



A Prison Diary

By Jeffrey Archer

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On July 19, 2001, following a conviction for perjury, international bestselling author Jeffrey Archer was sentenced to four years in prison. Prisoner FF8282, as Archer is now known, spent the first three weeks in the notorious HMP Belmarsh, a high-security prison in South London, home to murderers, terrorists and some of Britain's most violent criminals.

On the last day of the trial, his mother dies, and the world's press accompany him to the funeral. On returning to prison, he's placed on the lifer's wing, where a cellmate sells his story to the tabloids. Prisoners and guards routinely line up outside his cell to ask for his autograph, to write letters, and to seek advice on their appeals.

For twenty-two days, Archer was locked in a cell with a murderer and a drug baron. He decided to use that time to write an hour-by-hour diary, detailing the worst three weeks of his life.

When *A Prison Diary* was published in England, it was condemned by the prison authorities, and praised by the critics.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Convicted of perjury in 2001, Archer, a bestselling novelist (*Sons of Fortune*) and member of the British House of Lords, penned this memoir about his first three weeks in prison, focusing on his daily life, the prisoners' lives and the state of the British penal system. An old hand at plotting novels and developing stories, Archer moves his memoir at a captivating pace, a credit to his storytelling skills considering the book's characters are in their cells for 22 hours a day. Deftly using mundane hour logs, he relates the slow passage of time without falling into the trap of recounting events minute by minute. Knowing that his story as a wealthy, educated celebrity with high-powered attorneys pales in comparison, Archer focuses on the sad, strange and even silly tales of his fellow inmates, a cast of hardened criminals and smalltime crooks. Concentrating on others also serves to help Archer avoid extended fits of melodramatic and self-serving prose (as when he compares himself to Oscar Wilde), which occur when he writes about his own case. But balancing this small flaw with his humorous descriptions of prison food and listening to a cricket match that seems as long as his four-year sentence adds a needed bit of humanity to this controversial politician. Of course, some of Archer's observations and the inmates' tales can't be taken as gospel since Archer is a convicted perjurer and his secondhand stories come from the mouths of murderers and other felons. But those caveats do not override the strong narrative and good writing that make this memoir an intriguing and engaging version of the often-trite prison journal.

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Review

"Gruesome, touching, sharply written...the best thing Archer has written in years."

About the Author

Jeffrey Archer was educated at Oxford University. He has served five years in Britain's House of Commons and fourteen years in the House of Lords. All of his novels and short story collections--including *And Thereby Hangs a Tale*, *Kane and Abel*, *Paths of Glory* and *False Impression*--have been international bestselling books. Archer is married with two sons and lives in London and Cambridge.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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