

One Book, One School: IHA Summer Reading 2026

Welcome to our 2026 Whole-School Summer Read! Reading is often thought of as a solitary act, but a whole-school read transforms it into a collective experience. By sharing a single story, we build a shared vocabulary and a bridge of empathy across different grades and backgrounds. It allows us to explore deep questions about seeing and being seen, generosity, and being present together. We have chosen *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi for all students to read this summer.

Theo of Golden is a heartwarming, evocative novel that centers on the quiet miracles of human connection. The story takes place in the small, quiet Southern town of Golden. One spring morning, a gentle stranger named Theo arrives. No one knows where he came from or exactly why he is there. Theo visits a local coffeehouse where ninety-two pencil portraits of Golden's residents hang on the walls, drawn by a local artist.

Theo begins purchasing these portraits, one by one. But instead of keeping them, he tracks down the "rightful owners" to give them the art. In exchange for this act of unexpected generosity, Theo asks for only one thing: **their story**. Portrait by portrait, person by person, ordinary lives are profoundly altered as secrets are revealed, regrets are shared, and deep friendships are forged.

As you turn the pages this summer, we invite you to reflect on a few central ideas that we will dive into this fall:

- **Presence Over Speed:** In a culture obsessed with optimization and rushing to the next thing, Theo practices the quiet art of being fully present.
- **Seeing and Being Seen:** What does it mean to truly "see" someone? How does sharing our stories change how we fit into a community?
- **Creative Generosity:** How can small, intentional acts of kindness create invisible threads that bind an entire community together?

*Please note, different classes may incorporate the book in different ways, so students may want to make light notes on their thoughts as they read, but this is not required.

We encourage you to find a quiet spot this summer, a porch, a cozy couch, or a beach chair, and lose yourself in the town of Golden.

Happy summer reading!

"A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen... a novel about the quiet miracles that happen when we choose kindness and wonder."

Moore, Russell, host. "Allen Levi on *Theo of Golden*." *The Russell Moore Show, Christianity Today*, 4 March 2026, www.russellmoore.com/2026/03/04/allen-levi-on-theo-of-golden/.