

The Da Vinci Code Study Guide

The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown

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Introduction

The Da Vinci Code became one of the first notable international literary events of the twenty-first century as soon as it was published in early 2003. It is a fast-paced thriller involving Harvard professor of religious symbology Robert Langdon, who must solve a murder mystery before he is arrested for the murder himself. While the plot moves along rapidly, the narrative and dialogue slow down briefly at times to explore weighty issues and consider controversial questions. Was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene? Did early Christian leaders attempt to suppress her significance? Did Constantine the Great and the Council of Nicaea establish the divinity of Jesus Christ in 325 A.D.? Was Leonardo da Vinci one of the "keepers of the secret of the Holy Grail," as Leigh Teabing, the historian scholar, declares? Did he encode his art with symbols that suggested a Christian history far different from the one with which we are familiar? Though fictional characters raise these questions, Brown, in interviews about his novel, generated much debate by defending the possibility that Christian history has been carefully and artificially constructed. When asked in an interview what he would change if he were writing the book as nonfiction rather than fiction, for example, Brown replied he would change nothing.

Religious leaders, Christian scholars, historians, and media figures reacted strongly to Brown's novel. In 2004, it was banned from Lebanon when Catholic leaders protested against its content. In 2005, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone publicly responded to the claims of the novel, which he called "a castle of lies." A series of reactionary books bent on disproving the novel's theories emerged, and documentaries exploring the controversies it brings out were aired on networks from ABC to the History Channel. As of 2005, Columbia Pictures was developing the film adaptation, directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks, Audrey Tautou, and Ian McKellen, to be released in 2006.

Author Biography

Dan Brown was born on June 22, 1964 in Exeter, New Hampshire. His mother was a professional musician who specialized in sacred works, and his father, Richard Brown, was a Presidential Award-winning math teacher at Phillips Exeter Academy. After attending Exeter himself and graduating in 1982, Brown went to Amherst College, where he received a bachelor's degree in English Literature in 1986. He returned to teach at Phillips as an English instructor.

While teaching in 1996, Brown began generating ideas for his first novel when he learned that the U.S. Secret Service had detained one of his students for composing an e-mail message that appeared to threaten the president of the United States. The novel, titled *Digital Fortress* (1998), explores the tension between privacy and national security. His second novel, *Angels and Demons* (2000), introduces a character that would become the hero of his future works, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, and concerns the Illuminati, a secret society that plots to bomb the Vatican. *Deception Point* (2001), his third novel, is a political thriller that begins with the NASA discovery of a meteor believed to verify the existence of extraterrestrial life.

If Brown's first three novels moderately interested reviewers and readers, his fourth novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, a thriller exploring the possibility of a radically alternative Christian history, made him a worldwide celebrity. In fact, Brown became as famous for the controversies he incites in this novel about Christian history, Arthurian legend, and Leonardo da Vinci as he was for the number of novels he sold. During the two years after its release in early 2003, *The Da Vinci Code* sold an estimated twenty-five million copies worldwide in forty-four languages in its hardcover edition. In 2005, Brown was named one of the "world's 100 most influential people" in a special issue of *Time* magazine. In that feature, Michele Orecklin dubbed *The Da Vinci Code* "The Novel That Ate The World" and noted that the Bible was one of the few books to sell more copies since the debut of Brown's novel at the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list. The novel was named Britain's Book of the Year at the British Book Awards in London in 2005. Accepting the award via telecast from his home in New Hampshire, Brown was already at work on his next highly anticipated novel, *The Solomon Key*, a sequel to *The Da Vinci Code* set in Washington, D.C. with Robert Langdon investigating the secret world of the Freemasons. As of 2005, Brown was living in New Hampshire with his wife, Blythe.



Plot Summary

From the first sentence to the last, *The Da Vinci Code* is filled with action and thrilling twists. The book begins with the murder of renowned Louvre Museum curator, Jacques Sauniere. With the last threads of strength before he dies from his wounds, Sauniere leaves a complex set of clues to an incredible secret. The Paris police chief, Bezu Fache, calls upon Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor and symbology specialist, and Sophie Neveu, a police cryptologist, to help him decipher the clues left behind by Sauniere.

It turns out that Sauniere is Sophie's grandfather, and she believes the clues he left behind were instructions for her. Sauniere alluded to a secret about their family in a phone call to Sophie shortly before he was murdered. So Sophie asks Langdon to help her solve the mystery behind her grandfather's death. To do so, they flee from Fache, who they believe is trying to frame Langdon for the murder. They set out to find the truth about Sophie's family and prove that Langdon did not murder Sauniere.

Langdon's and Neveu's quest for the truth leads them to pursue the Holy Grail through a series of clues and riddles left behind by Sauniere. Sophie learns what Langdon already theorized, that the Holy Grail is not the cup of Christ but the tomb of Mary Magdalene, who married and had a child with Christ. Documentation of their marriage exists, but because of the power of the Vatican, the information has been suppressed for two thousand years. However, a secret society, called the Priory of Sion, was formed to protect this information. And Sauniere was the Grand Master.

The clues lead them to uncover the keystone, which was believed to hold a map and instructions for uncovering the Holy Grail. At the same time they are pursuing the Grail, a murderous group led by the "Teacher" and an Opus Dei bishop is right on their heels in pursuit of the Grail and its power. Their henchman, an albino monk named Silas, will do anything, including murdering innocent bystanders, to get to the Grail.

Langdon and Neveu's pursuit of the keystone leads them to a safety deposit box in the Swiss Depository Bank. With the bank surrounded by police, they escape with the keystone and steal an armored truck. They flee to Sir Leigh Teabing's home in Versailles. Teabing is a famed Grail historian and good friend of Langdon's.

Silas breaks into Teabing's home trying to retrieve the keystone and the group manages to overtake Silas. Teabing and his butler, along with Sophie, Robert, and a bound and gagged Silas, flee cross country in Teabing's Range Rover to a waiting private jet that sweeps them away to London.

In London, while Teabing, Neveu, and Langdon are solving riddles leading them to opening the keystone, Teabing's butler, Remy, releases Silas, and the two ambush the others and steal the keystone. They also take Teabing as their hostage and drive off in Teabing's Jaguar limousine. Sophie and Langdon continue to work on solving the clues to open the keystone, which leads them to a showdown with the Teacher, which, in a



surprising twist, turns out to be Teabing. They are able to outsmart Teabing, open the keystone, and take its contents. Teabing is then arrested by Bezu Fache, who has been chasing the Teacher all along.

The final clue within the keystone leads Langdon and Sophie to the Rosslyn Chapel in Edinburgh, Scotland, where Sophie is reunited with her grandmother and brother, which, for most of her life, she thought were dead. Sophie's grandmother helps Langdon decipher some final clues and he finds the resting place of the Holy Grail under the Louvre museum in Paris. Of course, he swore to Sophie's family to keep it a secret.



Prologue, Chapters 1, 2

Prologue, Chapters 1, 2 Summary

The story begins with the curator of the Louvre Museum in Paris, Jacques Sauniere, pulling a Caravaggio painting off the wall in the museum, which sets off the alarm and initiates a thief containment system within the museum. He is now separated from an attacker by a gate of iron bars. The albino attacker draws his gun and demands to know the truth about where "it" is. Sauniere lies to him like he had rehearsed many times. The albino has been told the same lie by "the others" and becomes impatient. He takes aim and shoots Sauniere, hitting him in the stomach. Sauniere, knowing that no one would be able to get to him before he died, knows he must pass on his secret. He uses all of the strength left in his body to complete the task now before him.

Robert Langdon is awakened in his hotel room at the Ritz in Paris by a ringing phone. It is the hotel concierge saying that he has an urgent guest. Langdon figured it was a fan of his work on religious paintings and symbology, and he asked the concierge to take a message. Then the police arrive at his hotel room door. They want to question him regarding a meeting he had scheduled with Jacques Sauniere that evening. Then they showed Langdon a picture of Sauniere's body. Langdon had seen such a horrible sight one other time, when his expertise had been tapped to help interpret. That experience led him to Vatican City where he almost died.

Silas, the albino attacker, returns to the brownstone residence and to his room. In his dresser is a cell phone, which he uses to place a call. He calls his Teacher to tell him about the information he has gathered from his victims. He tells the Teacher that he has received confirmation that the keystone is in Paris. The Teacher instructs him to immediately go and find the keystone. After concluding his conversation with the Teacher, Silas figures he had better get ready to complete his task. He began his practice of "corporal mortification," in which he beats his own back with a heavy knotted rope until he bleeds. The practice is to remind him of Christ's suffering.

Prologue, Chapters 1, 2 Analysis

The book starts off with an action scene and the reader is joining the story when the victim, Jacques Sauniere, is fleeing his attacker. The reader does not yet know why Sauniere is being attacked, who the attacker is, or what has happened so far. The story begins very suspenseful and the author purposefully leaves unanswered questions as a tactic to increase the suspense and pique the interest of the reader. In the first scene, the author introduces Jacques Sauniere and all that is revealed about him is that he is curator at the Louvre in Paris and a member of some kind of group. His allegiance to that group has something to do with his murder.



The second scene of the book introduces Robert Langdon, who studies symbology and theology. He had a meeting scheduled with Sauniere the night of his murder and the police want to question him regarding his involvement, as well as get his opinion of the significance of their findings at the murder scene.

In the third scene, the albino attacker from the first scene is further developed. His name is Silas and his actions are taken at the direction of an unnamed man called the Teacher. Silas is characterized as deeply religious, believing that his violent acts of war are the will of God. He also practices "corporal mortification" which is supposed to remind him of the sacrifice of Christ by wearing a belt lined with barbs on his thigh and beating his own back with a rope until blood is drawn.



Chapters 3, 4, 5

Chapters 3, 4, 5 Summary

Robert Langdon is driven by a police officer through the streets of Paris to the Louvre to meet the police captain at the crime scene. At the museum, Langdon is welcomed by Bezu Fache, the Captain of the Central Directorate Judicial Police. Langdon asks if Sauniere really did to himself what he saw in the photographs provided by the officer that picked him up at the hotel. Fache warns that what Langdon has seen so far is just the beginning. The Captain is described as a short, stout man with the gait of an "angry ox." The Captain leads Langdon through the halls of the Louvre and begins asking him questions about his relationship with Sauniere. Langdon tells him that they had never met and that evening they had planned to meet for the first time at Sauniere's request. He says that the two men shared similar interests in iconography of goddess worship. Langdon finds it strange that Fache is wearing a tie clip known as a *crux gemmata*, which means a cross with thirteen stones in it representing Christ and the twelve disciples. Langdon is surprised at Fache's outward display of his religion.

The men hear voices ahead and come upon the dead curator's office, which has become the command center for the investigation. Fache leads Langdon past the office and deeper into the dark hallways of the Louvre on the way to the crime scene. When they approach Langdon spots the large gate separating them from the crime scene. Fache tells Langdon about the museum's containment security system that when a piece of art is disturbed, gates automatically fall and alarms sound to contain the thief until the authorities arrive. The men duck under the gate and continue on toward the crime scene.

The Opus Dei World Headquarters is located on Lexington Avenue in New York City where men and women enter through different entrances. The organization is a conservative Catholic organization that boasts to be the most financially secure and fastest growing of all the Catholic organizations. Bishop Manuel Aringarosa leaves the building with a small travel bag to board a plane to Rome. Opus Dei had been threatened a few months earlier and the current battle had ensued. With the plane in flight, Aringarosa received a call telling him that Silas had located the keystone and its location. At that same time, in his hotel room, Silas was preparing himself for his next mission to retrieve the keystone.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 Analysis

With fast-moving action and quick scene changes, the suspense of the story continues to build. In these three chapters the reader is introduced to the police captain Bezu Fache when Robert Langdon is escorted through the halls of the Louvre Museum to the crime scene. Langdon finds the dark hallways creepy, yet sacred, because they hold some of the most famous art pieces in the world.



The reader is also introduced to the Opus Dei, located in New York City, an organization that is characterized as a conservative Catholic group that has become the most wealthy, yet mysterious of the Catholic organizations. The secular media consider the group a cult. One of its Bishops is introduced, Bishop Manuel Aringarosa and he is on his way to Rome. We learn that Silas works for him when he is called by a yet anonymous character with an update on Silas' finding the keystone.

The author continues to make use of suspense and missing information to draw the reader into the story. The reader does not yet know the connection between the Silas plot line and the Sauniere plot line, other than the murder.



Chapters 6, 7, 8

Chapters 6, 7, 8 Summary

Langdon and Fache arrived at the crime scene. Much to Langdon's surprise there was a Caravaggio painting still lying on the floor. It was the painting Sauniere had ripped off the wall to sound the alarms and drop the gate. It was a crime scene and nothing had been touched. Langdon noticed another parallel to his near death experience at the Vatican, the soft red lighting used to help prevent premature aging of the artwork. The lighting had been used in the Vatican archives as well. The men approached the body. The curator was lying on his back, naked with arms and legs outstretched. He had drawn a five pointed star on his abdomen using his own blood that had spilled from the gunshot wound. Langdon shared that the five pointed star, known as a pentacle, is a pagan religious symbol that dated back to Nature worship. He also shared that the pentacle specifically represents Venus, the goddess of sexual love. In Langdon's opinion the position of the body in a five-pointed position reinforced the pentacle symbolism.

Langdon also noticed a marker in Sauniere's hand, a black-light pen used to place invisible marks on artwork. Fache brought out a black light and written on the floor was a mysterious message.

Sister Sandrine Bieil lived in a suite within the Church of Saint-Sulpice. She was awakened during the night to her phone ringing. It was her boss the abbé calling to ask her a favor. An important American bishop, Manuel Aringarosa, had called and asked that one of his staff members be allowed to see the church that evening. He would be arriving in twenty minutes, around one in the morning. The sister agreed, although her women's intuition gave her a very bad feeling.

Back at the crime scene, Langdon read the message written by the now dead curator:

"13-3-2-21-1-1-8-5

O, Draconian Devil!

Oh, lame saint!"

Langdon did not immediately know what the message meant and he surely did not see any significance to the numbers. Interestingly, Sauniere was French and spoke French, however wrote the message in English. Then Langdon recognized the image, the body was laid out in a replica of Leonardo Da Vinci's most famous sketch, *The Vitruvian Man*. Da Vinci had always been a controversial historical figure due to his flamboyant homosexual practices and as an open Nature worshipper. Much of the artwork he was commissioned to do was Christian depictions, but it was believed that he inserted secret messages and symbolism that paid homage to his alternate lifestyle and beliefs within these pieces as a way to disrespect the Church.



Even with his new theory of the reason the body lay as it did, Langdon still did not understand why or if it revealed anything about the killer. "I would assume that if Sauniere wanted to tell you who killed him, he would have written down somebody's name," Langdon observed.

Back in the temporary police command center in Sauniere's office, a Lieutenant is listening to the entire conversation. On his laptop computer, the Lieutenant viewed a map of the museum with a red dot blinking at the position of Langdon and Fache.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 Analysis

In this section, Langdon finally gets to see the crime scene. The body is lying in a five point position with a five pointed star painted on the abdomen in blood. There is also a mysterious message written in invisibly along side the body. These mysterious messages are further clues to the murder, yet, at this point in the story, the reader has little clue to what they really mean or what relevance they have to the reason why the curator was murdered.

