



# Limitations

*Scott Turow*

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## **Limitations** Scott Turow

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Presumed Innocent* comes a compelling new legal mystery featuring George Mason from *Personal Injuries*. Originally commissioned and published by *The New York Times Magazine*, this edition contains additional material.

Life would seem to have gone well for George Mason. His days as a criminal defense lawyer are long behind him. At fifty-nine, he has sat as a judge on the Court of Appeals in Kindle County for nearly a decade. Yet, when a disturbing rape case is brought before him, the judge begins to question the very nature of the law and his role within it. What is troubling George Mason so deeply? Is it his wife's recent diagnosis? Or the strange and threatening e-mails he has started to receive? And what is it about this horrific case of sexual assault, now on trial in his courtroom, that has led him to question his fitness to judge?

In *Limitations*, Scott Turow, the master of the legal thriller, returns to Kindle County with a page-turning entertainment that asks the biggest questions of all. Ingeniously, and with great economy of style, Turow probes the limitations not only of the law but of human understanding itself.

## **Limitations Details**

Date : Published November 14th 2006 by Picador (first published 2006)

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Author : Scott Turow

Format : Kindle Edition 208 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Legal Thriller

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# From Reader Review Limitations for online ebook

## SmarterLilac says

The only more perfect mystery I have read is Høeg's "Smilla's Sense of Snow." And that's saying something.

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## John says

Having read Scott Turow's Presumed Innocent, I know what the man is capable of, and it's a whole lot more than what you get with "Limitations." Not that Limitations is bad or anything; Turow shows throughout that he is a terrific writer with a style that is much more literary than you usually find within this genre. However, the story itself just feels kind of flat, the legal jargon overshadows the suspense, and the plot threads resolve in unsatisfactory ways. The book originally appeared in much shorter form in The New York Times, and I can't help but think that this new expanded edition was Turow's attempt at a quick cash grab. Who could blame him for being unable to resist the temptation to whip out another 75 pages in return for being able to sell the book at \$13 a pop? Unfortunately, though, it comes across as the equivalent of a Lifetime original movie (albeit a pretty good one), rather than a masterfully crafted thriller.

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## Lena says

I probably should not have read this book. I read Presumed Innocent when I was 14 or 15 and fell in absolute love with it. However, for some reason I never read another Scott Turow book. So, after many years of remembering my love for the one book of his I read, I picked up another one. Of course, it was bound to disappoint.

If Presumed Innocent was anything like this book, I cannot believe that I loved it as a teenager. I got bored early on with this one. The case was interesting enough, about a group of high school guys who gang-banged (and videotaped the incident) a 15-yr-old while she was unconscious, and years later, the tape surfaces and they are arrested. It sounded interesting. Especially since three of the guys are supposedly good guys now, or at least decent human beings/good citizens on the surface. If that was the whole of this book, it would have been very interesting and much more disturbing. Especially if Turow had gone on to show each of the men and how they lived good lives now. If he'd made the reader see their good lives and sympathize with them even after this brutal crime (and the way they describe it, it's pretty horrifying), it would have been one of those books that make you look at yourself and your beliefs, disbelieving that you could think two different things so strongly at once. Unfortunately, that's not what the book is about.

The book is more about the judge of the case who participated in something similar forty years before and he struggles to judge the new case b/c of the similarities between their case and his past. That part was all so boring to me. In fact, around page 100, I started skimming and skimmed the rest of the novel. I didn't care at all about the judge, his past, his marriage, or his death threats (although they tied in at the end and made it a little better). Anyway, this was a book that could have been amazing and caused a major psychological upheaval, but Turow didn't dare go there. Or didn't because he wanted to focus on the law aspects which made his other books so successful. But for me, it was just an okay book that could have been AMAZING and instead was just lacking (and lagging). I probably will not read more of his books, but his hard-core fans

will probably like this one as much as any of his others. I guess I'm just not interested in legalities as much as I am the psychological disturbance a talented author can inflict with the power he wields when weaving an absorbing story.

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## **Steve Hall says**

I have always enjoyed Scott Turow. Legal "thrillers" almost always leave me unable to suspend disbelief, because, as a lawyer, I rankle at the obvious legal flaws introduced by authors either unintentionally (by those who wouldn't know better) or intentionally (by even such greats as John Grisham) in order to make the plot work. I cannot recall any instance where Turow has succumbed to that temptation.

But *Limitations* goes far beyond avoiding that flaw. I attribute the less than stellar ratings by some readers to the fact that the greatness of this small work may possibly be appreciated best by an attorney.

There is always a tension between the turmoil and messiness and emotion and humanity of life, on the one hand, and the idyllically rigorous logic of the law that is supposed to rise above that other, messy milieu. At its best, especially at the level of appellate practice where this novel is set, reason should reign supreme. Above all, a court's decisions must make excellent logical sense on many levels. That is not nearly as easy a task as it may seem to a lay person, because the language necessary to the drafting of statutes and rendering opinions is inherently less than mathematical in its clarity, while the events of life rarely confine themselves to the circumstances foreseen by legislatures or presented to appellate courts.

