READING GROUP GUIDE

About the book:

*Mightier than the Sword* opens with an IRA bomb exploding during the MV Buckingham's maiden voyage across the Atlantic - but how many passengers lose their lives?

When Harry Clifton visits his publisher in New York, he learns that he has been elected as the new president of English PEN, and immediately launches a campaign for the release of a fellow author, Anatoly Babakov, who's imprisoned in Siberia. Babakov's crime? Writing a book called *Uncle Joe*, a devastating insight into what it was like to work for Stalin. So determined is Harry to see Babakov released and the book published, that he puts his own life in danger.

His wife Emma, chairman of Barrington Shipping, is facing the repercussions of the IRA attack on the Buckingham. Some board members feel she should resign, and Lady Virginia Fenwick will stop at nothing to cause Emma's downfall.

Sir Giles Barrington is now a minister of the Crown, and looks set for even higher office, until an official trip to Berlin does not end as a diplomatic success. Once again, Giles's political career is thrown off balance by none other than his old adversary, Major Alex Fisher, who once again stands against him at the election. But who wins this time?

In London, Harry and Emma's son, Sebastian, is quickly making a name for himself at Farthing's Bank in London, and has proposed to the beautiful young American, Samantha. But the despicable Adrian Sloane, a man interested only in his own advancement and the ruin of Sebastian, will stop at nothing to remove his rival.

Jeffrey Archer's compelling Clifton Chronicles continue in this, his most accomplished novel to date. With all the trademark twists and turns that have made him one of the world's most popular authors, the spellbinding story of the Clifton and the Barrington families continues.
Discussion Questions

1. The board of Barrington’s deals with the IRA’s attempted bombing of the Buckingham’s maiden voyage by keeping it completely under wraps. Do you agree with that decision? Why or why not?

2. After Sloane forces Sebastian out of Farthings bank, Sebastian feels that he has to think like Sloane in order to beat him, while Sam thinks Seb should act the way Cedric Hardcastle would have in order to win. While both have the same ultimate end goal, the methods are extremely different. Who do you agree with?

3. Were you surprised that Sam left Sebastian? Why or why not?

4. What do you think of Priscilla Bingham? What motivates her to act as she does throughout the book?

5. The depiction of communism in this book is not very flattering. Both East Germany and Russia seem to be prisons from which one only wishes to escape. Do you agree with this depiction? And given how often people in this series have been able to game the capitalist system for their own profit, does capitalism seem like the right alternative? Is there any other?

6. Giles’ affair with Karin and his impending second divorce are a real political liability for him. This is reflective of our current political system. What do you think about this? Should a politician’s personal life influence voters? Is it an indicator of how someone will conduct themselves professionally, or is it completely separate?

7. Sebastian goes back on his word to Mr. Swann about funding the school theater, but he eventually attempts to make up for it with an even larger than expected check. Do you think this redeems him?

8. Trelford reminds Emma that they have to prove Emma’s words were not slander to win the court case, while Virginia simply has prove that they could have been slander. This “innocent until proven guilty” aspect of the law allows for the truly innocent to escape wrongful conviction the majority of the time, but how do you feel about the possibility that it allows the guilty to go free? Which sacrifice do you think is more worth making?

9. Does Major Fisher’s suicide make you any more sympathetic towards him?

10. When Giles hears that Major Fisher has killed himself, he feels sorry for him; on the other hand, Major Fisher spent a lot of his life actively working to create bad events in Giles’ life. Compare their personalities. What do you think are their greatest differences? Do you see any similarities?

11. Compare the two trials that take place at the end of the book. What do you think the
contrast between Russia and England’s respective justice systems say about the two countries?

12. This series has spanned in time from the 1920s to the 1970s. Have you noticed any societal changes over the course of those decades? If so, what? Are they positive or negative?

13. What do you think could possibly be in the letter?

About the author:

JEFFREY ARCHER was educated at Oxford University. He has served five years in Britain’s House of Commons and twenty-two years in the House of Lords. All of his novels and short story collections—including Be Careful What You Wish For, Best Kept Secret, Sins of the Father, and Only Time Will Tell—have been international bestselling books. Archer is married with two sons and lives in London and Cambridge.

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