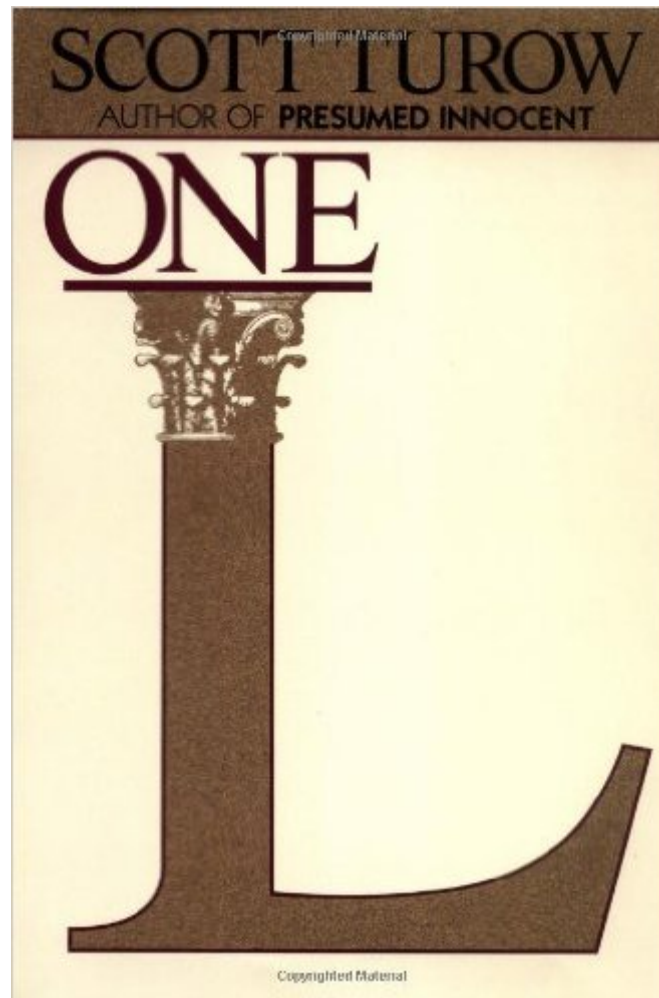


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One L



Synopsis

One L, Scott Turow's journal of his first year at law school introduces and a best-seller when it was first published in 1977, has gone on to become a virtual bible for prospective law students. Not only does it introduce with remarkable clarity the ideas and issues that are the stuff of legal education; it brings alive the anxiety and competitiveness--with others and, even more, with oneself--that set the tone in this crucible of character building. Turow's multidimensional delving into his protagonists' psyches and his marvelous gift for suspense prefigure the achievements of his celebrated first novel, Presumed Innocent, one of the best-selling and most talked about books of 1987. Each September, a new crop of students enter Harvard Law School to begin an intense, often grueling, sometimes harrowing year of introduction to the law. Turow's group of One Ls are fresh, bright, ambitious, and more than a little daunting. Even more impressive are the faculty: Perini, the dazzling, combative professor of contracts, who presents himself as the students' antagonist in their struggle to master his subject; Zechman, the reserved professor of torts who seems so indecisive the students fear he cannot teach; and Nicky Morris, a young, appealing man who stressed the humanistic aspects of law. Will the One Ls survive? Will they excel? Will they make the Law Review, the outward and visible sign of success in this ultra-conservative microcosm? With remarkable insight into both his fellows and himself, Turow leads us through the ups and downs, the small triumphs and tragedies of the year, in an absorbing and thought-provoking narrative that teaches the reader not only about law school and the law but about the human beings who make them what they are. In the new afterword for this edition of One L, the author looks back on law school from the perspective of ten years' work as a lawyer and offers some suggestions for reforming legal education.

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Customer Reviews

I originally read ONE L, I think, because I was a big fan of The Paper Chase. This version includes an afterward, written after PRESUMED INNOCENT was published. As a first-year law student, Turow had to study the law of Contracts, Torts, and Property, Criminal Law, and Civil Procedure. A lot of this reminded me of the Paper Chase with professors using the Socratic method in which students are interrogated at length on selected court cases from which they are expected to deduce legal principles. Rudolph Perini, Turow's Contracts professor, will definitely remind you of Professor Kingsfield. "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, the mornings we have Contracts . . . I'm nearly sick to my stomach. . . . I can't believe it, but I think about that class and I get ill," Turow complains. Another Paper Chase element is the study group. A small number of students, usually between four and eight, would meet regularly to discuss common concerns. Turow valued his group for its therapeutic function. At first Turow and his cohorts in the study group disdained grades, but that gradually changed as Midterms drew closer. The top five or six people in each 1L section would be elected to The Law Review the next summer. Those elected would glean faculty contacts, the opportunity to teach at a law school, and the possibility of a Supreme Court clerkship. Some parts of ONE L are rather funny. For instance, students often retaliated against a professor by hissing, "a piece of student weaponry frequently used when a professor dismissed a student's comments unfairly or said something hardhearted". Another instance would be the night before Midterms when Turow took a sleeping pill, and a Valium, but still couldn't get to sleep.

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