In another scene, the bishop Aringarosa has cleared the way for Silas to get into the Church to find the keystone. The sister, living in the church, has been instructed to let the man in by her boss. The reader does not yet know what the keystone is or why Opus Dei is seeking to retrieve it.

The author also provides some foreshadowing in this section. Langdon keeps seeing similarities in this scenario to the one he encountered in Vatican City where he almost got killed. This foreshadowing increases the suspense of the story because the reader fears for the safety of Robert Langdon.



Chapters 9, 10

Chapters 9, 10 Summary

Captain Fache receives a call on his two-way radio cellular phone. He is notified that the cryptographer has arrived and most likely decrypted the numerical portion of Saunier's message. Although Fache asks that the officer be detained at the command center, she makes her way to the crime scene. Sophie Neveu is the cryptographer and Fache does not like her at all, mostly because she is a woman. She shares that she has decrypted Saunier's message, however, before that, she has an urgent message for Langdon that he must contact the U.S. Embassy at once. On a slip of paper, she provides him with the phone number and code. The phone number is to Sophie's personal answering machine; he punches in the code. Next, a message plays that he was in danger and to follow her instructions closely.

While Silas sits in his car outside the Church of Saint-Sulpice, his thoughts drift to the genesis of his anger, which ultimately led him to be saved. He does not remember what his name was then, but he remembers leaving home at the age of seven, after his drunken father killed his mother, because she had borne him an albino son. Silas had, in turn, stabbed his father to death with a knife. In his late teens, he was trying to steal food from a cargo ship, killed a crew member in the process, and was also caught by the police. He was imprisoned for twelve years and ridiculed for being an albino. One night during an earthquake, he escaped. Somehow he ended up on the doorstep of a missionary named Manuel Aringarosa. Manuel named him Silas.

Chapters 9, 10 Analysis

The reader is introduced to a new character, Sophie Neveu, a cryptographer. She gives Langdon the message that he is in danger. However, at this point, the reader does not have any indication whether she is a trustworthy character or not. The author intentionally does not reveal much about her character at this point in order to increase the suspense. The reader does not know any more about this character than Langdon does at this point in the story.

Silas is poised to carry out his next mission; however, the author takes a break in the action to further characterize Silas. The reader learns of Silas' violent childhood seeing his father kill his mother and in turn taking the life of his own father. The tragic end to his childhood becomes the beginning of a life of crime and eventual imprisonment for Silas. After he escapes prison, he befriends a missionary, Manuel Aringarosa, who becomes his mentor and boss. The author uses this characterization to make Silas more sympathetic, the reader may almost feel sorry for him and further understand why he fell easily into the Opus Dei organization and way of life.



Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14

Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14 Summary

Sophie tells Captain Fache that the numerical code in Sauniere's message is a mathematical prank. Fache is not happy with her solution to the puzzle. She tells him that the series of numbers represents a famous mathematical progression called the Fibonacci sequence. She also tells him that the series of numbers means nothing more than that. Fache makes his disbelief and displeasure apparent, and Sophie leaves. Langdon had just ended his phone call after listening to Sophie's warning message over and over. He excuses himself from Fache's presence and heads toward the bathroom. Fache decides to return to Sauniere's office. Fache has Langdon bugged so he can track his every move from Sauniere's office.

Langdon enters an empty men's room and splashes water on his face. When he looks up, Sophie is there with him. She tells him that he is Fache's prime suspect in Sauniere's murder. She also tells him about the GPS tracking dot they planted in his suit pocket. Langdon is shocked and terrified. Sophie also tells him about the last line in Sauniere's message that he had not yet seen. She produces a photo in which, below the message Sauniere wrote, also invisible without the black light, says, "P.S. Find Robert Langdon."

Believing that Fache has enough evidence to throw Langdon in prison for the night, Sophie then tells him that the messages written on the floor were for her to see and that Sauniere was her grandfather.

While Langdon and Sophie are conversing in the restroom, Fache is watching Langdon's every move from Sauniere's office. Then, not knowing that Sophie was still in the building, Fache takes a call from the director of the Cryptology Department who informs him that something is not quite right.

Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14 Analysis

In this section, the reader is given more information about Sophie. We learn that Sauniere was her grandfather and that she believes the messages he left were for her. Because of this new information, it is easier to believe that Sophie may be genuinely trying to help Langdon.

However, the reader still does not know exactly what Sauniere's messages mean or why he instructed her to find Langdon. The protagonist, Langdon, an unlikely hero, is now clearly in danger, and we now know that Captain Fache is hoping to arrest him as a suspect in Sauniere's murder. Tension again builds, not knowing whether Langdon will be able to escape or be arrested by Fache.



Chapters 15, 16, 17

Chapters 15, 16, 17 Summary

Silas finally makes his way from his car to the front door of the Church. He feels lustful when he sees a group of prostitutes in the plaza nearby. He has denied himself sexual pleasure for the last ten years as a part of his devotion to *The Way*. He approaches the door to the church and bangs on it three times.

Meanwhile, back at the Louvre, Sophie wonders if she is doing the right thing, and how long it will take the police to notice that she has not left the building and find out that she is Saunier's granddaughter. She loved her grandfather, but their relationship had become strained after she caught him in the act of doing something she was not supposed to see. Following that, she asked him not to call her anymore and he complied, until earlier that day. He had left her a message saying that something terrible had happened and that he needed to talk to her about her family. Her family had been wiped out in an instant when their car slid off of a bridge into a fast-moving river. Sophie was four. She did not call her grandfather and now he was dead.

Sophie insisted that she and Langdon leave the museum at once. She needed him to help her solve her grandfather's code. Sophie knew that the only way she was going to save Langdon was to get him to the US Embassy before Fache could arrest him.

While Sophie was concocting her plot to get Langdon out of the museum, Fache was desperately trying to reach Sophie on her cellphone to no avail. He was anxious to speak to her after finding out that the Cryptology Department had not sent her and that she just happened to be the granddaughter of the deceased. Then it occurred to Fache and his assistant, Collet, that perhaps Saunier's message had been written for Sophie. Just then an alarm sounded. Collet watched the red blinking dot on his screen while Fache ran toward the men's room with his gun drawn. According to the GPS tracker it looked like Langdon had jumped out the window and was now in the middle of the street.

Chapters 15, 16, 17 Analysis

Silas is now poised for his next mission. The author further characterizes him and writes that *The Way*, otherwise known as Opus Dei, requires celibacy as a practice. Silas has remained faithful, however still feels lust for the prostitutes he sees. The teeth of his cilice dig into his thigh to remind him of his vows.

The author provides further background information and characterization of Sophie by giving the history of her relationship with her grandfather and that she had not spoken to him for ten years after discovering him involved in a yet unknown act. The author also reveals that Sophie's entire family was tragically killed when she was four. Now that her grandfather has been murdered, she is left with no family of her own.

The suspense and action continue in this section with Sophie and Langdon deciding to try to escape the museum. The author continues to change scenes frequently in order to intensify the suspense of each scene.



Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21

Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21 Summary

Fache races toward the men's room while Collet yells Langdon's position to him in the walkie-talkie. He sees that the bathroom is empty and he moves toward the window. Then he sees Langdon's method of escape. A large tractor-trailer truck with a tarp over its load is moving on the road away from the Louvre. He deduces that Langdon must have jumped out the window onto the tarp. Fache radios his squad, and they all disband from the museum to chase the truck.

Meanwhile, Langdon and Sophie hide in the hallway outside the restroom until Fache departs. Sophie had scouted out his escape route through the window, onto the approaching truck and out onto the street. She then took the GPS tracker from him, embedded it into a bar of soap and launched it out the broken window onto the tarp of the truck, just in time for them to leave the men's room and hide in the hallway when Fache passed by. Now that all the guards were gone, Langdon had a perfect opportunity to leave and go to the Embassy.

Back at the Church of Saint-Sulpice, the quiet and darkness is likened to a "tomb." Silas followed Sister Sandrine deeper into the church, wishing she would leave him alone. The Sister continues to linger and Silas grows impatient with her. He tells her that he prefers to be left alone and that she should return to bed. The Sister relents and heads up the stairs to her room. While Silas bows in prayer, Sister Sandrine watches from the shadows of the balcony, wondering if this visitor is the one she had long ago been warned about. If so, she would have to carry out her orders. She remains on the balcony, watching him.

Sophie and Langdon move quickly toward the emergency exit. They talk, trying to decipher all that they had learned to this point about Saunier's murder. While Sophie talks about the games she and her grandfather used to play, Langdon thinks.. Sophie tells Langdon that her grandfather had taught her about the Divine Proportion. Then it occurs to Langdon that the Dive Proportion is a central thread between Da Vinci, the Fibonacci numbers, and the pentacle. The proportion, 1.618, is a building block of Nature and a number widely used as a proportion factor in artwork. While they continued to ponder the clues, Langdon receives a revelation. The message Saunier had written was actually an anagram and the numbers meant nothing, other than a clue to the fact that the letters were an anagram. Decoded, the two lines said:

"Leonardo da Vinci!

The Mona Lisa!"

Sophie confirms that her grandfather loved anagrams and that his message being an anagram makes perfect sense. She decides that she must make her way to the



painting, where she is sure she will find a message left for her. Langdon wants to accompany her, but not knowing how long the museum would be empty, she insists he escape while he has the chance. Langdon complies and heads toward the exit. While he thinks more about Saunier's message, the letters "P.S" intrigue him. Then it occurs to him what the letters mean. He runs back to find Sophie.

Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21 Analysis

The suspenseful escape of Langdon and Sophie is underway. The author does an effective job of making the action engaging and engrossing. Half way through the scene of their attempted escape, another chapter begins and follows the action of Silas when he enters the Church of Saint-Sulpice to carry out his orders. The author's descriptions of the church are thorough and take the reader into the setting. He describes the church as dark, quiet, and tomb-like.

During the action scenes between Sophie and Langdon, the author intersperses the characters' inner thoughts, such as Langdon's constant disbelief that he has found himself in the middle of a murder investigation where he is the prime suspect. We also learn that Langdon is a professor of Symbolism in Art. The reader also learns further details of the relationship between Sophie and her grandfather. We learn that they played Tarot together and he taught her the many numerical codes and anagrams. Sophie also reminisces about when he took her to see the Mona Lisa. With each passing chapter, the reader is given more clues to figure out the Saunier murder, but not yet enough to understand it or allay the suspense.



Chapters 22, 23, 24

Chapters 22, 23, 24 Summary

With the Sister out of his way, Silas is free to look around the Church. He spots what he is looking for, a strip of brass embedded in the church floor. It is called *The Rose Line* and runs across the church to a large, Egyptian obelisk, then runs up the obelisk. Silas follows the line across the church to the obelisk. At the same time, Bishop Aringarosa' plane is landing in Rome. He thinks about the fact that he would be the most powerful man in all of Christianity if everything goes according to plan in Paris.

Sophie makes her way to the room that houses the Mona Lisa. She doubles back, momentarily, to grab the ultraviolet pen light, just in case her grandfather's message is in invisible ink. When she does, Langdon spots her and asks her if the letters "P.S." mean anything to her. She thinks back to the time she was snooping through her grandfather's things, looking for her birthday present, and found a golden key with the initials P.S. engraved in it. She tells Langdon about the key. He says that her grandfather was most likely a member of a secret society called the Priory of Sion and included members such as Boticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and, of course, Leonardo da Vinci. The group is well known for worshipping the sacred feminine, known as *the cult of pagan goddess worship*.

Silas now approaches the obelisk in the church and kneels at its base, searching for clues to a hiding place beneath it. He knocks on the tiles, and one of them makes a hollow sound. From far above, Sister Sandrine is watching in fear. The sister takes care of the church, but is also a guardian of its secrets. What is happening that night is a signal to her, a distress call.

Chapters 22, 23, 24 Analysis

The author's meticulous description of the Church Saint-Sulpice gives the reader the feeling of being there in the church with Silas. His use of descriptors such as "brass glistening," and "golden line" communicate the preciousness of the items for which Silas is searching. At this point, the reader is unaware of exactly what Silas is looking for, or the secret he seeks to uncover. Again, the author provides just enough information to keep the story interesting, but not enough for the reader to have all the answers.

Sophie and Langdon still look for answers of their own. It seems that the author is solving the book's mystery by approaching it from two opposite ends that will meet in the middle with the climax of the novel. Langdon reveals that Sauniere was most likely a member of a secret society called the Priory of Scion that has a very distinguished and very secretive roster of members, including Leonardo da Vinci. The author ties these clues together using symbols; the symbol of the Priory, "the fleur-de-lis—the flower of Lisa—the Mona Lisa."



The reader also learns in this section that the Sister Sandrine of the Church Saint-Sulpice has a secret of her own and has sworn to protect the secrets of the church. Silas is now compromising those secrets.



Chapters 25, 26, 27, 28

Chapters 25, 26, 27, 28 Summary

Captain Fache finds out that he has been duped by Langdon's bar of soap. He thinks back to the phone call Langdon made to the Embassy. He calls the Embassy to try to retrieve Langdon's message. They tell him that they have no automated messaging system. Then he remembers that Langdon used his phone. He redials the phone number stored in his phone, reaches Sophie's answering machine, dials the code and listens to the message to Langdon.

Meanwhile, Langdon and Sophie approach the viewing area for the Mona Lisa. Langdon is excited to see one of the most popular works of art in the world. He thinks about the many theories about the mysteries of the painting. Some claim that there are hidden messages, double entendres, and allusions within the work. Langdon believes Da Vinci was a proponent of feminine sensibilities and promoted his beliefs through the painting. He believes Da Vinci's work contains a message of androgyny by making her name an anagram for the male and female Egyptian gods of fertility ("AMON" and "L'ISA").

Langdon and Sophie found a message, written in the same invisible manner as before, on the protective glass covering the painting. At the same time, Lieutenant Collet is sitting in Sauniere's office on the phone with Fache. Fache tells him all about the bar of soap and Langdon's escape and commands him to send in a security guard to search the area where they think Langdon may still be. For his part, Fache and his men will guard all the exits, he also sends officers to apprehend Langdon if he tries to enter the U.S. Embassy.

"So Dark the Con of Man" is the message written on the glass. Langdon agrees, thinking about Church history and the vast campaign over the centuries to remove all semblance of female presence in religion. Women were not allowed as priests, free-thinking women were called witches, and the sexual union between man and woman became shameful. Langdon's thoughts are interrupted by Sophie alerting him that someone is coming. She is able to duck out of sight quickly, but Langdon is caught and ordered face down on the floor by an armed guard.

Chapters 25, 26, 27, 28 Analysis

The author often uses the thoughts of his characters to interject history and back story. In this section, he gives a history lesson on the speculation and rumors that surround the Mona Lisa by having Langdon recall an art history class he taught to prison inmates. He also uses Langdon's thoughts as an opportunity to recount Church history and its rejection of feminism.

The suspense of the story continues while Langdon and Sophie, and Silas continue their separate quests. In addition to each treasure hunt is the threat of being discovered. At the end of this section, Langdon is caught by the museum security guard leaving the reader to wonder whether Sophie will be discovered or Langdon will escape.



