

H-TOWN BOOKS READER GUIDE

Between the Notes

Book Club Guide

A conversation guide for readers who have finished the novel.

A NOTE FROM SCOTT

Thank you for choosing *Between the Notes* for your book club!

As I wrote this story, a question that has interested me for years but especially as I travel through midlife gradually emerged: what happens when the life you've carefully maintained no longer feels quite like your own? Eve and Gideon come to that question from different directions, and music gives them a way to hear something in each other—and eventually in themselves—that had gone quiet.

I hope the novel gives your group plenty to talk about: love, family, work, reinvention, the choices we make for other people, and the parts of ourselves we sometimes set aside without realizing it. The questions in this guide are not meant to lead you toward a single reading of the book. They are invitations. Follow the ones that interest you, skip the ones that don't, and let the conversation go wherever it wants to go.

Thanks for spending some time between the notes.

SPOILER NOTE

This guide discusses the entire novel, including the ending. Finish the book before reading on.

"Some parts of us are only waiting to be heard again."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Let the Book Open the Conversation

These questions begin with Eve and Gideon, then gradually open outward toward the experiences the novel may have stirred in you. Please don't think you need to answer every question, and you don't need to make an answer more personal than you want it to be.

1. At the beginning of the novel, Eve insists she's doing fine. Do you think she believes that herself? At what point, if any, does her definition of "fine" begin to change? Have you ever had a period when "fine" meant something different from what you thought it did?
2. Eve first knows Gideon through the music coming through their shared wall. How does hearing him before really knowing him shape their relationship? Would their connection have developed differently if they had simply met face-to-face first?
3. The notes Eve and Gideon exchange allow them to communicate at a slight distance. What are they able to reveal in writing—or through music—that might have been harder to say aloud?
4. Both Eve and Gideon have built functional lives around responsibilities to other people. In what ways have they each stopped making room for themselves, and how are their situations different? Did either experience feel familiar to you?
5. Music means something different to Eve than it does to Gideon. How does that difference change over the course of the novel? Did the book make you think about a song, artist, or creative pursuit that has carried a particular meaning in your own life?
6. Eve is a mother as well as a woman beginning a new relationship. How do Sam and Noah affect the choices she makes? Did you ever think she was being too cautious—or not cautious enough—about bringing Gideon into that part of her life?
7. Gideon's relationship with Olivia is entering a period of change as she prepares to leave for college. How does being a father influence the way he approaches Eve, his music, and the possibility of beginning something new?
8. Rick remains part of Eve's life even though their marriage is over. How did your feelings about Rick—and about Eve's history with him—change as the story progressed? What does Eve need to understand about that marriage before she can fully move forward?
9. "Breathing Room" changes meaning as the novel unfolds. What does the song represent when Gideon writes it, and what does it represent by the time Eve hears it performed near the end of the novel?
10. Eve tells Gideon, "I love you," but Gideon never says those words to her in the novel. Did you notice that? By the end, do you feel he has communicated the same thing in another way? Why or why not?
11. The novel is about romantic love, but also about recovering parts of yourself that have gone quiet. Which matters more to Eve and Gideon's transformations: finding each other, or rediscovering themselves? Did either journey make you think about something in yourself that you have rediscovered—or might want to?
12. The novel ends with Gideon telling Eve, "I've got you." What did those words mean to you at that point in their story? How would their meaning have been different if the novel had ended with "I love you"?

BEHIND THE BOOK

A Few Notes from Scott

Why a later-in-life romance?

The short answer is that's my age. As much as I love romances with younger characters—think *Heated Rivalry*, *Off Campus*, or even *It's Different This Time* by Joss Richard—I found myself hesitant to write my first romance novel about characters in an age range and time of life I didn't know firsthand. This naturally flowed into writing about two people who already had full lives before they met. Eve and Gideon are not waiting for adulthood to begin. They have children, work, history, obligations, disappointments, and routines. The romance had to fit into lives already in motion. That made every choice feel more interesting to me, because beginning again at forty-something is not the same as beginning for the first time.

Why did music become the bridge between Eve and Gideon?