In this novel Turow is completely true to both sides of this tension, crafting a story with both the reality and complexity and messiness of life, and the aspiration of the law and courts and judges to use logic and reason to render a decision that rises above and makes sense of that messiness in the context of the law.

In doing so, using a case ostensibly about the statute of limitations, he recognizes the human limitations that judges (and lawyers) have to deal with in the attempt to meet the ideal of the law. I do not want to spoil anyone's reading of this fine book, but let me just say that the climax of this novel for me was not the "dramatic" climax that may have, for many readers, seemed less than ideal. For me it was the text of the judge's draft decision, which was ultimately the focus of the protagonist's most difficult challenge -- rendering a decision in a difficult case.

The greatness of this book sneaked up on me. But it is great. It may not be the "thriller" that the genre seems to demand or that a reader may expect, but I doubt that is the target at which Turow was aiming. The target is the tension between life and the law, he hit that target straight dead center.

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## **Margaret says**

Although not my favorite Scott Turow story, I felt the turmoil George Mason, one of the presiding judges in the Court of Appeals, is faced with as he examines the facts in the rape case recently assigned to him. The case causes George to look into his own life, reevaluate his stance on the law and his responsibility to it. Many novels present the story from the lawyers viewpoint of a case and it was refreshing to consider the story from the judges perspective. I would like to think that most judges put this much thought into their opinions. I guess we would all certainly hope so if it was our case in front of the judge. I also enjoyed

reading about the reasoning the other judges on the Appeal Court with George used to back-up their opposing opinions. The law allows for interpretation and seldom is something just black and white. The story is more about George's reaction and response to the case in front of him, than the case itself.

To complicate matters George is receiving threatening e-mails which may be connected to the case in some way. To top it all off, George's wife has been seriously ill. All combined, George begins to feel it may be time for him to stop judging others and to step down from the bench.

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### **Patrick says**

Anyone who reads this with close attention should earn 2 credit hours for the Scott Turow Law School course, "Statute of Limitations 101." But it is not all about the trial since the judge has been receiving some death threats, making it a mystery story as well as a legal seminar. A good, quick read!

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### **Samantha says**

Of the three Turow books I've read, this has been my least favorite. It wasn't exciting, it wasn't suspenseful, it wasn't riveting. But still, I enjoyed it, except for the fact that I figured out who the "bad guy" was about halfway through the book and I like to be surprised.

This book was more what I would call "cerebral." It was more of a treatise on the impartiality of judges, or the lack thereof. Judge George Mason is hearing the appeal of a case involving the gang rape of a girl four years before. This, of course, reminds him of an incident in his own past and the troubling memories are keeping him from making a decision in the case.

Meanwhile, someone has been sending the judge threatening e-mails and text messages. Who, pray tell, could that be? Throw in a red herring by the name of Corazon, a gang leader with a bottomless capacity for violence whose conviction Judge Mason upheld, and you have the makings of a dime-store suspense thriller. Except you know it's not the obvious guy. It's not the second most obvious guy, either. But the third most obvious guy (and once you read the description of the person's life, it becomes obvious they're the bad guy)...ding, ding, ding!

I give this book 3 stars because it's well-written and the legal stuff fascinated me. As for as plot...eh.

Decent, not great.

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### **Larry says**

Turow's shortest (197 pp) novel is one of his most interesting. At its core, someone is sending death threats to appellate judge George Mason, long a model of what a judge and lawyer should be. He is what he seems to be, so what is behind the threats? The novel tells the reader a lot about how justice works. The quote from

Oliver Wendell Holmes that the law is not about logic but about experience is born out by its fairly moving if imperfect conclusion. Turow has always written with precision and skill, but this novel is my favorite, and it holds up to rereading after a decade.

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### **Joan says**

I've enjoyed Scott Turow since I read '1L' about a million years ago. I very much appreciate that he writes both non-fiction and fiction and has the confidence/following to work on projects that he must feel are important. Limitations is not a large book, but rather sparse in terms of characters and narrative. I enjoyed it as I enjoyed Michael Crichton's last couple of books - as both authors had an idea that they wanted to explore (or have me explore vicariously) with enough of a story around it to pick it up in the first place.

People wanted a big, action-packed, twisty plot should look to his other novels. This book helped me think about how our past experiences affect our interpretation of current events and it is really hard to look with 'new eyes' on new problems. Judge Mason's first intimate experience with a woman coloured his view of a rape case. The court security chief's experience with gang violence influenced her investigation of threats made against Judge Mason. Judge Mason's 'southern gentleman's' upbringing to protect women from life's unsavory details influenced his truthfulness about the threats to his wife as well as the expectations about his female clerk's ability to review the information about the aforementioned rape case. Because the plot is less complicated, as a reader, I had more 'time' to think about the issues and examine my own reflexes.

