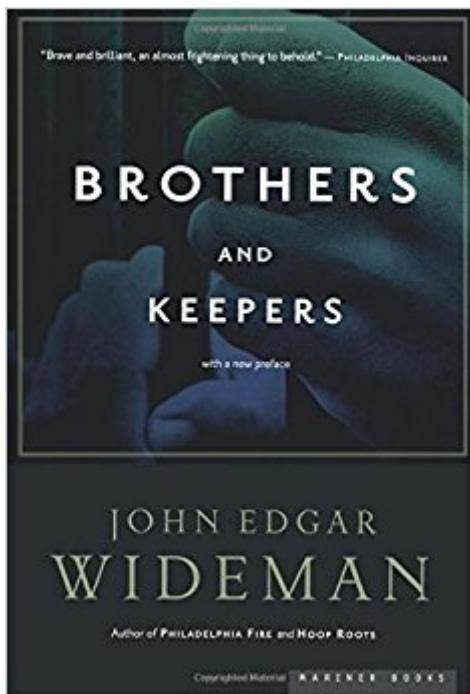


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# Brothers And Keepers: A Memoir



## Synopsis

A haunting portrait of lives arriving at different destinies, Brothers and Keepers is John Edgar Wideman's seminal memoir about two brothers — one an award-winning novelist, the other a fugitive wanted for robbery and murder. Wideman recalls the capture of his younger brother Robby, details the subsequent trials that resulted in a sentence of life in prison, and provides vivid views of the American prison system. A gripping, unsettling account, Brothers and Keepers weighs the bonds of blood, tenderness, and guilt that connect Wideman to his brother and measures the distance that lies between them.

## Book Information

Series: 2

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books; Reprint edition (January 26, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0618509631

ISBN-13: 978-0618509638

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 36 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #42,721 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #115 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Crime & Criminals #158 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > African-American & Black #288 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > African-American Studies

## Customer Reviews

With novels like *Damballah* and *Hiding Place*, John Edgar Wideman began his career in an explicitly modernist vein--indeed, his chronicles of life in the Pittsburgh ghetto of Homewood had more than a trace of a Joycean accent. The autobiographical *Brothers and Keepers*, however, allowed the writer to find his own voice. Perhaps this dual portrait of the author and his brother Robby--serving, then and now, a life sentence for a murder committed during a bungled robbery--finally forced Wideman to fuse the modernist trappings of his earlier work with the storytelling traditions of African American culture. "My memories needed his," the author recalls. "Maybe the fact that we recall different things is crucial. Maybe they are foreground and background, propping each other up." In any case, the *Rashomon*-like result is a raw meditation on fate and family, as well as an indictment of our entire

notion of crime and (especially) punishment. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Wideman, novelist and professor at the University of Wyoming, seeks to understand how he and his brother, who is serving a life sentence for murder, could have such disparate lives after a childhood together in a Pittsburgh ghetto. Ruthless about himself, particularly about his move into the upper middle-class as a "black intellectual," Wideman characterizes his brother as an intelligent, loving, proud dreamer. He raises "existential questions" about culture, racism and the "grief and guilt of a brother," PW wrote. NovemberCopyright 1985 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Well written (in 1984) and a compelling (true-based) story of contrasts between two black brothers -- the Ivy League-educated author and his street-wise, crime-addicted brother, serving time for murder -- and their different paths from their urban-plight roots in the 1960's (???), one escaping and the other trapped by the streets and then the prison system. It reinforces how inhumane our prison system can be; there has to be a better way.

I read this book as an assignment in a UW Certificate in Memoir class. I was excited to read a memoir written by a man. I like how Wideman slipped into the vernacular on the street, in the prison, in his mind, in his own voice. I liked the tension he created before, during and after a prison visit, and about the conflict he felt over things he could have done differently as a brother. This is a powerful story of time, place and circumstance. As an afterthoughtÃ¢Â¢Â¢ It is interesting to think about the authorÃ¢Â¢Â¢s brother in prison for life, and how his life seems to have improved over time. He has become a better man than he ever could have on the streets that consumed him.

Interesting autobiography...although told from dual perspectives not just from Wideman's perspective

sent to a prisoner who loved it.

My perspective very much changed after reading this text. It taught me about compassion & the ability for any human being to better their circumstance. When he gave up at the end (Robby), I felt such remorse for a 'criminal'.

It wasn't exactly what I ordered but that's ok. I ordered a new hard cover and got a used paperback. The company was great to deal with though. I only ordered the book because I knew the Widemans and went through school with the authors boys. It ended up being a good read!

An amazing story of a brother, who after losing contact with his younger sibling, finds himself very distant and on totally different realities.

Now that (and finally) massive incarceration is in the public eye, "Brothers and Keepers" is required reading.

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