The moment I read the original story prompt—woman hears her new neighbor play music through a shared wall and they leave each other notes—I loved it. I liked the idea that Eve would hear Gideon before she knew him. It's one of the reasons I enjoyed writing the wedding scene in *Bloom and Vine* because they got to see each other, form opinions about each other, and interact all without knowing they were actually neighbors.

And since Eve is the main character, I liked the idea that the music she heard through the wall would affect her directly. It gave me a way to let a connection arrive before either one of them was looking for it. As soon as the notes began, the wall stopped being only a barrier. It became the place where the relationship started.

As you can imagine, for the music Eve hears, I needed it to be special. I can't recall how quickly I landed on "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman, but with their ages being a few years behind my own, I cycled back to my own youth and college years, something that could be recognizable and be able to be played on guitar.

"The Swan" was a different story, but it came to me almost instantly. I wanted a piece of music that Eve might recognize but not know. And I specifically wanted her to hear a different side of Gideon: the private instructor. Some of my favorite romances are those where the two leads interact with children that are not just their own kids.

Where did "Breathing Room" come from?

The song grew alongside the novel. Not only is *Between the Notes* my first romance novel, "Breathing Room" is the first song I've written. To pull back the curtain, I wrote the song on 12 May 2026 when I realized I had been dancing around Gideon's song without really diving into the lyrics. That evening, I pulled out an 11x17 in. piece of paper and began jotting down the words. How late in the novel's progress was this? I finished the novel on 19 May!

I needed something that belonged to Gideon, but I also wanted the song to carry the ideas the story was already circling: quiet, listening, space, and that somewhat strange experience of hearing your life differently. I could not have written that song earlier in the novel's progress because by the time Gideon plays it for Eve and her kids, he had changed. And so had I.

By the end when everyone hears Asher Wren invite Gideon on stage to sing his tune, the song means more because the people around Gideon have changed the way he hears the song—and himself.

Why doesn't Gideon say "I love you"?

Even though this is my first romance novel, I am well aware of the tropes. And I'm well aware of how the second utterance of the phrase can sometimes come across weaker than when the first person says it.

And there's always Han Solo. As a behind-the-scenes Star Wars geek, I know that Harrison Ford never liked that George Lucas had Han say "I love you" to Leia in *The Empire Strikes Back*. So Ford improvised "I know" and landed a place in cinema history.

As I reached May, I realized I hadn't had Eve or Gideon say "I love you" yet and started figuring out when it should land. After I realized that Gideon would decline Asher Wren's offer to tour so he could stay in Houston and build his relationship with Eve, I knew that was his "I love you" moment, especially after I conceived that penultimate chapter when Eve learns what he did. That way, she gets to be the only person in the book who says "I love you."

And speaking of Han Solo, do you remember the last line in the book?

Did you always know the final line?

Rarely. I tend to write toward destinations while still discovering what they mean.

Early on I knew I wanted the final scene in the book to be Olivia leaving for college. I know the bittersweet gut punch of that event and I really didn't want a traditional last scene where the two leads kiss. By having Gideon react to Olivia leaving, it allowed Eve to be there for him in a way that wasn't entirely romantic. It also layered on the knowledge that in a year, she'd be going through the same thing with Sam.

I knew she would have the final line of dialogue in the book—which turned out to be the actual final line—but that meant I needed to come up with something for Gideon to say. By the time I reached the ending, Gideon had already expressed his love by choosing to stay, so I gave him "I've got you." It carried his character arc in a sentence way better than a longer speech could have.

What do you hope readers carry away from the book?

I hope readers were entertained. I hope they enjoyed the story as much as I did. And, if I'm being honest, I hope a few tears filled a few eyes along the way, especially that last chapter or two. I'll freely admit that I cried when writing the last chapter and cried again when I read it aloud to my wife.

But as to meaning, I will leave that to the reader. I am drawn to stories about people realizing that parts of themselves have not disappeared simply because it has been quiet for a while or because they are at a certain age. I have relished midlife not as a time of sadness that I am as old as I am but a time to thrive and flourish. To try new things (like writing a romance novel) or rediscover something I used to do (in my case, painting).

If the book leaves someone thinking about what they have stopped hearing in their own life, I would be glad for that conversation.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Thanks for spending some time with *Between the Notes*. Discover more books and stories at ScottDennisParker.com.