Chapters 29, 30, 31

Chapters 29, 30, 31 Summary

Back at the Church Saint-Sulpice, Silas searches for a means to crush the floor tile between him and his treasure. He smashes the floor tile with a candle holder covered with his cape. He reveals a compartment and reaches in to find a stone tablet with a Bible verse referenced. He finds a Bible and looks up the verse which reads "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." At that same moment, the Sister retrieves an envelope hidden in her bed frame. Inside the envelope are three phone numbers and she begins dialing.

Meanwhile, Langdon remains face down on the floor of the Louvre with a gun trained at his head. Sophie springs into action, walking toward the far wall. The security guard sees her silhouette and calls out to her; she identifies herself and tells the guard that Langdon is no threat, and he did not kill her grandfather. The guard is unsure and continues to try to use his walkie-talkie, which does not work in this hallway. He sees that the entrance is behind him and he starts to slowly back up in order to get close enough to the exit and put out a call on his radio. Meanwhile, Sophie is using her black light looking for more clues. She looks behind a large Da Vinci painting called *Madonna of the Rocks*. Hidden on the back of the painting is the gold key on a chain with the initials P.S. She retrieves the key and uses the large painting as a shield. She shouts for the guard to drop his radio and gun. He complies and moments later Sophie and Langdon have his gun and radio and are running toward the nearest exit.

Sister Sandrine is on the phone leaving a message at one of the phone numbers on the list conveying that "they're all dead." The sister does not know who she is calling, just that she has been given the instructions to call by a faceless man. She does not reach anyone at the first four numbers and tries a fourth, emergency number. While she waits for an answer at the fourth number, she hears a voice behind her, commanding her to hang up. Silas is in her room. He is angry at being played a fool. He explodes in a rage and kills her with the candle holder he had just used to smash the tile.

Chapters 29, 30, 31 Analysis

In this section, Silas, obviously one of the villains of the story, is not rewarded and does not find what he is looking for. On the other hand, Sophie and Langdon find what Sauniere wanted them to find, the gold key with the fleur-de-lis and the initials P.S. engraved in it. Although this development does not answer the question of why Sauniere was killed, it brings to resolution the message that Sauniere was trying to convey with his clues within the museum. Langdon is rescued by Sophie and they are again on the run.

The story has reached a mini-climax, leaving the reader to wonder what will be the next quest for Sophie and Langdon. Silas will have to start over with his quest for the keystone, having apparently killed everyone that knew anything about its whereabouts. Before she was killed, the Sister Sandrine left phone messages on three answering machines to alert unknown people about the break in at the Church. The reader does not yet know the impact of these phone messages or to whom they were directed.



Chapters 32, 33, 34

Chapters 32, 33, 34 Summary

Sophie and Langdon exit the museum to the sounds of alarms and sirens in the distance. They head for Sophie's car and speed off into the night. Not long after, the sirens and blue lights can be seen behind them but luckily the police are heading toward the museum and not pursuing them. Langdon cannot help but wonder what Saunier's final message was. Langdon asks Sophie what she found behind the Madonna of the Rocks painting and she tells him about the key. Sophie drives through Paris toward the American Embassy as she tells him about the laser tooling on the key that would make it virtually impossible to duplicate. Sophie wonders what secrets the key may unlock. She also thinks back to the time when she was in college and returned home a couple of days early to find that her grandfather at his chateau in a secret basement with a group of men and women wearing gowns and tunics, men in black, women in white. They were all chanting and worshipping something in the center of their circle that she could not see. She was terrified and left the room, left the chateau, moved out of her grandfather's house, and cut off all communication with him. When Sophie and Langdon reach the Embassy, they see Fache's men blocking the street to the entrance. They quickly turn around and speed away when the police sirens come to life.

While Sophie and Langdon race through the streets of Paris, Sophie hands the key over to Langdon for him to inspect. Neither of them knows what the key may open. They decide they need to get off the road and think more about the key and figure out its purpose. Sophie drives them to the train station and parks out front. She hands a handful of cash over to a taxi driver, and he speeds off without them. Langdon is getting more and more nervous.

Meanwhile, a driver in a black Fiat sedan picks up Bishop Aringarosa at Leonardo da Vinci International Airport. Aringarosa is shuttled to Castel Gandolfo, just as he had been five months earlier. Five months earlier he had been summoned to Rome at the request of the Vatican. It was an offer he could not refuse. He had been taken to the Vatican's Astronomy Library - where high level secret meetings were often held. That night, a deadly chain of events was put into motion. He now wonders why he has not yet heard from the Teacher, who should have heard from Silas by now.

Chapters 32, 33, 34 Analysis

Sophie and Langdon remain on the run and it looks as though they have held the authorities at bay, for now. The author has provided a suspenseful, exciting mix of action and intrigue as the pair finally leaves the museum and tries to find asylum for Langdon at the U.S. Embassy, only to be prevented by more police officers. Sophie ends up driving them to the train station, where it appears as though they will flee Paris. Now, their challenge is to find out what the key they have opens and where.



Also within this section, Sophie has a flashback that sheds some more light on why she and her grandfather became estranged. She had found him with a group of strangers, barricaded in a secret basement in his chateau, chanting and worshipping something mysterious and disturbing for Sophie. After that experience, she cut all ties with her grandfather.

Also, the reader learns of Bishop Aringarosa's arrival in Rome and that he is being shuttled to a location off the Vatican grounds, the Castel Gandolfo, which houses the Vatican's Astronomy Library and often secret meetings. The Bishop thinks about a meeting held there five months ago, but no further description or content of that meeting is revealed, other than it put a deadly chain of events in motion.



Chapters 35, 36, 37, 38

Chapters 35, 36, 37, 38 Summary

Sophie and Langdon are at the train station, and Sophie asks Langdon to use his credit card to buy two tickets on the next train departing Paris, which he does. They promptly exit the station through a side door and meet up with the taxi that Sophie had given money to earlier. Sophie tells the driver to head out of town, and she and Langdon spend a few minutes debriefing. They notice that the key looks recently cleaned and smells of rubbing alcohol. Langdon requests to see the pen light. There is an address written in invisible ink on the key. Sophie instructs the driver to the address and asks Langdon to tell her all he knows about the Priory of Sion.

Back at the Louvre, Bezu Fache is ready to take drastic measures to capture Sophie and Langdon. He orders Interpol be notified and both of them flagged. Their photos are faxed all over the city, and their passports and credit cards are flagged. Fache is confident he will catch them before the sun rises again.

In the cab, Langdon begins to tell Sophie what he knows about the Priory of Sion. The organization had been founded in 1099 in Jerusalem by a French king named Godefroi. The king was said to possess a secret that dated back to the time of Christ and he formed the Priory in order to preserve the secret for him, by passing it on to future generations. He had hidden documents beneath King Herod's temple that were so disturbing that the Church would not rest until they found them. At one point, the military arm of the Priory - the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon - were said to have uncovered the documents and moved them. Langdon says that only the Priory knows where the documents now reside. The documents are known, in present day, as the Holy Grail.

Sophie is confused, thinking that the Holy Grail is a cup. Langdon assures her that the chalice is a metaphor for something else. Just then, they notice the driver speaking into his radio. Sophie yells for him to put the radio down and pulls out the gun they took from the security guard. The driver pulls over and is ordered out of the car. Sophie orders Langdon to drive. He momentarily objects, saying he does not really know how to drive a stick shift. He pops the clutch, squeals the wheels, and the pair drives off into the night.

Chapters 35, 36, 37, 38 Analysis

Sophie and Langdon are still on the run with the authorities just a couple of steps behind them. During the suspense and action of their flight the reader learns more about the Priory of Sion and continues to put the puzzle pieces of the mystery together. We now know that somehow Sauniere was a member of Priory, who were charged with protecting a secret that dates back to the time of Christ. The Priory was charged with

passing the secret down to following generations, which is what it looks like Saunier was attempting to do by leaving the key behind for Sophie. It is yet unknown what the key opens and what will be revealed. As Langdon and Sophie work on solving the mysteries of her grandfather and the key, the dragnet initiated by Captain Fache closes in on them.

In this section, Sophie learns that the Holy Grail is not a cup but actually a metaphor for secret documents and the secret they possess. She also learns that, during one of the Church's campaigns to seize the documents and secrets of the Priory, they launch a sting operation on Friday, October 13, 1307. Countless Knights are captured and tortured on that day, which is why Friday the thirteenth is considered unlucky to modern day.



Chapter 39, 40, 41

Chapter 39, 40, 41 Summary

Back in his room, Silas is fuming over the fact that he was deceived. He thought he was close to achieving his mission but it was all a farce. Silas has not reported in to the Teacher. Rather, he sits thinking that killing the nun would most likely complicate things for him. He knows he has put the Bishop at risk. Silas prays for forgiveness and begins his ritual of Discipline.

After a while of Langdon's horrible driving, he swallows his pride and asks Sophie to drive. They both wonder to themselves what the key will unlock. Langdon doubts that they will uncover the Holy Grail and finds it hard to believe that Saunier could have been one of only four in the world that know where the Grail is kept. Sophie kept it to herself, but she knew he was one of the four. When they approach the address written on the key, they find the Depository Bank of Zurich, and they figure that the key they were holding went to a safety deposit box.

Bishop Aringarosa arrives at his destination and is ushered from the car to an upstairs conference room where three men await his arrival. The group decides to get down to business right away. The Bishop is curt with them when they hand over a large briefcase full of bearer bonds. The three men try to question him about his intentions with the bonds, but Aringarosa rebukes them, and asks them to give him what he needs to sign. They thank him for his service to the Church and inquire about his plans. He says he is going to Paris.

Chapter 39, 40, 41 Analysis

The story line with Silas and the Bishop takes precedence in this section, where the reader learns that Silas is remarkably callous and feels no remorse for killing the nun. However, he is worried more about how the deception he is victim to will effect Bishop Aringarosa. He also is confident that the Bishop will be able to protect him from any consequences.

Bishop Aringarosa collects a large sum of bearer bonds from a mysterious group of leaders of the Vatican. The relationship between the Bishop and the three men is unclear, however, not very warm or friendly, strictly business. It is unclear what the bonds are in payment for and or how they will be used.

Meanwhile, Sophie and Robert Langdon continue on their adventure, making their way back into Paris to the address written invisibly on the key. Langdon educates the reader more about Leonardo Da Vinci, that he knew of the location of the Holy Grail and that there has been much conjecture among art historians about whether he hid clues to the Grail's whereabouts in his paintings. For example, the landscape in the Madonna of the

Rocks has been said to look like Scotland or that the order of the disciples in the Last Supper represented a clue.



Chapters 42, 43, 44, 45

Chapters 42, 43, 44, 45 Summary

Langdon and Sophie drive to the entrance of the well fortified bank and go through two gated entrances and down into the underground protected parking. The bank is known for protecting the privacy and security of its customers. At each entrance, Sophie uses the gold key to gain entry. Once inside, they are met by a guard who points them to the elevator that corresponds with their key, and once they are in the elevator, picks up the phone and calls Interpol. They are met and escorted to a waiting room by another staff member. While the man instructs them how to access their box, they realize they do not have the account number needed in conjunction with the key to access the box. Across town, Fache and his men are alerted that Interpol has received a tip. They immediately are on their way to the bank.

The president of the bank, Andre Vernet, is notified of the gold key visitors and he descends from his apartment above the bank to greet them. When he sees Sophie, his words of welcome become stuck in his throat. He is horrified when Sophie tells him her grandfather is Jacques Sauniere, and he is dead. He tells them that he and Sauniere were dear friends. After Langdon and Sophie assure him they had nothing to do with the murder, he tells them that Interpol has been called and authorities are on the way. He also says that he will not allow them to be arrested if he has anything to do with it.

Next, Langdon and Sophie have to figure out the ten digit account number to access the safety deposit box. Langdon produces the photo of the crime scene and the numbers Sauniere had written on the floor of the museum. The number was ten digits. They decided to try the numbers in the kiosk. They only had one chance and before hitting the "enter" key Sophie hesitates.. She rearranges the numbers into the Fibonacci sequence and hits the "enter" key. The account number is correct and the box is produced on a conveyor belt by the robotic retrieval system. They open the box to find, inside, a smaller Rosewood box. Carved in its top was a five-petal rose, the Priory symbol for the Holy Grail. They lift the lid and what they see is not the cup of Christ.

Just then, Vernet, the bank president, enters the room to tell them of his plan to get them out of the bank that is now surrounded by the police. He leads them to an armored truck and puts them in the cargo hold. The box is wrapped in Langdon's jacket and he cradles the precious cargo. Vernet, wearing a driver's uniform, gets behind the wheel and drives to the exit where the police question him heavily and demand to search the cargo hold. After much discussion, they let him and the truck leave the premises.

Chapters 42, 43, 44, 45 Analysis

In this section, Sophie and Langdon are getting closer and closer to answers in the murder of Sauniere, although they are being hotly pursued by the authorities. The



author maintains a high level of suspense with Sophie and Langdon finding clues while being just one small step ahead of the authorities. At the Depository Bank of Zurich, where they are sure they will be safe from recognition, an eager guard recognizes them and calls Interpol, unbeknownst to them. Fortunately, the bank president was a friend of Saunier's and becomes their savior.

They are so close to accessing the contents of the safety deposit box when they discover that they must have an account number in addition to the key they have. With the authorities on the way to the bank, they only have moments to figure out the account number and retrieve the contents of the safety deposit box. Langdon remembers the ten-digit number written on the floor of the museum and Sophie rearranges it to form the Fibonacci sequence, a historically significant number sequence that her grandfather had taught her.

Langdon and Sophie gain access to the box and find a smaller, Rosewood box inside with a five-petal rose sign, the sign of the Holy Grail, engraved on its top. They lift the lid and view the contents, but the author does not allow the reader to know what they find, which further increases the suspense in the story. The only clue that is provided to the reader is that the content of the box is not a chalice.



Chapters 46, 47, 48, 49

Chapters 46, 47, 48, 49 Summary

Silas is still in his room, now recovering from beating himself on the back. He thinks back to when Bishop Aringarosa bestowed his duties upon him. Silas had been honored to be asked to serve. Now all hope was lost. He has been taken out of direct contact with Aringarosa and is ordered to report only to the Teacher. He finally musters the courage to call the Teacher and tell him what has happened at the church. The Teacher admonishes him for losing his faith too quickly. He tells Silas that all hope is not lost and that the secret has been passed by Sauniere before he died. He orders Silas to remain ready to complete the mission that night.

Meanwhile, Sophie and Langdon are still riding in the cargo hold of the armored truck. They decide to open the rosewood box. What is inside is a mystery to Langdon. It appears to be a white marble cylinder with similar size and shape to a tennis ball can. It had end caps that prevent one to see its contents. It also has brass framework that is engraved with letters. Sophie knows what it is instantly, a "cryptex," a mini-vault that her grandfather used to fashion for her. The brass dials have to be aligned properly in order to open it. If an attempt is made to force the cryptex open it will self-destruct. The more he thinks about it, the more Langdon is sure he knows what is inside.

Langdon then explains to Sophie that he believes they are holding the Priory keystone, and the keystone is a map that leads to the Holy Grail. He also explains to her that, traditionally, the information has been passed from generation to generation verbally, but it was only in recent decades that they felt the information should be written down and protected with the utmost security. What Langdon can not figure out is why, when three others besides Sauniere knew of the keystone, did Sauniere go out of his way to pass the information on to his granddaughter?

