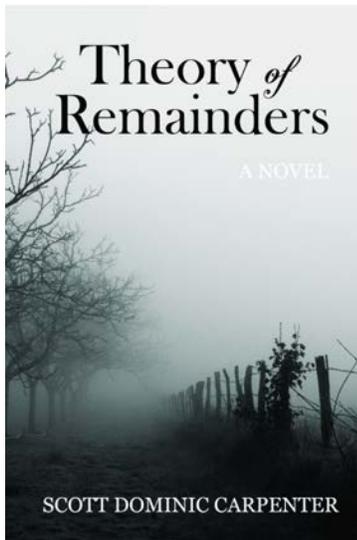




Scott Dominic Carpenter's *Theory of Reminders*

A Book Club Guide

Theory of Reminders



At fifty-two, psychiatrist Philip Adler is divorced, alone, and gutted of passion. When a funeral draws him back to his ex-wife's homeland of France, the trip reunites him with a trauma he has struggled to forget: the brutal death of his teenage daughter fifteen years earlier. Prodded by his former brother-in-law and stirred by the unspent embers of his marriage, he embarks on a mission to resolve lingering questions about this past, hoping to heal himself along the way. The search leads to a disturbed man who may hold more answers than anyone expects—if only Philip can hear what he's trying to say.

A suspenseful literary novel set in the lush backgrounds of Normandy, *Theory of Reminders* explores the secret ties between love, trauma and language.

About the Author

Scott Dominic Carpenter is a professor of literature at Carleton College (MN) and the author of the recent collection *This Jealous Earth* (MG Press 2013), as featured on Minnesota Public Radio and described as “charmingly nostalgic” (*Publisher's Weekly*) and “incredibly moving” (*The Rumpus*). Author Siri Hustvedt called the collection “psychologically acute and elegantly written... By turns sad, funny, tender, and alarming.” A Pushcart Prize nominee, Carpenter has published broadly in literary journals. His work has been included in *Best Indie Lit New England 2012*. You'll find his website at www.sdcarpenter.com.



Find *Theory of Reminders* on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and at many local bookstores.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is this story about?
2. The murder of a child is always a traumatic event. How is Philip Adler's situation made worse by his dual role as parent and psychiatrist?
3. What are Philip's strengths and weaknesses, and how do these affect his progress?
4. How does Philip both help and fail to help Melanie Patterson?
5. What significance does the setting have? Could the story be told just as well in another location—perhaps even in a different country?
6. How are issues of language prominent in the novel?
7. Why does Yvonne change her mind about helping Philip?
8. What leads Philip to his final realizations about himself?
9. How did you feel about Carpenter's minor characters, who so amply populate the town of Yvetot? How did your feelings change over the course of the story?
10. What does *Theory of Reminders* have to say about the role of fathers?
11. How do cultural misunderstandings affect the characters?
12. What does *Theory of Reminders* say about our ability to deal with "reminders"?
13. What were the most surprising elements of the story?
14. Why does the discovery of the soldier's body on Le Mont de l'If trigger a change in local sentiment?
15. How would Margaux's life have been different if Philip had never come to France for the funeral?
16. What is Roger's role in this story?
17. Why does chess come up so often in the novel?
18. Is Adler right about Edouard Morin's motivation at the end of the novel? Does it matter?
19. What has actually changed by the end of the novel?
20. What does the title mean to you?