces heavy whipping cream
- 2 ounces simple syrup
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch salt
- Cocoa powder – to rim glass
- Coffee beans – for garnish
- Ice
- 1-2 dashes of aromatic bitters - bitters

Directions:

Dip the rim of your martini glass into simple syrup and then cocoa powder. Set aside.

Into a cocktail shaker add ice, espresso, heavy cream, simple syrup, vanilla extract, salt, and optional aromatic bitters.

Shake vigorously for about a minute or so. Pour into two martini glasses and top with a few coffee beans.



(Source: <https://entirelyelizabeth.com/espresso-martini-mocktail/>)

Recipes Continuation

Pastéis de Nata (Portuguese Custard Tarts)

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1 1/3 cups granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup of water
- 6 large egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cinnamon stick
- Peel of 1 lemon cut into thin strips
- 1 sheet of puff pastry
- Ground cinnamon for dusting, optional



Directions:

Preheat the oven to 550 F and lightly grease a 12-cup muffin tin.

Bring the sugar, water, vanilla extract, lemon peel, and cinnamon stick to a boil in a medium, heavy-based saucepan. Cook without stirring until it reaches 220 F, then remove the cinnamon stick and take the pan off the heat.

Meanwhile, in a separate saucepan, whisk the milk, flour, and salt until well blended. Whisk constantly and cook over medium heat until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove it from the heat and let it cool for 10 minutes. Once the milk mixture has cooled, whisk in the egg yolks, then add the sugar syrup and mix until everything is well combined. Pour through a sieve into a measuring cup to remove any lumps. Cut the puff pastry sheet into two pieces and place them on top of each other. Tightly roll the sheets into a log from the short side, then cut it into 12 evenly sized pieces.

Place one piece of pastry in each of the 12 wells of the muffin tin, dip your thumb in cold water, then use your thumb to press the pastry against the sides to form a cup. Make sure the pastry comes slightly above the edge of each well. Fill each pastry cup 3/4 of the way with custard. Bake at 550 F for 10-12 minutes. The tarts are done when the custard starts to caramelize and blister, and the pastry turns golden brown.

(Source: <https://spanishsabores.com/pasteis-de-nata-recipe/#recipe>)

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Recipes Continuation

Easy Buckeye Recipe

Ingredients:

- 5 peaches, peeled, cored and sliced
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

For the batter:

- 6 Tablespoons of butter
- 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup of milk
- ground cinnamon



Directions:

Add the sliced peaches, sugar and salt to a saucepan and stir to combine. Cook on medium heat for just a few minutes, until the sugar is dissolved and helps to bring out the juices from the peaches. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Slice butter into pieces and add to a 9x13 inch baking dish. Place pan in the oven while it preheats to allow the butter to melt. Once melted, remove the pan from the oven.

In a large bowl mix together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Stir in the milk, just until combined. Pour the mixture into the pan, over the melted butter and smooth it into an even layer.

Spoon the peaches and juice over the batter. Sprinkle cinnamon generously over the top.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 38-40 minutes. Serve warm, with a scoop of ice cream, if desired.

(Source: <https://tastesbetterfromscratch.com/peach-cobbler/#wprm-recipe-container-10080>)