The armored truck stops and the cargo doors open with Vernet holding a pistol aimed at Sophie and Langdon. He commands them to put the box down and says he has a duty to protect Sauniere's assets. He tells them he had been listening to the radio and could not believe that they had killed three other people. As much as they assure him they had not done those things, he insists they put down the box. Langdon follows his instruction. Vernet picks up the box and closes the door to the cargo hold. The door sticks and will not close. Langdon and Sophie take the opportunity to charge the door. They knock Vernet back, grab the box, and drive off in the truck.

Chapters 46, 47, 48, 49 Analysis

The author has revealed how the book's two story lines will merge. It is foreshadowed in Chapter 46 that Silas will order a pursuit and capture the keystone, which Sophie and Langdon now have in their possession. However, if Silas and his group, Opus Dei, try to



force the cryptex open, they may cause it to self-destruct, and the secrets within will be lost forever. Sophie gives the history lesson in this section with respect to the cryptex. She tells Langdon that it is an invention of Leonardo Da Vinci's that her grandfather built. She said that Da Vinci had invented the crypts as a way to send secure messages. Inside, the message is written on papyrus and rolled into and around a fragile glass vial of vinegar. If the cryptex was tampered with, the glass vial would break, and the vinegar would dissolve the papyrus.

Langdon also tells of the symbolism of the rose and that it and the Grail are synonymous. The rose also stands for confidentiality and secrecy. It was a custom in Rome to hang a rose over a meeting to indicate they required privacy. It is where the term "sub rosa" (under the rose) came from.

Langdon tells Sophie of the symbolism of the keystone, that it represents an architectural term that speaks of the wedge-shaped stone, at the top of a stone archway that connects the two sides and holds all the weight of the archway.

At the close of this section, Langdon and Sophie are once again in danger, while Andre Vernet tries to take the box from them at gunpoint. Langdon refuses to let the box get away without a fight and when he sees an opening, crashes the cargo hold door into Vernet, and he and Sophie escape, once again, with the box.



Chapters 50, 51, 52, 53, 54

Chapters 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 Summary

Bishop Aringarosa leaves the Castel Gandolfo with a heavy briefcase containing bonds equaling twenty million euros. He plans to exchange them with the Teacher. He begins to worry why he has not heard from the Teacher who will contact him; the bishop cannot contact the Teacher. He hopes that he has not missed the call due to bad cellular coverage.

Meanwhile, Sophie and Langdon are fleeing in the armored truck. Sophie wonders out loud if Vernet wants the Grail for himself. Langdon doubts it, saying that throughout history, two groups pursue the Grail, those that think it is the cup of Christ, and those that know the truth and are threatened by it. Both Sophie and Langdon feel the enormous weight of the object in their possession. They do not know what to do next or how to break the code of the cryptex. Langdon remembers one friend who knows more about the Grail than anyone, Sir Leigh Teabing. They decide to visit him at his estate in Versailles. Langdon drives the armored truck to Sir Teabing's gate and they call him. After some questions, Teabing allows them to enter.

Just when Langdon drives the truck up the driveway, Andre Vernet calls his bank to ask for help. He asks the night manager to activate the trucks LoJack, radio-controlled location device. The transponder also notifies the authorities that there is a problem.

Sophie and Langdon are invited into Teabing's chateau. Not quite sure how much to reveal to Teabing, Langdon carries the box with him, but wrapped in his coat. They are shown to a drawing room by the butler, and after the butler leaves, Langdon puts the cryptex under the divan and sits down above it. Teabing joins them, and Sophie notices the crutches he uses as a result of polio. After introductions, Teabing request the purpose of their visit, and Langdon asks him to tell Sophie about the Holy Grail.

Chapters 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 Analysis

Both of the book's story lines come to another climax. Bishop Aringarosa has collected bonds worth twenty million euros from the Vatican representatives, yet he does not know of Silas' failure to collect the keystone. At the same time, Sophie and Langdon are on their own again; yet, do not have any clues to solve the password that will open the cryptex. In the Aringarosa story line, the reader does not yet know who the Teacher is and what group he represents. In the story line with Sophie and Langdon, they decide to ask the one person in the world who is the foremost scholar on the Holy Grail, Sir Teabing, to help them.

So far, the reader knows little about Teabing, only that Langdon met him when Teabing asked him to be a part of his documentary about the true Holy Grail. We also know that he came from England and inherited all his wealth. He also hates the French



government because of how heavily they tax him. Sophie's reluctance and distrust of the situation may foreshadow events to come involving Teabing.

Langdon also raises an interesting prospect of how the story may end. He wonders what they will do with it if they, in fact, discover the Holy Grail. Will they give it back to the "brotherhood?"

By the close of this section, Langdon and Sophie are in greater danger now that the authorities will be able to track the whereabouts of the armored truck because of its radio-controlled locator system.



Chapters 55, 56, 57, 58

Chapters 55, 56, 57, 58 Summary

Back at Teabing's chateau, he begins to tell Sophie the rest of the story about the Holy Grail. He confirms what Langdon told her that Da Vinci hid clues about the Holy Grail in his artwork. Then he goes on to tell the story about how the books of the Bible were chosen by Constantine, who was trying to keep the peace in the Roman Empire between the Christians and the pagans, and placate the emerging Vatican power. Pagan traditions of Sun worship were mixed with Christian traditions. In that effort, Constantine had to make Christ like a deity and erase his qualities as a mortal man.

Da Vinci, however, knew the truth, and Teabing referred to a painting of *The Last Supper* to prove his point. He points out that there is no 'one cup,' or Holy Grail, on the table but all 13 disciples have their own cups. However, the painting shows the Holy Grail as a person, not a cup. Sophie is astonished that the Grail is a person and Langdon tells her that the person is a woman. The ancient symbol for a woman looks like a wide 'V' and is called a 'chalice.' So, the Holy Grail represents a woman, a goddess. Sophie asks who she is, and Teabing escorts his guests to his study to see a painting of her.

At that moment, the butler was watching television in the kitchen. A news flash with photos showed the same two people in the other room. Also at that moment, the French authorities had received a tip that the armored truck had been found. Just then, Silas gets out of a black Audi, and, with gun in hand, jumps the wrought iron fence that surrounds Teabing's chateau.

Sophie, Langdon and Teabing retire to his study, which is enormous. He converted the chateau's ballroom into his private study full of books, artifacts, and analysis equipment. In the study, Teabing has a large replica of *The Last Supper* on the wall and asks Sophie to take a closer look at the person seated in the place of honor at the right hand of Christ. He says that it is Mary Magdalene and shows her further symbolism of that fact within the painting. He also shows her passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls that talk about Magdalene as Christ's spouse. Then, Teabing brings out a large chart, on which, was the family tree of the Tribe of Benjamin and says that by the marriage of the Jesus and Mary, two powerful bloodlines were joined. Even more shocking was the fact that they had had a child.

Chapters 55, 56, 57, 58 Analysis

In this section the book reaches toward its climax by revealing the most shocking news yet, the real story of the Holy Grail. Teabing tells Sophie about the history of Christianity and the Vatican. He says that Christianity, as practiced in the Roman Empire, was a blend of the pagan religion, which worshipped the sun. He points to powerful symbols,



such as the sun disks that became halos and that the act of communion was originally a pagan practice. Also, December 25th is the birthday of Osiris, Adonis and Dionysus, not Jesus. Even the holy day was changed from the Sabbath Saturday to the day of the sun, "Sunday." Teabing says that Christianity was expropriated in the interest of gaining power.

Just as Sophie is getting her history lesson, the noose is tightening around her and Langdon and they do not even know it. The two story lines are about to collide, most likely violently, as the French authorities and Silas converge on Teabing's chateau.

Sophie's education continues as she finds out that not only is the Holy Grail a person, but is, in fact, a woman. The symbols used to prove his assertion are that the ancient sign for a woman is a 'V' shape known as a chalice and that the chalice holds the blood of Christ, which speaks of Mary having Christ's child. Teabing shows Sophie the symbols within Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* where the symbol of the chalice and an 'M' are evident secret symbols hidden in the painting.



Chapters 59, 60, 61, 62, 63

Chapters 59, 60, 61, 62, 63 Summary

Aringarosa receives a message with a phone number to call to reach the Teacher. He dials the number and the destination of his call is the "Direction Centrale Police Judiciaire." Aringarosa then speaks to a man with a gruff voice.

Meanwhile, Teabing continues to tell Sophie about the Holy Grail. She is reeling in astonishment while Teabing shows her books that chronicle the role of Magdalene. He also tells her about the symbols created to represent Mary, such as the Chalice, the Holy Grail, and the Rose. Then Teabing tells her that Mary was pregnant at the crucifixion and then shuttled off to what is now France to have her baby. She is believed to have been buried along with numerous documents, called the Sangreal documents, that prove her standing, as well as documents written by Jesus himself. So, the Holy Grail is actually a tomb housing Magdalene's body. Teabing also tells them that there are Jesus' descendants that live, even in modern day. While he is telling the story, the butler interrupts them to ask Teabing to see him in the kitchen.

Sophie wonders if she can be a part of that royal family, that perhaps that was the secret her grandfather wanted to tell her about her family. Langdon confirms that she is not a descendant of Jesus. Langdon tells Sophie about how the church outlawed speaking of Mary Magdalene, so her story was passed on from generation to generation through the arts. He gives examples from Da Vinci to Walt Disney. Shortly he leaves, Teabing returns to demand an explanation from Langdon as to why the news is saying he is a murderer.

Langdon tells Teabing the whole story about how he has been framed and has not murdered anyone. He also tells Teabing that they have the keystone.

What the three inside the house do not know is that outside, Silas is in the bushes, waiting for the chance to enter the house and retrieve the keystone.

Langdon then tells Teabing his and Sophie's assumption of why Sauniere had to pass on the secret to someone outside the circle, because the other three members of the circle had been murdered too, and if Sauniere did not pass his secret to Sophie and Robert, the Grail would be lost forever. Teabing guesses that the only organization powerful enough to be behind such a campaign was The Church. He speculates that The Church is desperate to find and destroy the Holy Grail, because the Priory's time to reveal their secret is fast approaching. While the three talk, Silas silently enters the house and begins to search for the keystone.

Outside, at the foot of the long, winding driveway Lieutenant Collet and his men are staged, preparing for an assault on the residence to retrieve Langdon. Fache has ordered them to remain in place until he arrives, in twenty minutes



Chapters 59, 60, 61, 62, 63 Analysis

In this section, the reader learns many important details that, up until this point in the story, have been withheld for suspense. The author reveals that Bezu Fache, the police chief, is the Teacher that is directing Silas' deadly search for the keystone. The reader also learns more about the Holy Grail, while Langdon's friend and colleague, Leigh Teabing, continues to tell his stories about the Holy Grail. In terms of symbolism, the reader learns that, because it was forbidden by the Church to speak of Mary Magdalene, she emerged in the arts and in symbols such as the Chalice, the Holy Grail, and the Rose.

In this section of the book, the story reaches its climax as the two story lines converge, and Silas is now pursuing Langdon and Sophie. Most of the major characters of the book converge on Teabing's chateau with the keystone as the primary focus for all of them. The reader has learned, along with Sophie and Langdon, why Saunier was murdered and the potentially explosive information regarding Jesus and Mary Magdalene. We have also learned why the keystone and its secrets were passed on to Sophie and Langdon. Langdon and Teabing learn from Sophie that, in fact, Saunier was the Grand Master of the Priory.



Chapters 64, 65, 66, 67, 68

Chapters 64, 65, 66, 67, 68 Summary

Sophie and Langdon show Teabing the Rosewood box. He lifts the lid and holds the cryptex in his hands. Langdon begins examining the box and upon closer inspection finds that the rose pops out of the top like a puzzle piece. Just then, from behind him, Silas makes his move, hitting Langdon over the head and knocking him to the floor.

Silas demands that Sophie and Teabing hand over the keystone. Teabing agrees and seeing that he is on crutches, Silas orders him to hand over the keystone. While Teabing tries to balance the heavy marble keystone in one hand and balance on his crutch with the other hand, he loses his balance, and the keystone flies through the air. Teabing's crutch comes down on Silas with a crushing blow to his crotch, doubling the albino in pain. Sophie sees her opportunity and lands a kick to Silas' jaw. He discharges the gun, but hits no one.

Outside, the police hear the gunshot and spring into action, against Fache's orders. Teabing orders the monk bound and gagged. They see the police lights approaching the house, and spring into action.

Collet and his men search the house and find that it has been abandoned. They then find a vehicle is missing from the barn - a Range Rover. Just then, Teabing, Sophie, Langdon, the butler, and the monk speed across a field and into the woods in Teabing's Range Rover. They begin to discuss how Silas could have found them so quickly and deduce that the monk is, most likely, not working alone. Teabing then tells them that they are headed to a local airfield to fly to London on his jet. They are all in agreement that the Grail is most likely in Great Britain, anyway, and that they would be much safer there.

Silas, still bound and gagged, can hardly breathe. Teabing removes the duct tape over his mouth and begins asking him questions. Expectedly, Silas reveals nothing. He begins to pray for deliverance.

In the front seat, Langdon demands to borrow a phone. He calls his editor in New York, wanting to know if he had circulated Langdon's most recent manuscript. His editor, Jonas, admits that he had, and one of the people on the distribution list had been Saunier. In his manuscript, he had talked about the Priory as a secret society and about the secret they were charged to protect. He had also mentioned the keystone. Fache must have discovered the manuscript in Saunier's office and now it made sense why he was so eager to get Langdon involved.



Chapters 64, 65, 66, 67, 68 Analysis

In this section, the history lessons are on hold for the moment as the book's explosive action takes center stage, once again. Sophie and Langdon come inches from losing the keystone, and their lives, at the hands of Silas. The quick thinking of Teabing and Sophie prevent the loss of the keystone and provides another answer to the mystery. Seeing Silas in his monk's robe, they know that it is the Church that is pursuing them and the keystone. What they cannot figure out is why Opus Dei wants to find the Holy Grail. Teabing also wonders whether Silas has a connection within the police department or depository bank that led him to them. They do not yet know, what has been revealed to the reader, that Fache is the Teacher directing Silas' moves.

In this section, the author changes points of view from Langdon, Sophie, and Teabing's point of view to Silas' point of view. At the end of the section, the author provides some foreshadowing that increases the suspense of the story. While Silas prays for deliverance, the author foreshadows that, in a few hours, he will get the miracle he is praying for.

Langdon, trying to figure out why he is being framed for murder, finally figures out how Fache chose him to frame. He discovers that his editor had sent an advanced copy of his controversial manuscript about goddess worship to Sauniere, which also revealed that Langdon would be in Paris. So, Fache, the Teacher, was able to master plan Sauniere's murder, and even had someone to frame for the murder — Robert Langdon.



Chapters 69, 70, 71, 72, 73

Chapters 69, 70, 71, 72, 73 Summary

Langdon, Sophie, the butler, and Silas, along with Teabing flee France for the anticipated safety of London. Teabing warns Sophie and Langdon of the dangers and seriousness of the role they have chosen to play in the history of the Holy Grail. Sophie is still secretly hopeful that the whole adventure will lead to answers for her about what happened to her family. Teabing believes that everything that has happened to the three has happened for a reason and that the time has come for the truth of the Grail to be revealed. Sophie is strong and nonplussed and quote's Teabing's words back to him; "You do not find the Grail, the Grail finds you."

