



Fools, Knaves and Heroes: Great Political Short Stories

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Jeffrey Archer, one of the world's most popular writers of literary thrillers, has, with the help of Simon Bainbridge, put together a collection of his favorite stories about the denizens of the political jungle. Among the authors represented in this volume are Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, James Thurber, Kingsley Amis, Jack London, James Joyce, and Jeffrey Archer himself.

The category of "political short story" is a deliberately loose one, for not many writers have hands-on experience of the world of politics. The authors here might have described their stories as being about people, rather than politics. And so the collection is wonderfully diverse, ranging from Joyce's evocation of tarnished ideals and a fallen hero in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" to Jack London's vivid fantasy of a general strike across the United States in "The Dream of Debs," to Mark Twain's dark satire of the venality of political life in "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg." If there are few genuine heroes in the stories Mr. Archer has selected, perhaps that is an accurate reflection of the real world. In any case, this generally dark view of politics has a silver lining: for as readers of Milton's *Paradise Lost* discovered long ago, the doings of a charismatic villain make for more interesting reading than the deeds of a virtuous man.

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