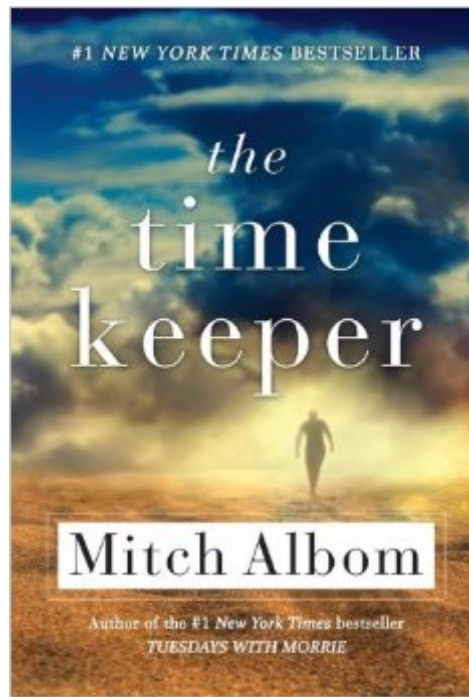


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The Time Keeper



Synopsis

From the author who's inspired millions worldwide with books like *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* comes his most imaginative novel yet, *The Time Keeper*--a compelling fable about the first man on Earth to count the hours. The man who became Father Time. In Mitch Albom's exceptional work of fiction, the inventor of the world's first clock is punished for trying to measure God's greatest gift. He is banished to a cave for centuries and forced to listen to the voices of all who come after him seeking more days, more years. Eventually, with his soul nearly broken, Father Time is granted his freedom, along with a magical hourglass and a mission: a chance to redeem himself by teaching two earthly people the true meaning of time. He returns to our world--now dominated by the hour-counting he so innocently began--and commences a journey with two unlikely partners: one a teenage girl who is about to give up on life, the other a wealthy old businessman who wants to live forever. To save himself, he must save them both. And stop the world to do so. Told in Albom's signature spare, evocative prose, this remarkably original tale will inspire readers everywhere to reconsider their own notions of time, how they spend it, and how precious it truly is.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Time Keeper, by Mitch Albom, follows the creator of time. Dor, the main character, is Father Time; he is the Time Keeper, cursed to hear every one of man's cries for time. Published by Hyperion, ISBN: 9781401322786, the book should appeal to anyone who have ever said "I just

don't have the time."As a young man, Dor is the first human to develop a system of counting and measuring time. His discovery leads him to forsake everyone in his life, except one person who is immune to his obsession. This one person, Alli, is the only one who holds the key to access Dor's attention; the only one whose presence has the ability to make Dor forget about his discovery. Dor's motivations are made clear by the author. His environment and his discovery play against each other in a well-developed tension which, in turn, plays into the development of the entire narrative. Mitch Albom provides enough detail at crucial points in the story to inform the reader of the driving themes of two other supporting characters, Sarah and Victor, who are plagued with being bound by time. Their personal struggles and their lives are driven by their blind constraint. Along with Dor, they are all prisoners of the same device. Only when the protagonist frees Dor, does Dor begin to understand the sentence and the meaning of the very thing he invented. He is a slave, perhaps in Plato's Cave, where he is only exposed to the shadows of thoughts and reality from outside the cave. He eventually becomes the master of the thing that once held him. He holds the hourglass, where he was once imprisoned and which now maintains control. Before he can guide the others through their obsessions, he is without direction as he discerns the meaning of his hourglass. The suffering and death of his wife was beyond his control in his former life. Would he now have the opportunity to relieve the suffering of others before they ran out of time? As the story comes to a climax, Dor must discover a way to intervene in the lives of Sarah and Victor. He must provide both of them the keys to escaping their own bonds, but first, Dor as the master of time, must now discover the significance of time. Having the power to effect a thing, we learn, is not the same as having real understanding of the thing. We are often blinded by the very thing we are compelled to worship. I found the story well-written, with an abbreviated writing style making me feel like I was reading the thoughts of the characters instead of waiting for an author to develop the players for me. I was pleasantly shocked on reading how the sands of time represent "every moment of the universe." Overall, Mitch Albom presents a book where the focus is not on the style, but on the underlying development of the grand theme of time. I was so engaged by the presentation of the story that I would have guessed it was merely about 50 pages instead of the actual 240. But as I learned, "Time Flies."