While standing in Teabing's empty chateau, Fache receives a call that the president of the Depository Bank is changing his story and that Langdon and Sophie stole something from Sauniere's account, and he is willing to do anything to get it back. Fache also learns of Teabing's private jet and the airfield nearby.

Meanwhile, Langdon, Sophie, and Teabing resume their examination of the Rosewood box. Langdon removes the rose inlay again and examines the unfamiliar script written on the back of the piece. He does not recognize it and neither does Teabing. Sophie takes a look and knows immediately what the message says. Her grandfather had done this before. The text was in English and written backward.

The text gave them further clues to opening the cryptex. "An ancient word of wisdom frees this scroll□and helps us keep her scatter'd family whole□a headstone praised by templars is the key□and atbash will reveal the truth to thee." The three begin discussing the passage and brainstorming five letter words that could meet the requirements of the riddle.

Bezu Fache arrives at the Airfield from which Teabing's plane departed. He demands to know where the plane's destination was and who had been aboard. The air traffic controller knew nothing for sure, but conjectured they had flown to London. He had no idea who may have been aboard.

Chapters 69, 70, 71, 72, 73 Analysis

In this section Sophie, Langdon, and Teabing are struck with the heavy impact of the events unfolding before them. The author takes a break in the action to reveal the inner struggles present in Sophie, Robert, and Teabing while they flee France, and the hunt for them by Fache and his men goes international.

The three realize that they must confront the reality of their roles and the danger ahead for them in possessing the keystone. The author offers some foreshadowing that they will, one day, know the location of the Holy Grail and have to decide what to do with



their knowledge that will change the course of history. With that realization they press forward to the next clue, which is found, written backwards, on the bottom of the rose inlay from the Rosewood box.

In the text on the bottom of the rose is the next clue, a riddle written in iambic pentameter, which is a poetic rhythm. The result of the riddle will give them the five letter password to open the cryptex. Langdon reveals the symbolic meaning of the text being written in English. Because the Priory was at odds with the Vatican, it wanted nothing to do with languages that were rooted in Latin, the language of the Vatican, such as French, Spanish, and Italian.



Chapters 74, 75, 76, 77, 78

Chapters 74, 75, 76, 77, 78 Summary

With Teabing in the back of the plane to check on their hostage and the butler, Langdon takes the opportunity to ask Sophie how she is doing. He also tells her that he thinks that he knows why her grandfather told her to find him; he knows why she cut off all contact with her grandfather. He asks her if she witnessed a sex rite. Sophie did not understand how he would know that. Langdon tells her that she witnessed a two-thousand year old tradition that ancient people believed they were not complete, spiritually, without a union with the sacred feminine. Then Sophie told him what she had witnessed. She was sobbing by the time she was through.

Aringarosa was also traveling by air at the same time as Teabing's group en route to Paris. After receiving a call from Fache, he knows he must have the plane change directions immediately. He cannot believe how badly his plans have fallen apart. He bribes the pilot with one of his diamond rings, and the pilot agrees to fly on to London.

Shortly after Sophie's recount of her story discovering her grandfather involved in a sex rite, Teabing returns with soda and a snack, and the three return to their thoughts about the riddle. Langdon figures out what the riddle means when it refers to the Templar headstone; it is referring to Baphomet, the pagan fertility god. The name has too many letters, so they decide to apply the ancient Hebrew cipher, called the Atbash Cipher, to the word.

Together, they create the Atbash substitution matrix that will result in a five letter word based on Baphomet. Teabing applies the cipher and is amazed and surprised. The resulting word is five letters and is an ancient word meaning 'wisdom.' Even more astonishing is that it spells out 'Sophia' the Greek word for wisdom. Sophie felt emotional and could not believe that her grandfather had encoded her name into the cryptex.

Sophie turns the bands of the cryptex to line up the proper letters. She then carefully pulls end off of the cylinder. Inside was a scroll and something else. She dumped the contents into her hand and revealed another, smaller cryptex. The clue written on the scroll said that the next clue was in London, so at least they were headed in the right direction.

What the three did not know was that there would be six local police cars waiting for them when they arrived at the Kent airport.

Chapters 74, 75, 76, 77, 78 Analysis

The reader learns an important aspect of Sophie's character, the details of why she severed all contact with her grandfather. As a young college student, she had stumbled



upon a sex rite ceremony in which her grandfather was participating. Langdon explained the symbolism behind the ceremony to her in order for her to have a better understanding of her grandfather. This chapter offers resolution to the previously unanswered question of what was so horrific that would cause Sophie to sever ties with her only living relative. The chapter also allows resolution for Sophie, because her character learns about and begins to understand her grandfather.

The ceremony that Sophie's grandfather was involved in carried many symbols that are present throughout this book and are used as foreshadowing as well. The participants wore black or white, white for women, black for male. According to the author, these colors foreshadow the balance that Sauniere seeks in his clues, such as the black cryptex within the white cryptex. The ceremony also represents the male and female aspects of divinity, which is a main theme in this book. The theme of incompleteness without the presence of male and female is also a symbol present in the ceremony and important to the author, as well, in choosing a male and female for the lead characters that are equally important in his story.



Chapters 79, 80, 81, 82, 83

Chapters 79, 80, 81, 82, 83 Summary

Back at the Chateau Villette, Lieutenant Collet and his men are searching the premises. They have found little of interest, except for a photo of a cathedral with a list of the Priory of Sion's Grand Masters and years of their service written on the back. Then Collet receives a phone call from Andre Vernet, looking for Fache. He recognizes the voice as the armored truck driver and begins to wonder how Vernet is involved. He decides to conduct his own investigation and orders every piece of information on Mr. Vernet from Interpol.

On Teabing's plane, the passengers are instructed to prepare for landing in London. Just before landing, the pilot tells them that the air traffic control tower has requested they park at the terminal and not Teabing's private hanger, due to a gas leak. Teabing was suspicious. He joined the pilot in the cockpit to make other arrangements.

The plane lands with a swarm of armed policemen to welcome them. Unexpectedly, the plane continues past the terminal and toward Teabing's hanger. The police scramble to meet the plane as it came to a stop inside the hanger. Teabing emerges from the plane to talk to the authorities. He insists that he is leaving in his limousine with his butler Remy. He also insists that his plane is not to be searched without his permission. The inspector ignores him and boards the plane. Except for the pilot, the plane is empty. Teabing leaves in his limousine, without incident. What the police do not know is that before they arrived Remy, Langdon, and Sophie, carrying the monk, quickly left the plane before it had made its full turn in the hanger and had gotten inside the limo.

Once the limo speeds away, Sophie and Langdon take seats facing Teabing and they begin to discuss the next clue, which reads, "In London lies a knight a Pope interred. His labor's fruit a Holy wrath incurred. You seek the orb that ought be on his tomb. It speaks of Rosy flesh and seeded womb." Teabing's theory is that the knight was one of the Knights Templar that had been killed by the Church in 1307. He happens to know the Temple Church in London, which houses ten knights' tombs.

While Teabing gives Remy directions to the church, Sophie and Langdon have a moment alone, in which she tells him how glad she is that he is with her. Langdon feels some attraction between them. She goes on to ask him his advice on what to do if they find the Sangreal documents. He does not want to influence her with his opinion, since it is clear that her grandfather had entrusted her with the secrets.

The car arrives at the Temple, and Teabing, Sophie, and Langdon go inside the Temple. They have to fabricate a story in order for the altar boy to let them in at 7:30 in the morning. They enter the Temple and begin to look around for the tombs.



Chapters 80, 81, 82, 83, 84

Chapters 80, 81, 82, 83, 84 Summary

The action continues as Fache and the authorities are close behind Langdon, Teabing, and Sophie. The three think they are getting ahead, yet unbeknownst to them, Fache is gaining ground. Teabing's plane is met by a small army of armed policemen, whom they outsmart and head toward London to solve the next riddle and open the black cryptex.

There are some developments within the characters in this section. For example, it seems that a romantic attraction may be developing between Langdon and Sophie. Also, it is clear that Sophie and Langdon are individually conflicted about what to do if they find the Holy Grail and all the documents that could change the course of history and what the public has believed to be true for two thousand years.

Langdon and Sophie also have an interesting and controversial discussion about religion and how all faiths are built upon fabrications, metaphors, and exaggerations. Langdon says that the whole definition of faith itself is accepting something that cannot be empirically proven true.

In Chapter 83 the author chooses an interesting point of view change in mid-chapter. When the three are trying to enter the Temple Church, the author switches to the point of view of the alter boy, a new and unknown character in the book. Up to this point, the author would typically maintain the point of view throughout an entire chapter. With the change in point of view, the reader gets to see Teabing, Sophie, and Langdon through a different set of eyes.



Chapters 85, 86, 87

Chapters 85, 86, 87 Summary

While Teabing, Sophie, and Langdon are in the church, Remy, the butler parks the car in an alley and goes to the back where the monk is. He retrieves a wine opener from the bar. Silas can see what is happening and becomes very fearful. Then, Remy cuts the ropes that bind Silas and pours both of them a glass of vodka. He apologizes for not releasing Silas earlier. Silas is astonished. Remy tells him that he had been hired by the Teacher also. Then he hands Silas a gun and retrieves another pistol from the car's glove box and tells Silas they have unfinished business.

Fache arrives at the Biggin Hill airport where Teabing's plane had landed earlier. Holding a gun to the head of the terrified pilot he gets a full report of what has transpired on the plane earlier that day. He also finds out from the pilot that Teabing had stowed the Rosewood box in the plane's safe. While Fache is waiting for the safe to be drilled open, he receives a call from Bishop Aringarosa to say that he will be arriving in an hour.

Back at the Temple Church, Langdon, Sophie, and Teabing have found the tombs and are examining each one, looking for clues of a missing orb. Sophie notices that the tenth tomb does not have a statue of a knight lying atop it and she calls the others over. The altar boy interrupts them and tells them that what they are looking at are not tombs, but effigies. Teabing, Sophie, and Langdon figure they are missing something.

When the altar boy returns to the sanctuary, Silas and Remy are there to greet him. Silas holds him in a headlock with a gun to his head and Remy tells him to leave the church and run as fast and far away as he can.

Silas sneaks up behind Sophie and grabs her, surprising Teabing and Langdon. He demands the keystone. Langdon is holding it and orders Silas to let Sophie and Teabing go and he will settle the issue with Silas himself. Remy had orders to stay out of sight or everyone who sees him will have to be eliminated; but when he sees Silas hesitate, he emerges from the shadows and puts the gun to Teabing's head. Langdon hands over the cryptex and Remy and Silas take their hostage, Teabing, with them.

Chapters 85, 86, 87 Analysis

The story takes a surprising twist when we find that Remy is working for the Teacher, he frees Silas, and they go after Sophie, Langdon, and Teabing in the church in order to retrieve the keystone.

The action and suspense continues to escalate when Fache arrives in London and Bishop Aringarosa is planning to arrive shortly. All the main characters in the hunt for the keystone will converge in London.

This section ends with Sophie and Langdon losing the keystone, which heightens the suspense greatly, because it is now in the hands of two violent men who have taken their friend, Teabing, as a hostage.



Chapters 88, 89, 90, 91

Chapters 88, 89, 90, 91 Summary

At Chateau Villette, Collet and his men continue to search the home and the grounds. One of his men calls him out to the barn. He had found a ladder leading up to a loft that housed a complex computer workstation with multiple screens, video monitors, speakers, and audio equipment. By the looks of the equipment, they deduce that it must be a surveillance post. The men begin to investigate further to see if they can determine who is being bugged.

Sophie and Langdon head to the tube station to take the subway to King's College, famous for their massive electronic theological database. They are very confused about to what to do next, and Langdon is feeling incredible guilt for involving his friend, Teabing, whose life is now in danger. Sophie wants to involve the authorities, and Langdon finally relents. Sophie calls the London police. She gives them her name and she is asked to hold. A short time later, a gruff voice comes on the line. It is Fache. He demands to know where she is, asks her to cooperate and go immediately to the nearest police station for refuge. Sophie does not say a word, and then she blurts out that Teabing has been kidnapped, hangs up the phone, and jumps on the train with Langdon.

While Fache oversees the destruction of the safe in Teabing's plane, he receives a phone call from Andre Vernet. He tells Fache what happened with Sophie and Langdon and wants to make sure the reputation of his bank remains intact. Fache assures him that the rosewood box and its contents, as well as his reputation, are in good hands.

Back in the barn at Chateau Villette, Collet and his men discover that the surveillance equipment is set up to listen in on five different people; one of them is Jacques Sauniere. They also realize that much of their investigation and discussion in Sauniere's office could have been listened in on, because the knight on Sauniere's desk had been bugged.

Chapters 88, 89, 90, 91 Analysis

For Sophie and Robert Langdon all seems hopeless. They have lost the keystone and their friend Teabing. After Sophie's very brief conversation with Fache, they now know that he has arrived in London and knows that they are there. Additionally, he has alerted the authorities, which may make it more difficult for Sophie and Robert to move around the city. Fache begs for them to seek refuge at a police station, but Sophie refuses, believing that it is probably a trap.

The plot continues to thicken as the reader learns of the surveillance post hidden in Teabing's barn. The author does not reveal who is doing the listening, Remy or Teabing. However, because of his polio injuries, it seems likely that it is not Teabing.



Andre Vernet, the bank president, re-emerges in this section to make sure that his reputation and the reputation of his bank remains intact. Fache tells him that all is under control. Fache's tone seems sinister and perhaps foreshadows that all will be in his hands.



Chapters 92, 93, 94, 95

Chapters 92, 93, 94, 95 Summary

While Remy ties Teabing in the back of the limo, Silas waits in the front seat. When Remy joins Silas in the driver's seat of the limo, he puts up a partition. Not long after, Silas's cell phone rings, it is the Teacher. He is finally able to give the Teacher some good news, that they had recovered the keystone. The Teacher thanks him and instructs him to give the keystone to Remy to bring to him. He tells Silas to go to the Opus Dei residence in London and wait for further instructions. Remy feels pity for the monk, because he has no idea of what will happen to him next. Remy knows that he has been used and his mentor, the bishop, has been used, as well.

Langdon and Sophie arrive at the King's College library and ask a librarian for some help with their research. They have to invoke Teabing's name before the librarian agrees to help. They tell her they are trying to find a tomb in which a knight was buried. The librarian could see their urgency and goes right to work to help them. She tells them the search should take fifteen minutes.

Remy drops Silas off on a quiet street near the Opus Dei building. It is raining. Silas walks to the center, introduces himself, and is immediately granted a room. He takes off his wet clothes and kneels to pray. Just then, downstairs, the London police call looking for an albino monk. The staff person confirms that he is in his room and the police tell him they will be right over.

Remy drives the limousine to the large St. James's Park. The Teacher takes a seat on the passenger side, next to him. He has a flask of cognac, and congratulates Remy on a job well done. The Teacher takes a drink of the cognac and passes it to Remy. Remy enjoys a drink of the cognac, which tastes a bit salty, but satisfying. While the Teacher begins to talk to him about how he is the only one who knows his face, Remy feels his throat begin to feel uncomfortable, and then continues to rapidly swell. He realizes that he is being murdered! After watching Remy choke to death, the Teacher leaves the park. He has one, last, loose end to tie up - Langdon and Sophie. He heads toward the sight designated for the next clue.

