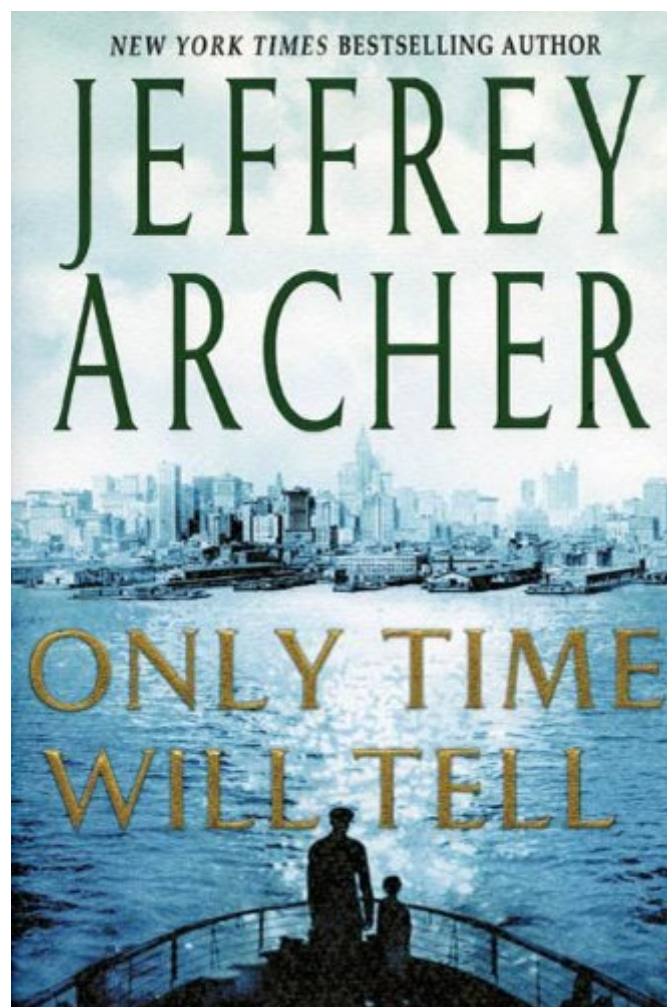


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Only Time Will Tell (Clifton Chronicles Book 1)



Synopsis

From the internationally bestselling author of Kane and Abel and A Prisoner of Birth comes *Only Time Will Tell*, the first in an ambitious new series that tells the story of one family across generations, across oceans, from heartbreak to triumph. The epic tale of Harry Clifton's life begins in 1920, with the words "I was told that my father was killed in the war." A dock worker in Bristol, Harry never knew his father, but he learns about life on the docks from his uncle, who expects Harry to join him at the shipyard once he's left school. But then an unexpected gift wins him a scholarship to an exclusive boys' school, and his life will never be the same again. As he enters into adulthood, Harry finally learns how his father really died, but the awful truth only leads him to question, was he even his father? Is he the son of Arthur Clifton, a stevedore who spent his whole life on the docks, or the firstborn son of a scion of West Country society, whose family owns a shipping line? This introductory novel in Archer's ambitious series *The Clifton Chronicles* includes a cast of colorful characters and takes us from the ravages of the Great War to the outbreak of the Second World War, when Harry must decide whether to take up a place at Oxford or join the navy and go to war with Hitler's Germany. From the docks of working-class England to the bustling streets of 1940 New York City, *Only Time Will Tell* takes readers on a journey through to future volumes, which will bring to life one hundred years of recent history to reveal a family story that neither the reader nor Harry Clifton himself could ever have imagined.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book by bestselling author Jeffrey Archer is excellent. The story grips readers who become emotionally involved with its characters. This is volume one of The Clifton Chronicles. When readers finish it, they will look forward with eagerness to see what happens to Harry Clifton. The opening chapters of the adventure, in the 1920s and 1930s, tells the same events from the perspectives of several different people, each adding or changing what had been told before, and thereby deepening the understanding of the events and the people involved. This style had been used effectively before by William Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* - who people call "the greatest author the US South produced" - and by the editors of the four New Testament Gospels, where each Gospel writer revisits what the others told, with changes, deepening the readers' interest and understanding. The story hangs on the mystery of Harry Clifton's parentage: who was his father? This mystery, in turn, creates others. What difference does it make who Harry's father is? What happened to Harry's mother's husband? Why do people keep her husband's whereabouts secret? If the mystery of Harry's parentage is not resolved, will it destroy his life? We read about the extraordinary sacrifices of Harry's mother. She is poor. She is determined that Harry will get schooling, even though she lacks money to pay for the schooling, and even though someone is repeatedly sabotaging her efforts. We read about the very rich Barrington family, the grandfather who is a paragon of goodness, his son Hugo who is clearly evil, and his grandchildren Giles and Emma, and the strong positive emotional feelings that the two have toward Harry.

I gave this a three star rating two thirds of the way through the book. Having finished it, I have revised my rating to one star. The story starts out pleasing if somewhat predictable and familiar. The characters are equally predictable. That's okay to begin with, but eventually they are more caricatures than characters. They are either insufferably bad or insufferably noble. Their actions are frequently completely implausible; all seem intent on taking the path which will do them the most harm over the path that will help. The changing point of view is extremely tedious, repetitive and adds nothing. The author insists on telling exactly the same story from the point of view of several different characters. In essence we hear the protagonist's story at the beginning, then the rest of the book (until right at the end) is filled with the same story told several times. Within the changing point of view is more changing point of view, with head hopping between characters. The reader is

constantly told how a character feels or what they are thinking rather than this taking place through dialogue or action. If it is demonstrated through either then we are still told what they are thinking or feeling after it. The writing is amateur. From the opening pages, one of the main character's actions beggar belief (Harry's mother). Her reasons for having sex with a complete stranger just before her wedding aren't particularly true to the times, or very believable. Actually, just about every character's actions beggar belief. Some are rather supernatural, such as the character who decides he no longer has anything to live for and brings on a heart attack - but not before he has taken the time to put on his Victoria Cross.

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