I may read this again, just to have another think....

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### **Linda says**

Limitations served as my intro to the writing of Scott Turow, and it's made a very favorable impression. As expected, it contains The story of an appellate court judge who recognizes striking personal elements within his latest case, it contains, as expected, absorbing courtroom scenes interspersed danger and action. Turow goes further, however, taking his readers inside the heart and head of his protagonist. Judge George Mason must decide the appeal of a high profile case of multiple rape, based upon challenges to the statute of limitations and the admissibility of a horrific video tape of the incident. He's preoccupied with worry over his wife's life threatening illness, at the same time receiving anonymous death threats via the internet.

But the crux of the plot rests upon the ethical dilemma of Mason's life; this explosive case reminds him of an incident that occurred thirty years ago in his college dorm. Turow takes his readers inside Mason's heart and mind as he struggles with memories and guilt that he believed long buried. It's the humanity with which this character is presented that raises Limitations above the run of the mill among legal thrillers.

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### **Una Tiers says**

While a judge grapples with actions the defendant is charged with, the story was stale. This does not equal some earlier books.

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## Mark says

Judge George Mason is at a moral and professional crossroad with only three choices for a way forward, none of which offer any hope for his nagging conscience.

George, a former criminal defense attorney familiar with internal struggles between loathing, amusement, intrigue, envy, and empathy, is now an appeals court judge hearing motions about a case that has multiple mitigating factors. The case is old, and the clock is about to run out on the law's statute of limitations for rape. The politics of the appeal and the particular way he and his fellow judges on the Appeals bench prefer to deal with it, each for his own distinctively non-legal reasons, is boxing George into choices he'd prefer not to make. He is also struggling with dark fears associated with death threats from an anonymous troll from his past.

This is a great start and more than enough in my experience to keep readers turning pages, not only in the bookstore where a strong start is a competitive advantage yet also on airplanes, park benches and late at night in bed. Scott Turow knows his craft as a legal thriller writer. He is a lawyer. He is a #1 New York Times Bestselling author who has published eleven fiction and three nonfiction books and sold more than 30 million copies. He also served effectively as president of the Authors Guild during one of the most challenging eras for writers and authors in history. He is more than an author. He is an expert who can translate legal arcana and ethics into meaningful tutorials for the rest of us.

There is another thing that Scott Turow is – he is a novelist, which is saying he is something more. He practices the craft side of his talents deftly in ways that don't let the seams, the diversions, and the subtle mechanics of literature show. It is the storytelling side of work that qualifies as literary art. His characters grow before us on the page as they encounter life challenges and reveal themselves in the way they react, sometimes freezing, sometimes fleeing, more often planting their feet and facing up to their fears.

Gail Caldwell of the Boston Sunday Globe compares Turow to John le Carre for his ability to share “an introspect's embrace of the gray-zone ambiguities of modern life.” It's a good observation and, as a long-time fan of Le Carre's writing, I can mostly agree with it. The critical difference for me between the two authors is that while le Carre is deeply wary of the government and the people responsible for its present and future, Turow seems to be more optimistic and forgiving, which results in more neatly fitting resolutions.

Writing this during these trying times when values such as truth and character are so easily compromised by weak, selfish and narcissistic leaders makes me realize how much we have to appreciate in the works of writers and artists during society's worst moments. LIMITATIONS was written before our current crisis of faith and confidence in our social institutions, which is both good and not so good. Good because it reminds us that man's struggle with truth and honor has a long and varied history. Not so good because it enables readers to make allowances for George's and his opponents' moral and ethical framework.

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## Angie says

I find this book hard to describe. There is not much action--but whenever an event is described, an incident in the past or in the present, it gains its power from the fact that you have been reading some chapters

containing primarily the ruminations of a judge on a court of appeals deciding the fate of a case (he's casting the deciding vote), all while handling the end of his wife's brush with cancer, and strange, vague threatening messages received on his cell and e-mail.

Character, as always with Turow, is emphasized. Somehow within 195 pages--I suppose this is a novella, then--he manages to convey much more than most novelists do in 300-350. No, this is not a masterpiece like *Presumed Innocent* or *Burden of Proof*; but age and practice in the author's dual professions, law and *auteur*, have given Turow's writing an appropriate gravitas.

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### **Stacy says**

I liked his indecision over the rape case and how it related to his college days. It made him see the boys convicted in a light that most of us would never entertain and I thought that was the most compelling part of the story. But ultimately the story hinges on the death threats and who wants the judge dead and I found the culprit to be a satisfying one. I mean, I didn't really suspect him or her but it made some sense at the end.

there's more on my blog <http://stacybuckeye.wordpress.com/201...>

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### **Tania says**

One of those books with a good story line to begin with, but then ceased to stay interesting.

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