At the same time, Bishop Aringarosa has arrived at the airport. He is told that Fache is not there and has asked that he be taken to Scotland Yard for safety. While he rides in the police car, he hears on the police radio what is happening at Opus Dei, and requests to go there, at once.

Chapters 92, 93, 94, 95 Analysis

In this section, the keystone is handed over to the Teacher by Remy, who continues on his killing spree by poisoning and killing Remy, following the turnover of the keystone to him. It seems that all hope for Langdon and Sophie is lost while they are delayed at the



library looking for the answer to the clue about a knight buried in London. The Teacher already knows the answer to the clue about the knight and heads directly for knight's tomb.

Also, somehow the authorities are tipped off that Silas is staying at Opus Dei and they plan to apprehend him there.

The author continues the suspense by presenting surprise alliances, such as the alliance between Remy and Silas. Even though some answers are provided, there are still many questions that remain to be answered. For example, Remy knew that both Silas and the bishop were being used by the Teacher. The reader does not yet know why, or who, is using them. The Teacher, although thought to be Bezu Fache, continues to be a mysterious character.



Chapters 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

Chapters 96, 97, 98, 99, 100 Summary

Sophie and Langdon are immersed in the library search and coming up with nothing. While the minutes pass, and the search continues, they finally come up with something interesting. They run across a book about the knight, Sir Isaac Newton who was buried in London at Westminster Abbey by his friend Alexander Pope. Langdon is sure that he is the knight for whom they are looking. His work in the sciences had stirred up the anger of the Church, and he was a Grand Master of the Priory of Sion.

Silas has gone to sleep by the time the authorities reach the Opus Dei center. His instincts awaken him and he jumps out of bed and toward the door. The police come through the door, and Silas debilitates the first officers and throws himself toward the stairs. He goes down the stairs and toward a back door. Running out the door, he collides with a policeman and grabs his gun. He shoots at the approaching officers, and is hit by return fire. Out of nowhere, someone grabs his shoulder; Silas spins and fires, shooting Bishop Aringarosa.

Sophie and Robert arrive at Westminster Abbey in search of Newton's tomb. The church is largely quiet, which worries Langdon, who is not looking for a repeat of what happened at the last temple. They know that whoever now has the keystone will have to make an appearance at the Abbey to see the tomb and solve the riddle. However, they do not know whether that person has already come and gone or might still be there. While they tried to find a docent to point them toward the tomb, the Teacher stands at the tomb of Newton. He has been there for ten minutes, searching for clues. He sees the pair, from afar, and he knows he has to talk to them to see if they have solved the riddle. He knows he has to lure them to a quiet place.

Sophie and Langdon approach Newton's tomb, thinking about the riddle. They are looking for the "orb that ought be on his tomb." While they search the spot for clues and ideas, Sophie discovers a message, written for them, that says "I have Teabing. Go through Chapter House, out south exit, to public garden." To Langdon, this is a good sign. Teabing is alive and they have not broken the code and opened the keystone. Or it was a trap. They make their way toward the Chapter House, as instructed. They find themselves at a dead end, in a large room. A door closes and latches behind them. They turn to see Lea Teabing.

Teabing is holding a gun and begins to speak with an apology. If not for Sophie and Robert's persistence, they would not be in the situation they are in, he said. He tells them that it was never his intention to involve them. He also tells them that he began his campaign to retrieve the keystone after learning that Jacques Sauniere had changed his mind about revealing the truth of the Grail to the world after being threatened by the Church. He had sold out and Teabing feels it is his responsibility to right the wrong.



Sophie catches on to what he is saying and is filled with anger to learn that it is he who killed her grandfather.

Langdon begs Teabing to let Sophie go and the two men work out the situation alone. Teabing refuses, but he does hand over the keystone to Robert as a sign of trust. He wants the three of them to continue to work together to unlock the cryptex and reveal the truth of the Grail to the world. Sophie vehemently refuses. Robert accepts the keystone. Teabing demands to know whether Robert would assist him or not.

Teabing thinks back to how his plan came together since they were all at the Temple Church. Remy, the only connection to Teabing, had ruined everything by showing his face; otherwise, no one would have known it is Teabing behind the plot. Only Remy knew. After staging the kidnapping, when Teabing was in the back of the limo, he was able to call Silas and give him the orders. Remy had been easy to eliminate with his deadly allergy to peanuts. All Teabing had to do was feed him the cognac laced with peanut chards.

Chapters 96, 97, 98, 99, 100 Analysis

In this section, the story begins to wrap up, mysteries are solved, and questions answered. However, before that happens, Silas and the bishop are shot. Silas accidentally shoots his mentor and the police shoot Silas. Although Silas is a violent, homicidal criminal the author has done a good job of making him a sympathetic character, as well. He becomes even more sympathetic now that we know he was used and discarded by the Teacher.

One of the main twists of the novel comes in this section, when the reader learns that the Teacher is Leigh Teabing. The author does a superb job leading the reader to believe that Bezu Fache was the Teacher. However, when Teabing ambushes Sophie and Robert he reveals his identity and role in the plot. They learn that it was he that murdered Sophie's grandfather, because he believed Saunier sold out to the Church, had succumbed to their influence, and decided not to reveal the truth of the Grail to the world. The reader finds that it was Teabing who hired Silas and the bishop to murder the other Priory leaders and that Sophie and Robert had fallen into his trap on accident.

The mystery not solved in this section is the riddle that, when solved, will open the small cryptex that holds the information about the location of the Grail. It is also a mystery whether Robert will assist Teabing and how he and Sophie will escape Teabing's grasp.



Chapters 101, 102, 103, 104

Chapters 101, 102, 103, 104 Summary

Silas carries the wounded bishop to the hospital, both suffering from bullet wounds. Aringarosa apologizes to Silas for getting him into this mess. He acknowledges that they both had been taken advantage of and deceived. Aringarosa recalls the events that brought them to this point. It all started when he was summoned to the Castel Gandolfo, where the church leaders told him that the Vatican was withdrawing its sanction of Opus Dei, because of their controversial practices. Aringarosa was deeply angered by this development. A few weeks later, he receives a call from the Teacher, offering him an opportunity to gain power over the Vatican and have them bowing at his feet.

Back at Westminster Abbey, Teabing demands to know whether Robert will help him or not. He steps back into the shadows of the room to think and look at the keystone. Robert attempts to convince Teabing that he knows the answer to the riddle and they need to go back to the tomb to view it. The ploy does not work. Teabing asks him to put the keystone on the floor. Instead, Langdon tosses it in the air, and, instinctively, Teabing drops the gun and his crutch and dives for the keystone. He and the keystone crash on the floor. The vinegar vial within the keystone shatters and the liquid leaks out. Teabing pulls the keystone apart and sees no dissolving papyrus within. Langdon has the final message safely tucked in his pocket and the gun trained on Teabing. Just then, Fache bursts through the doors and arrests Teabing. He is glad to see Langdon and Sophie are unharmed and scolds them for not coming in for safety when he had asked.

After Silas drops Aringarosa off at the hospital, he finds a nearby quiet garden. He lies in the grass and prays while the blood from his bullet wound leaves him, and he falls asleep. In his recovery room at the hospital, Bishop Aringarosa is later informed that Silas's body has been recovered in the nearby garden. He asks Fache if he will take the Vatican bonds and distribute them to the families of those Silas had murdered in Paris.

Chapters 101, 102, 103, 104 Analysis

The story's suspense is resolved when Langdon is able to extract the last clue from the keystone and pocket it, without Teabing seeing him. He knew Teabing would drop everything to protect the keystone, so he throws it up in the air to break it and ends up with the gun aimed at Teabing. The reader learns that Bezu Fache was actually one of the good guys when he comes to Langdon's and Sophie's rescue and arrests Teabing.

The author is wrapping up the story and offers resolution on many of the other loose ends of the story. It is revealed why and how the bishop became involved in the plot, because of his own pursuit of revenge against the Vatican.

Silas becomes the story's most tragic character. Having had a very tough life, his life ends with him being used and discarded by the man he respected and loved the most.

He was a very faithful and loyal man, although very misguided. Silas ends up dying alone in a garden as a result of his bullet wound.

In a surprising twist, Teabing ends up being the villain of this story. His greed and persistence result in the ruin of many lives. Only Langdon and Sophie are able to narrowly escape his grasp and survive.



Chapters 105, 106, Epilogue

Chapters 105, 106, Epilogue Summary

Robert and Sophie arrive at Rosslyn Chapel, south of Edinburgh, Scotland. They have come here according to the last riddle in the keystone. "The Holy Grail 'neath ancient Roslin waits," it said. Even though Langdon feels it was too obvious a location, he figures they must be there for a reason, if Sauniere guided them there. Once inside the chapel Sophie had the strange feeling that she has been there before. She spots an archway that is covered with symbols carved in each stone. Lore says that the cipher was enormous and virtually impossible to solve. She remembers having been there as a little girl, shortly after her family had been killed. She remembers seeing her grandfather come out of a nearby house. She leaves the chapel and heads for the house.

Langdon is speaking with the docent while he looks around. The young man asks him about the rosewood box he is carrying, saying his grandmother had one just like it. In fact, his grandmother is the chapel curator and head of the Rosslyn Trust and lives in the rectory.

At the house, Sophie discovers her grandmother, very much alive. Her grandmother confesses that they had kept many secrets to protect her. She also reveals that the young docent was Sophie's brother. While they all get reacquainted, Sophie finally feels at peace and happy to be with her family.

While Sophie's grandmother reveals the truth about their family, Sophie learns that they are direct descendants of the Merovingian family, sons and daughters of Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ. She also learns that her family was separated after her parents perished in a car accident, which Jacques Sauniere feared was not an accident. To protect the lineage, he felt it best to separate the children. Langdon asks about what would happen to the Priory now that the top leadership has been murdered. Sophie's grandmother assures him that succession plans are already in place and not to worry. She confirms the plan of the Priory is to never reveal the secret. However, Robert still wants to know if the Holy Grail is under the chapel. The old woman tells him that it had been moved many years ago. She gives no more information, but tells him that, one day, it would dawn on him, and he, too, would know where the Grail is.

Sophie invites Langdon to stay with them for a few days, but he declines, encouraging her to spend some quality time with her newfound family. She tells him she wants to see him again, and he invites her to join him in Florence in a month. They embrace and kiss.

A couple of days later, back at his hotel room at the Ritz in Paris, Robert has been catching up on his sleep. Something occurs to him that he had not considered before. He gets up, dresses, and leaves the hotel. He goes to the Louvre and discovers that he has just solved the last riddle of the keystone. The Holy Grail is safely buried beneath the large, inverted pyramid in the Louvre. He feels very emotional and falls to his knees.



Chapters 105, 106, Epilogue Analysis

The author wraps up the story in this section, revealing a final twist. All of her life, Sophie thinks her family has died in a car accident, when, in fact, her grandmother and brother are alive. She reunites with them as a result of solving the last riddle in the keystone. Sophie is finally at peace and all of her questions regarding her family are revealed. She was fiercely protected by her grandparents, because of her direct decendency from Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene.

For Robert, he finally solves the mystery that has been his life's work and finds the Holy Grail. He is sworn to secrecy by Sophie's family; however, he discovers that the final resting place of the Grail is underneath the Louvre museum. As for Sophie and Robert, they have a budding romance and plan to meet in Florence for a rendezvous.

In this section, there are numerous symbols, such as the Rosslyn Chapel, which is known as a desirable site for mystery seekers to flock. Both Sophie and Langdon were seeking answers about the Grail and about Sophie's family. Langdon also discovers the meaning of the Star of David as the ancient symbols for man and woman overlaid, which symbolizes the fusing of male and female. A large Star of David adorned the floor of the Rosslyn Chapel as a sign that the Grail once resided there.



Characters

Robert Langdon

Robert Langdon, the main character of the story, is a Harvard University professor of Religious Symbolology. He seems to be an unintended main character in that the action and adventure of the story finds him, rather than him searching for it. In this story, he happens to be in Paris when the curator of the Louvre museum is murdered. The police adamantly summon him to the scene of the crime to help them decipher clues left by the victim at the scene. He agrees to help, and then is recruited by another main character, Sophie Neveu, to help her follow the clues further to learn about why her grandfather was murdered and the truth about her long since dead family.

Robert is a likable character that could be described as a well-respected, sought after, intelligent academic - especially regarding history, art, and religion. He is an author of numerous books and has devoted his life to his teaching and writing. He is a requested speaker all over the world, which is what brought him to Paris to begin this story.

It appears that he devotes a great deal of time to his work but not necessarily to his personal life. There is virtually no description of his family or whether he has been married. However, he and Sophie develop a romantic relationship toward the end of the book.

Sophie Neveu

Miss Neveu is a much more deeply developed character. Initially, she is introduced as the police cryptographer who is summoned to the scene of Jacques Sauniere's murder to help decipher some of the clues left behind by the victim. Then it is revealed that she is the granddaughter of the victim and that she believes the clues left behind were just for her.

Through the course of the book, the reader learns that Sophie's parents, brother, and grandmother - her entire family except for her grandfather - were killed in a car accident when she was young. She never felt that she knew the truth about her family, who they were, why they were killed, and whether their deaths were accidental or homicide. The only remaining family she had was her grandfather, with whom she had a strained relationship. After unintentionally seeing her grandfather involved in a pagan sex rite, she moved out of his home and cut off all contact with him, although he continued to write and call her.

After his death and throughout her adventures in this story, Sophie learns more about her grandfather and comes to really love him and miss him. By the end of this story, Sophie learns the truth about her family and is able to gain peace when she learns of her extraordinary heritage and is reunited with surviving members of her family.



Sophie is characterized as a strong, independent woman, capable of making quick decisions in crisis situations. Oftentimes during this story, she leads Langdon on to the next step in the story. She is, by no means, the stereotypical female sidekick but an equal partner to Langdon's wit, intelligence, and guts.

Jacques Sauniere

Jacques Sauniere is the curator of the Louvre museum, as well as the grandfather of Sophie Neveu. Later in the book, Sophie reveals that Sauniere is the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, a secret society devoted to the protection of the secrets behind the Holy Grail.

Bezu Fache

Bezu Fache is the Captain of the Central Directorate Judicial Police, the French equivalent of the U.S.'s FBI. Fache is in charge of the investigation into Sauniere's murder. His staff calls him "le Taureau," which means "the bull" in French. He is named such because of his short, stocky build and his authoritative gait. After their escape from his grasp, Fache pursues Langdon and Neveu through Paris, Versailles, and to London.

Silas

Perhaps the most tragic character of the story, Silas is an albino monk and member of Opus Dei, a conservative Catholic organization known for its questionable beliefs and practices. After growing up in an abusive home and seeing his father murder his mother, Silas left home after killing his father. He grew up on the streets and became a petty criminal. After escaping prison during an earthquake he was taken in by Bishop Aringarosa and taught the way of Opus Dei. He is used as the homicidal henchman for the Teacher and the bishop's plot to steal the keystone and reveal the secrets of the Holy Grail. In the end, Silas is carelessly discarded by his employers and dies of gunshot wounds, alone in a garden.

