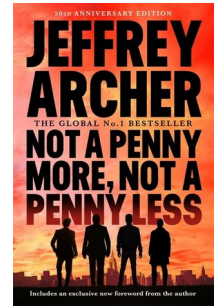


Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS



A warning before you start. These questions assume you have finished the book. If you have not, go away and read it first. I shall wait. *Jeffrey Archer*

THE ART OF THE CON

- 1 There are four separate schemes to relieve Harvey Metcalfe of his money, and each man plays to his own strengths. Which did you enjoy most? I have my favourite, and I have never told anyone which it is.
- 2 They agree to take back exactly what they lost. Not a penny more, not a penny less. Why does that matter so much to them? And be honest with yourself here. If you had been in that room, would you have argued for taking a little extra for your trouble?
- 3 Some readers tell me the schemes are ingenious. Others tell me they had to suspend their disbelief and simply enjoy the ride. Which were you? And does it matter, so long as you turned the page?
- 4 The book opens with the mechanics of the fraud itself, laid out in some detail, before you meet a single one of the four men. Did that grip you from the first page, or were you waiting for the revenge to begin?

MORALITY, JUSTICE AND REVENGE

- 5 The law cannot help these men. So they help themselves. Is that justified? I know what I think. I want to know what you think, and whether you would say the same thing out loud in front of a judge.
- 6 Harvey Metcalfe ruins people, and yet the book is a comedy. Did I let him off too lightly? Should a story about financial ruin be this much fun?
- 7 Harvey is the cleverest man in the book and he is taken in again and again. Does greed always blind the greedy? Or did I simply need him to be fooled so that you could enjoy watching it?
- 8 Here is one nobody ever asks me. Which of the four men would you actually want as a friend? They are not all as likeable as each other, and I did that deliberately.

STYLE, STRUCTURE AND THE TWIST

- 9 The ending. You know the one I mean. Did it feel earned, or did you feel my hand on your shoulder steering you towards it? Reading groups divide sharply on this, and I enjoy the argument enormously.
- 10 I wrote this book while my own life was in pieces. Can you feel that in the writing? Some readers say the anger is on every page. Others say they would never have guessed. I am curious which camp you fall into.
- 11 The book begins with a man losing everything and turns into a caper. That is a considerable change of gear. Did it work, or did the tone shift under your feet?
- 12 This was written before mobile telephones, before instant background checks, before you could look up a stranger's entire life in thirty seconds. Could these four men pull it off today? And if not, what would they have to do differently?
- 13 For the writers among you. This was a first novel by a man who had never written one. What can you see in it that a more experienced novelist would have done differently, and what can you see that only a beginner would have dared?

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Do tell me what your group decided.

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