



Lord Jeffrey Archer

Novelist, Playwright, Actor and former Member of Parliament;
 Author of the best selling novels: Kane and Abel,
 Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less and A Prisoner of Birth.

Interviewed by Yash Rajgarhia, Vallari Agarwal, Shubham Agarwal and
 Yash Vardhan Goenka

YT What is the thought process that goes on during the course of writing a novel?

JA Your mind is continually trying to stay 3 pages ahead of what you're writing. But never more than that, because the book changes direction and sometimes moves in an unexpected way, if you allow your mind to remain open and lucid.

YT How much of a transformation have you seen in yourself as an author right from "Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less" to "The Clifton Chronicles"?

JA There are those of my followers who believe 'Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less' is still the best book I've written.



What they're referring to is the story. Whereas 35 years later, writing *The Clifton Chronicles*, there is no doubt you become a better craftsman, and more attuned to the writing of a novel. Perhaps the most wonderful thing is that so many people seem to have different favourites, and not just settle on one of the 24 books.

YT What gave you the impetus to take the leap of faith from a life in politics to one where you followed your passion?

JA I didn't have any choice. I left the House of Commons with massive debts, and wrote my first book in desperation. No-one was more surprised than myself when it became a bestseller.

YT Being a celebrated author yourself, how do you think a writer's personal experiences reflect in their work?

JA There is no doubt that if you're a writer, you should write about what you know, not what's fashionable at the time. For example, if you were a doctor, you can write about medicine, if you're a detective, then detective novels. I write about politics, business and art, because those are my loves.

YT What do you think of the current breed of Indian authors and the state of literary freedom in India?

JA India has produced some of the greatest authors in the world, my favourite being R K Narayan, and I don't sense when reading Indian books there's any lack of literary freedom.

YT Given a time machine, which point in time would Jeffrey Archer travel to and why?

JA If I had a time machine, I would go forward 100 years, not back. The changes in my lifetime have been so staggering, I'd like to see what happens in the next 100.

YT You joined politics to be a harbinger of change, so what responsibility do you think lies on the shoulders of an author in bringing about such a change in society?

JA An author should not preach, or let the reader know his political views. It is an author's duty to entertain with a good story that's well written, not to pontificate.

YT How thin do you think the line is between inspiration and plagiarism?

JA It's very difficult to write a truly original story. Let's face it, most of Shakespeare's stories were lifted from earlier tales, and we've all tried to do a variation on *Romeo and Juliet*.

YT If you were to write a book on your life, what would be its closing line?

JA No complaints.

YT What message would you like to give to the students of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata?

JA May I send everyone at the college my very best wishes, and hope that from your intake we will see what I passionately believe in, the further advancement of India as a power for good.