Bishop Aringarosa

Bishop Aringarosa is president of Opus Dei. Under his administration the Vatican withdraws sanction of the Opus Dei organization due to its controversial and questionable tactics and beliefs. The richest of the Catholic organizations, Opus Dei wields great power, however, much less power without the blessing of the Vatican. Aringarosa is enraged by this development and vows revenge, which he gets when he is given the opportunity to help the Teacher retrieve and reveal the secrets of the Holy Grail.



Sir Leigh Teabing

In their greatest time of need, Langdon and Neveu end up at Sir Teabing's chateau near Versailles to ask for his help eluding the French authorities and opening the keystone. Teabing is the British Royal Historian and a famed Grail historian. He has followed his Holy Grail research all over the world in search for its location and secrets. Langdon knew him from a television special they had filmed a few years before. He is incredibly intelligent and dedicated to his work. He is also crippled from a bout with polio as a child. By the end of the book, it is also revealed that Teabing is the Teacher and is the ruthless mastermind behind the murderous search for the keystone and Holy Grail.



Objects/Places

Louvre Museum

The Louvre Museum in Paris, France is where Jacques Sauniere is murdered and the story begins. Several of Leonardo's paintings, including the Mona Lisa and the Madonna of the Rocks, which provide clues to Langdon and Neveu, are hanging in the Louvre.

The Keystone

The keystone is an encrypted cylinder that contains clues where to find the Holy Grail. Sophie and Langdon find the keystone - as a result of clues left behind by Sauniere - in a safety deposit box at The Depository Bank of Zurich. During the course of the story the keystone changes hands

The Depository Bank of Zurich

The Depository Bank of Zurich is where Jacques Sauniere and the Priory of Sion had hidden the keystone. It is an extremely secure and private bank known for its highest levels of service, security, and anonymity.

Chateau Villette

After leaving the Depository Bank of Zurich, with the French authorities hot on their heels, Langdon and Neveu flee to Sir Leigh Teabing's home, called Chateau Villette. At the Chateau, Teabing tells Sophie the full history of the Holy Grail. The chateau is a very large home surrounded by a large estate and located near Versailles.

The Temple Church

Once in London, Langdon, Neveu, and Teabing go to the Temple Church to look for clues to solve the riddle that opens the keystone. The church is an ancient, pagan church located near Fleet Street in London.

Westminster Abbey

The final clue to open the keystone takes Langdon and Neveu to Westminster Abbey in London, which houses the tomb of Sir Isaac Newton. The Abbey is also the location of the final showdown between Langdon, Neveu, and the Teacher.



Themes

Good Intentions Win Over Greed

The Da Vinci Code is written as a classic thriller in which, throughout the book, good and evil take turns having the upper hand. However, by the end of the book, the age-old truth is proven again, that good triumphs over evil. In this book, evil was more accurately described as greed.

Sir Teabing's misguided intentions to reveal the truth about the Holy Grail were a result of his greed for knowledge of the truth and power. He capitalized on Bishop Aringarosa's greed for power to lord over the Vatican.

Meanwhile, the intentions of Sophie Neveu and Robert Langdon were more pure. For Sophie, her greatest interest was in finding the truth about her family and discovering why her grandfather was murdered.

For Robert Langdon, his intentions started out being to help Sophie find why her grandfather was murdered. Once the Holy Grail and the keystone entered into the picture, Robert became motivated by discovering where the Holy Grail was located. The search for the Grail and the truth about whether Christ and Mary Magdalene were married was a pursuit of Langdon's for his entire academic career.

Because Sophie and Langdon's motives were pure, their quest triumphed over the quest for power motivated by greed. In the words of Sir Teabing, "You do not find the Grail, the Grail finds you."

The Search for Truth is Timeless

The question of whether Christ and Mary Magdalene were married is about as old as the Christian church. The search for the truth about this subject is timeless and has permeated lore for thousands of years. As the success of Dan Brown's book proves, it is still a great question. The millions of readers are interested in the quest for the truth on this subject as well as the characters in the book.

Robert Langdon and Sir Teabing, two of the main characters, have devoted their lives to the quest for the truth about the Holy Grail. Although their motives become very different, the two men have made the search for the Holy Grail a central point of their lives and careers.

Throughout the course of the book, the reader learns, through Langdon and Teabing, about the historic quest for truth throughout the ages. They discuss the Church's suppression of the truth and the formation of the Priory of Sion to protect the truth and quietly pass it down from generation to generation.



In the end, Langdon and Neveu's quest for the truth is rewarded when Langdon learns the location and truth about the Holy Grail, and Sophie learns the truth about her family and heritage. However, Teabing's and Aringarosa's quest goes unrequited.

Christianity vs. Paganism

A theme central to *The Da Vinci Code* is the similarities and differences and influences upon each other of Christianity and Paganism. Throughout the book, the author provides a history of the influences that paganism had on the early Christian church and how those influences have prevailed throughout history.

The book also discusses the power that paganism had over the early Christian church and the eventual power that the Christian church gained over paganism to force the suppression of many of the pagan practices, including goddess worship and nature worship.

For example, in the early days of the Christian church, in order to keep the peace between the growing Christian church and the deeply rooted pagan religions, Constantine incorporated some of the practices of paganism into Christianity. Sunday, for example, was the one day of the week dedicated to Sun worship. Sunday also became the day of worship for Christianity.

Paganism also encompassed goddess worship, which Jacques Sauniere practiced before his death. As a part of learning the truth about her grandfather and her heritage, Langdon teaches Sophie about many of the paganism, nature and goddess worship practices so that she can better understand her grandfather.

Power of the Roman Catholic Church

Another underlying theme throughout the book is the power of the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church on the worldwide stage. Through their research, Robert Langdon and Sir Teabing have learned, and discuss numerous times throughout the book, how the Church has suppressed the truth about Mary Magdalene. They discuss how the Church, throughout history, has suppressed the truth through edicts and even violence.

This theme is one that underlies the Teacher's motive for finding the Grail. He believes that the Church had pressured Sauniere and the leadership of the Priory of Sion to continue hiding the truth about Jesus and Mary Magdalene so he takes it upon himself to seek to unearth the Holy Grail himself.

The power of the church is proven when the Vatican leaders are able to pay the Bishop \$20 million in Vatican bonds to keep him quiet. The power and influence of Catholic organizations, such as Opus Dei, also showcase the power of the church.



Sacrifice

The Da Vinci Code opens with a dramatic personal sacrifice—Saunière's death to protect the secret of the Priory of Scion—but theme of sacrifice appears repeatedly throughout the novel. It does not always require a death, however; a sacrifice can be any type of loss, from loss of integrity or freedom to the loss of a physical item. A sacrifice entails the giving up of something in exchange for something else. It is a circumstance that does not allow for two competing needs to exist together. For example, Saunière makes the ultimate sacrifice—death—that hundreds in the Priory throughout history, according to Brown, have been willing to make. Likewise, Sister Sandrine Bieil sacrifices her life to warn the Priory when Silas attempts to unearth the keystone in the Church of Saint-Sulpice. Sophie's grandmother and brother, whom she had long thought dead, sacrifice their freedom—and time with their family—to go into hiding in order to protect her grandfather's identity. Leigh Teabing, the long-time scholar of the Sacred Feminine, sacrifices his integrity and conscience in exchange for the possibility of gain; he is willing to stop at nothing in order to procure the Holy Grail. But perhaps the greatest sacrifice in the novel is not made by one of the characters, but by, according to Teabing and Langdon, the Catholic Church. They believe that in order to keep the knowledge of Christ's earthly wife and child a secret, the Catholic Church, in essence, sacrificed Mary Magdalene. Teabing and Langdon's theory is that the Church designated her a prostitute to discredit any rumor of Christ's involvement with her, in fear that knowledge of a marriage with Mary would affect Christ's divine status.

Quest

At the heart of Brown's novel is the quest, not only as a long adventurous journey in search of something, but also as one of the most archetypal elements in literature, the pursuit of the Holy Grail. Several characters are on quests in the novel for different reasons. Silas looks for the keystone that will lead to the Holy Grail for his savior, Bishop Aringarosa. Detective Fache searches for the murderer of Saunière. Langdon explores the meaning behind Leonardo da Vinci's symbols to greater understand the subject to which he has devoted his studies. Sophie seeks answers to truths about her family. In the novel, these fictional pursuits merge with the quintessential quest for the Holy Grail, a tale represented in Christian tradition literally as the search for the goblet that Christ drank from during the Last Supper and that Joseph of Arimathea used to catch Christ's blood as he hung from the cross, and figuratively as the search for Christ within one's soul. The tale of the quest actually surfaced in the twelfth century as a poem by Chrétien de Troyes, and the legend took different forms as others rewrote it. The most famous of those to invoke the legend in their art are thirteenth-century German epic poet Wolfram von Eschenbach, fifteenth-century English writer Sir Thomas Malory, English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and composer Richard Wagner in the nineteenth century. Brown's novel changes the quest considerably in proposing that the Grail is not a chalice at all, but rather Mary Magdalene herself and the texts that tell the secret of her marriage to Jesus.



Christianity

Though *The Da Vinci Code* appears to implicate Catholic institutions in a conspiracy to wipe out alternative Christian histories, its suggestions that Jesus was not divine, that Mary Magdalene had children by him, that she, rather than the apostle Peter, was intended to be the first leader of Christianity, and that Constantine the Great suppressed all of this and assembled the Bible at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., all relate to Christians of any denomination. Of course, history, which the narrative declares is written by those who are victorious, does not support any of these suggestions. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John repeatedly refer to the divinity of Christ, and there is no evidence that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus. The major texts of Gnosticism—the belief in the *gnosis* (intuitive knowledge) of the human soul, surfaced in the second and third centuries, well after early Christians deemed the four gospels authoritative, though they are said in the novel to be suppressed by Constantine. Christianity, moreover, is portrayed in the novel as a patriarchal religion built on conspiracies authored by those who want to suppress information. The Christian characters in the novel delight in masochism and thirst for power. Nevertheless, Brown carefully phrases his page of facts to state simply that the Priory of Sion exists, that Opus Dei has built an elaborate and expansive headquarters in New York and has been the subject of controversy, and that descriptions of art, architecture, rituals, and documents are accurate. Most of the claims about an alternative Christian history, furthermore, are spoken authoritatively by the novel's villain, Leigh Teabing.



Style

Point of View

Dan Brown uses point of view brilliantly in *The Da Vinci Code* to increase suspense and keep the reader guessing what will happen next. Brown increases suspense by using third person point of view that is for the most part, not omniscient. So, the reader sees and knows only what the characters in that particular scene are experiencing and thinking.

For example, the identity of the Teacher is hinted at by the author but not revealed until Robert and Sophie discover his true identity. Also, regarding the reasons for Sauniere's murder, the reader learns along with the main characters rather than knowing in the beginning and then just observing the characters finding their way.

Setting

The Da Vinci Code takes place in modern day Paris, Versailles, London and Edinburgh, Scotland. The story starts out in the Louvre museum and along with the main characters, leads the reader to various locations throughout Paris. The author does a thorough job of describing the Louvre and its grounds as well as the streets around central Paris. The characters also visit locations such as a Paris train station and the Depository Bank of Zurich.

After leaving Paris, the story takes the reader to the Chateau Villette, which is a sprawling estate with a castle near Versailles on the French countryside. The main characters arrive there at night, so there is not much description of the area, other than it is wooded and more remote. After a short time at the chateau, the story moves to London.

In London, the story is set in various historic and religious sights, such as the Temple Church on Fleet Street and Westminster Abbey. Langdon and Neveu also visit the King's College campus and its library.

From London, the main characters, Langdon and Neveu, visit Edinburgh Scotland and the Rosslyn Chapel there.

Language and Meaning

Because *The Da Vinci Code* is targeted toward the widest range of readership, the language follows the action, suspense, and thrill of the story in that it is fast paced and full of dialogue among the characters. Brown's writing style is conversational and easy



to read. However, there are instances where the author uses some French but it is basic enough for most readers to understand.

Brown uses quite a bit of symbolism in the story, however, most of it relates to the religious symbolism and artwork that provide the clues to solve the murder of Saunière and the location of the Holy Grail.

Structure

The Da Vinci Code is divided into 105 chapters with a Prologue and an Epilogue. The structure of the book is such that, just about every time there is a scene change or the point of view changes, a new chapter begins.

Fact in Fiction

The Da Vinci Code is striking in the way the fictional plot is woven into several other intriguing historical plots. References to actual historical figures such as Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Constantine the Great, and Leonardo da Vinci have prompted scholars to write articles and books responding to claims about them made by the fictional Saunière, Langdon, and Teabing. References to existing locations such as the Louvre and Rosslyn Chapel have generated so much interest that tour guides developed the "Da Vinci Code Walking Tour" in Paris and the number of tourists to Rosslyn Chapel doubled in the few years following the novel's publication. Further, references to real organizations such as Opus Dei and the Vatican have inspired many readers to question Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular.

Though the novel follows its fictional characters during the course of only a few days, the search for the answers to symbols, clues, and riddles Saunière leaves behind is related to the search for answers to mysteries in the Bible as well as the history of the quest for the Holy Grail. It also invokes the history of the Council of Nicaea and its role in shaping Christianity, the history of the Priory of Sion, and speculation about Leonardo da Vinci's artwork. Though the narrative raises several questions about history, the fictional plot in *The Da Vinci Code* ends with most of its questions answered and its conflicts resolved.

Suspense

Any description of this novel would not be complete without mentioning suspense, or the literary technique of creating excitement, apprehension, and expectation. The final sentences of the Prologue give nothing away as they describe how Saunière sets the scene that will preoccupy characters during the first half of the novel: "Wincing in pain, he summoned all of his faculties and strength. The desperate task before him, he knew, would require every remaining second of his life." When a clue is left on the glass



covering the *Mona Lisa*, the last sentence of the chapter indicates only that "six words glowed in purple, scrawled directly across the *Mona Lisa's* face," and the narrative shifts to another scene in the following chapter before showing readers what those words are. Curious omissions, changing interpretations of symbols and riddles, and plot twists in the narrative drive the reader to seek further for more complete descriptions and definitive interpretations, and to rush to the end of the novel.

Mystery

The major appeal of Brown's novel is its construction of profound mysteries, both fictional and historical. It deploys one of the most conventional elements of the classic mystery genre only to dismiss it immediately: the novel begins with a murder, but reveals the identity of the murderer in the second chapter. The central mysteries in the novel are the reasons behind Saunière's murder and the possible organizations involved, the meaning of various clues and riddles he leaves behind, and the truth about Sophie's family. Equally important is the novel's introduction to real historical mysteries. What role did Mary Magdalene play in Jesus' life? What was the real role of Constantine in shaping Christianity's future? How credible are the Gnostic gospels? What is the history of the Priory of Sion and who were its members? Was Leonardo da Vinci trying to communicate hidden messages in his paintings? What is the meaning of the number of Divine Proportion? Because the answers to these historical questions depend on historical evidence, or texts written by those who were victorious, the book plays upon the plausible idea that what is called history may be an artificial construction of true events. While the fictional mysteries in the novel entertain readers, the historical mysteries it interprets made it an international phenomenon.