The measurement of time, Mitch Albom's parable tells us, distinguishes man from other animals. Man alone measures time, and man alone fears time running out. Every parable has a moral, and Albom's is this: we should replace fear of losing time with an appreciation of the time we have. It is a worthy lesson, even if the parable flounders as it makes its way there. The Time Keeper imagines

Father Time as a real person. In biblical times, Father Time's name was Dor. While his childhood friend Nim was building the Tower of Babel, Dor was learning how to measure time. When Dor's wife becomes ill, Dor tries to climb the tower in the hope that by reaching the heavens, he can make time stop. When the tower falls, Dor is banished to a cave and cursed with immortality because he offended God. By teaching man to count time, "the wonder of the world he has been given is lost." Alternating with Dor's story are those of two other characters. Victor Delamonte, the fourteenth-richest man in the world, has a tumor on his liver. At the age of 86, he is running out of time. He resolves to buy more time. Sarah Lemon is a smart but unattractive seventeen-year-old who falls in love with an insensitive hunk named Ethan. When he rejects her, she doesn't know if she wants to keep living -- she wants less time than she has been allotted. Dor's penance -- his chance to atone for the sin of inventing clocks -- requires him to intervene in the lives of Victor and Sarah. The Time Keeper is easily read in one or two sittings (depending upon how long you sit). Albom uses simple sentences to tell a simple story. As is generally true of parables, simplicity is The Time Keeper's defining characteristic. The proposition it initially advances -- that counting moments leads to misery, that we should lead simple and grateful lives -- isn't particularly profound, but the nature of a parable is to illustrate an obvious lesson. But is it an honest lesson? Dor was punished (or readjusted) because he wasn't content to live his life without counting its moments, but inquiry and invention are not a wasted or evil use of one's life. There is much to be said for the human capacity to plan and to inquire, traits that inevitably lead to an understanding of time. Albom's point -- that we need to spend our life appreciating the time we have rather than fretting about the time we don't have -- is a good one, but it's also a half-truth. The downside of measuring time is balanced by countless upsides, a reality that Albom's story ignores. The sense of urgency, the race to accomplish something before the clock runs out, has led to better medicine, longer lives, greater comfort, serious literature, beautiful art, and a host of other worthy accomplishments that would never have been achieved if everyone were content to tend sheep and feel grateful for a quiet, uneventful life. Albom's expressly stated notion that life was more satisfying before the invention of time measurement is unsupportable. Time measurement actually began with prehistoric man, long before Dor, and cave dwelling isn't my idea of a fulfilling life. There's an undertone in Albom's story -- simplicity is good, progress is bad -- that is reflected in Albom's vision of a future in which people have "forgotten how to feel." A few hundred years from now, Albom posits, people will long for "a simpler, more satisfying world." Albom's peek at the future is a denial of history: life might have been simpler in biblical times, but it was also shorter and more difficult. Lives were consumed by the struggle to survive. The slaves who were building the Tower of Babel had little opportunity to feel

grateful for their existence. The ensuing millennia haven't made people any less capable of "feeling," and it's difficult to believe that humans will lose that innate ability as time marches on. People are fond of believing that everything was better in the past, but as Woody Allen recently demonstrated, the present is a better place in which to live. Of course, parables aren't meant to be taken literally, and if one reads the story solely as a reminder of the need to appreciate whatever time we have, the message resonates. There are conventional novels that make the same point with greater depth and more subtlety (The Chequer Board is a favorite), but parables aren't meant to be subtle or deep. Nor are the gaps in internal logic as important in a parable as they would be in a different kind of story. At its root, The Time Keeper tells a good story, has a sweet ending, and delivers half of a universal truth -- but only half.

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