Historical Context

Though there is no explicit reference to the year in which it takes place, *The Da Vinci Code* is set in a time contemporaneous with its publication in 2003. The narrative refers to several recent events, from the construction of the New York headquarters of Opus Dei in 2000 to the scandalous public indictment of Opus Dei member and FBI spy Robert Hanssen in April of 2001. Brown's contentious portrayal of Opus Dei appeared as the organization struggled to redeem its reputation after being accused by former members of using cultish techniques. The novel's suggestion that widely accepted histories are simply works constructed by those in power has motivated historians to critique its liberal interpretations of the past. Its equally strong claims about an alternative history of Christianity have provoked many biblical scholars to counter in a growing number of books written explicitly to discredit the novel. Its portrayal of religious fanaticism plays into readers' fears of spiritual politics, especially in the wake of recent terrorist acts committed by religious fundamentalists. In depicting Mary Magdalene as one of the most important early Christian leaders, the novel also brings out the debate about the role of women in Christianity, a highly charged issue as the Catholic Church elected a new Pope after the death of John Paul II in 2005, the Church's leader for almost a quarter century. The novel's female critic of the Church, Sister Sandrine, feels that "most of the Catholic Church was gradually moving in the right direction with respect to women's rights," but objects to Opus Dei, which "threatened to reverse the progress." Feminist scholars praised the novel's assertions that Mary Magdalene played a more important role than the official Bible indicates, and that femininity has been suppressed by Christian leaders throughout history.

While the novel is obviously fiction as a thriller that follows its protagonists through some extremely narrow escapes and ends with complete resolution, it does make interpretations of two historical events worth mentioning here: the origin of the Priory of Sion in the eleventh century, and the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

As a secret society, the Priory of Sion is shrouded in mystery. On the first page of the novel, unambiguously titled "Fact," Brown claims it is a "European secret society founded in 1099," and writes that in 1975, documents were found that identify figures from Sir Isaac Newton to Leonardo da Vinci as Priory members. Scholars have pointed out that Brown takes this claim from another international bestseller titled *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982) by Henry Lincoln, Richard Leigh, and Michael Baigent. Brown uses the last names of the two latter authors as straightforward and anagrammatic sources for his fictional historian, Leigh Teabing. Their book refers to the true story of a priest appointed in 1885 named Bèrenger Saunière, who mysteriously acquires great wealth in a short period of time, and eventually purchases a lavish estate. Though the story of Bèrenger Saunière is widely accepted as fact, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* assumes that Saunière's wealth is a direct result of his finding secret papers that prove the existence of Jesus' and Mary Magdalene's lineage. It also suggests that the real Saunière is a member of the Priory, which has existed since the eleventh century. But these myths were perpetuated by his housekeeper, Marie Dénarnaud, and the next owner of his estate, Noël Corbu, who turned the estate into a



resort to maximize public interest, thus increasing his profit. When the eccentric Parisian Pierre Plantard heard of the story in the mid-twentieth century, he created a series of documents including false genealogical records that suggested his relation to the Merovingian line. With the help of his friend Phillipe de Chérisey, Plantard crafted fake parchments containing coded messages, all of which were introduced under pseudonyms into the Bibliothèque Nationale in the 1960s. But these "dossiers secrets" were exposed as forgeries, and historians agree that there is no proof that the Priory has existed since the eleventh century. A French journalist uncovered the hoax in the 1980s, and a BBC documentary titled "The History of a Mystery" reiterated its falsity in 1996.

Brown's historian, Leigh Teabing, brings out the second relevant historical event when he discusses the Council of Nicaea, a gathering called by Roman Emperor Constantine the Great to unite the government with the Catholic Church. During this meeting, the Bible was officially canonized and Jesus' divinity was made concrete. Teabing argues that Constantine the Great "collated" the Bible and suppressed the Gnostic gospels, and that Jesus' divinity was debated and eventually accepted by a "relatively close vote." While making these controversial claims, he asserts that "everything you need to know about the Bible can be summed up by the great canon doctor Martyn Percy." Percy, a British theologian and the only living scholar Brown quotes, has responded to this reference in Brown's novel by discrediting the idea that Constantine could have divinized Jesus. Most of what Teabing says about Constantine comes from the same book of speculations Brown uses as evidence of Priory history, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Religious scholars point out that the council was called to address the "Arian heresy," or the unconventional belief that Jesus was not divine, that the gospels were considered authoritative as early as the first century A.D. Most historians, moreover, note that the "relatively close vote" to which Teabing refers was actually not close at all, and that Jesus' divinity was widely accepted among the early Christians. In fact, many scholars have invalidated the claims the novel makes about Christian history. Brown's theories are most convincing to those who see history as a conspiracy, not as a factual account of the past.



Critical Overview

The Da Vinci Code debuted at number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and generated high praise from many critics for its entertainment value. Reviewing the novel for the *New York Times*, Janet Maslin declares, "In this gleefully erudite suspense novel, Mr. Brown takes the format he has been developing through three earlier novels and fine-tunes it to blockbuster proportion." On the other side of the Atlantic—and indeed, on the other side of the critical spectrum—Peter Millar writes in his review for the *Times* (London) that the novel "is without doubt, the silliest, most inaccurate, ill-informed, stereotype-driven, cloth-eared, cardboard-cutout-populated piece of pulp fiction that I have read." Whatever the reaction, reviewers most often took polarized views of the book initially. Whatever the reason, sales of the novel increased exponentially. As of 2005, the novel had been listed in the *New York Times* bestseller list for ninety-six weeks, even though it had not yet been released in paperback. Over twenty-five million copies had been purchased in the two years following its publication to generate more than \$210 million in sales. Its world-wide success and controversial claims were deemed so dangerous that Lebanese religious leaders had it banned from the country, and Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone urged Catholics to boycott it.

The year after it was published, some critics began analyzing the reasons behind its success. Writing for the *New Statesman*, Jason Cowley notes that the novel brings out "many of the most urgent political themes of our time—religious extremism, the idea that history itself is a vast conspiracy, the power of secret networks and societies over our lives, the global reach of the internet, the omnipresence of satellite surveillance and other new technologies." More specifically, Cowley argues that "In the aftermath of the events of September 2001 and the invasion of Iraq, in a world where a mysterious and opaque global network of religious terrorists called al-Queda threatens the west as well as, it is believed, communicating via encoded messages," the novel "carries a powerful political charge."

Capitalizing on the novel's widespread success, networks produced a number of programs exploring its subjects. ABC sent reporter Elizabeth Vargas on an international journey to interview scholars about the novel's claims. The special, titled "Jesus, Mary and Da Vinci," aired in the fall of 2003. "*Da Vinci Code: The Full Story*," another program to explore the novel's issues, aired on the National Geographic Channel, attracted more viewers than the channel had for any other program in its history. As a summary of Christian scholars' critiques of the novel, PAX aired "Breaking *The Da Vinci Code*" in early May of 2005, taking its title from Darrel Bock's critical book. The History Channel produced a two-hour special titled "Beyond *The Da Vinci Code*," which aired in late May of 2005.

Many religious scholars published critical books of their own, taking issue with Brown's sensational assertions, voiced in interviews, that he believes in his novel's theories; they also took exception to the novel's astounding market success. Among those to debunk the novel are Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel in *The Da Vinci Hoax: Exposing the Errors in "The Da Vinci Code"* (2004). The Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Francis



George, speaking in *Ignatius Books*, calls *The Da Vinci Hoax: Exposing the Errors in "The Da Vinci Code"* "the definitive debunking" of *The Da Vinci Code*. In a pamphlet for *Our Sunday Visitor*, Amy Welbourn excerpts from her book, *De-Coding Da Vinci: The Facts Behind the Fiction of "The Da Vinci Code"* (2004). In it, she calls *The Da Vinci Code* "logically and historically flawed," and cites that Brown holds "no advanced degrees in religion." Other scholars and critics take more objective historical perspectives, with an aim of providing historical information that is sometimes at odds with the facts in Brown's novel. These books include Simon Cox's *Cracking the "Da Vinci Code": The Unauthorized Guide to the Facts behind Dan Brown's Bestselling Novel*, and Sharan Newman's *The Real History Behind the "Da Vinci Code"* (2005).

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2



Critical Essay #1

Dr. Helal has taught courses on writing and English literature for several years, and has presented and published many papers and articles on women's writing. In this essay, Helal analyzes the curious discrepancy between the feminist message of the novel's theories about Christian history and the misogynist portrayal of its heroine, Sophie Neveu.

Mary Magdalene is arguably the true hero of *The Da Vinci Code*. She is the Holy Grail, the secret kept by the Priory of Sion, the figure to whom the main character bows in reverence in the final chapter, the "woman's voice ... the wisdom of the ages ... whispering up from the chasms of the earth" in the final sentence. Indeed, the success of *The Da Vinci Code* in seducing readers to believe her role is more central in Christianity than it seems is due in part to Brown's reverence for this forgotten female figure. Leigh Teabing interprets the Christian misrepresentation of Mary Magdalene as a conspiracy to suppress her importance: "That unfortunate misconception is the legacy of a smear campaign launched by the early Church. The Church needed to defame Mary Magdalene in order to cover up her dangerous secret—her role as the Holy Grail." Indeed, since Pope Gregory delivered a series of sermons in 591 that simplified her identity as a sinner in contrast to the other famous Mary, revered as Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene has been depicted as a prostitute. Though historians generally do not "ascribe malicious intent to Gregory ... who most likely wanted to use the story to assure converts that their sins would be forgiven," as Heidi Schlumpf argues in *U.S. Catholic*, Mary Magdalene's reputation has been tarnished for centuries. The Vatican did vindicate her in 1969, and many biblical scholars such as Jane Schaberg and Susan Haskins have reconstructed her image. Schlumpf hopes that "with the prostitute baggage properly disposed of, Mary of Magdala can emerge as a model of a faithful, devoted follower of the Lord, as well as a strong, independent leader in the early Church."

For many, the appeal of *The Da Vinci Code* is its seemingly feminist celebration of Mary Magdalene as one of the most heroic figures in Christian history. Surely the fictional heroine of Brown's novel is just as honorable. The attractive and accomplished Sophie Neveu is a cryptologist for the Central Directorate Judicial Police in Paris; however, though she initially appears as an assertive and intelligent character, Neveu regresses as the novel progresses. Any feminist message is further undermined when Brown presents his revision of Mary Magdalene's story by staging a conversation between two male teachers and a female student that replicates the very patriarchal system he seems to critique. Though the novel overtly engages Christian history to critique it from a feminist perspective, Sophie Neveu functions disturbingly as the passive vessel into which Leigh Teabing and Robert Langdon pour their theories about the lost sacred feminine.

Neveu, who is oddly called "Sophie" throughout a narrative that refers only to the surnames of the male characters, first appears as a "young Parisian *déchiffreuse*," or one who decodes complex messages. She has "studied cryptology in England at the



Royal Holloway," an actual school internationally acclaimed for its academic research of cryptography—the science of enciphering and deciphering messages in secret code. She is defiant, fearless, and, of course, beautiful, to the dismay of her enemy Bazu Fache:

At thirty-two years old, she had a dogged determination that bordered on obstinate. Her eager espousal of Britain's new cryptologic methodology continually exasperated the veteran French cryptographers above her. And by far the most troubling to Fache was the inescapable universal truth that in an office of middle-aged men, an attractive young woman always drew eyes away from the work at hand.

Framing the heroine as a sort of rival to the misogynist Fache is one strategy Brown uses to present her favorably. He continues by shifting from Fache's perspective to Langdon's, emphasizing the contrast in the way she is seen differently by each male character:

Langdon turned to see a young woman approaching. She was moving down the corridor toward them with long, fluid strides ... a haunting certainty to her gait. Dressed casually in a knee-length, cream-colored Irish sweater over black leggings, she was attractive and looked to be about thirty. Her thick burgundy hair fell unstyled to her shoulders, framing the warmth of her face. Unlike the waifish, cookie-cutter blondes that adorned Harvard dorm room walls, this woman was healthy with an unembellished beauty and genuineness that radiated a striking personal confidence.

If Fache's description of Neveu is meant to reveal more about his insecurity than her character, Langdon's description functions as the more definitive one. Yet, it is as remarkable that one's hair could be associated with the term "burgundy" as that her "unembellished beauty and genuineness" could be immediately perceived by a perfect stranger. Nevertheless, initially Neveu is meant to be a highly intelligent and benevolent character. When she helps Langdon escape the museum with a clever plan that fools Detective Fache and his entire team, Langdon concludes: "Sophie Neveu was clearly a hell of a lot smarter than he was." Brown's portrayal of her seems at first to be consistent with the feminist message of the alternative Christian history he will develop.

As the novel continues, however, Neveu seems inexplicably to lose her faculties. It is the symbologist, Langdon, who first interprets the cipher Saunière leaves, and when he declares that "It's the simplest kind of code!" Neveu "was stopped on the stairs below him, staring up in confusion. *A code?* She had been pondering the words all night and had not seen a code. Especially a simple one." Brown justifies her ignorance by declaring that her intelligence causes her to seek complexity. But even the narrative seems to reveal this interpretation as ridiculous:

Her shock over the anagram was matched only by her embarrassment at not having deciphered the message herself. Sophie's expertise in complex cryptanalysis had caused her to overlook simplistic word games, and yet she knew she should have seen it. After all, she was no stranger to anagrams—especially in English.



Neveu's inability to decode the simple anagram is followed by a narrative flashback in which she is a six-year-old girl, her "tiny hand" in her grandfather's as he leads her through the Louvre. As her memories of herself as a girl continue intermittently in the narrative, her adult self seems to regress into childhood. When Neveu learns about the Holy Grail from Langdon and Teabing, she is depicted as an innocent child:

Langdon sighed. 'I was hoping you would be kind enough to explain to Ms. Neveu the true nature of the Holy Grail.'

Teabing looked stunned. 'She doesn't *know*?'

Langdon shook his head.

The smile that grew on Teabing's face was almost obscene. 'Robert, you've brought me a *virgin*?... You are a Grail virgin, my dear. And trust me, you will never forget your first time.'

Of course, as Langdon relates, anyone unfamiliar with the Grail legend is traditionally called a virgin by those familiar with the story. But the repeated characterization of Neveu as virgin and the pleasure Teabing takes in flaunting his knowledge and superior position seems extremely odd because he will tell her that women have been subordinated in Christian history. Teabing's message is feminist; his demeanor is quite the opposite.

In fact, the entire section of Brown's novel that delves into the alternative Christian history that celebrates femininity has Langdon and Teabing lecturing a wide-eyed, ignorant Neveu. The feminist claims that Mary Magdalene was meant to be the first priest and that Christian leaders have demonized femininity contrast with the antifeminist portrayal of Neveu's character. The association of Sophie Neveu's name with wisdom does very little to counter terms used to describe her as she learns that the Holy Grail is a woman and can only stare in awe and ask simple questions. As Teabing declares that the Council of Nicaea established Jesus' divinity in 325 by a "relatively close vote," "Sophie's head was spinning.... Sophie glanced at Langdon, and he gave her a soft nod of concurrence." Strangely, it takes a long time for this accomplished cryptologist to grasp fully what Teabing and Langdon suggest: "*The Holy Grail is a woman*, Sophie thought, her mind a collage of interrelated ideas that seemed to make no sense." When she is told that the female Holy Grail appears in Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, she "was certain she had missed something" in looking for her in the painting, and "turned to Langdon for help. 'I'm lost.'"

As Langdon and Teabing race through their revisionist theories, Neveu always remains one step behind them. The divergence between Teabing's message and Brown's portrayal of Neveu having a hard time following him is striking:

'Peter expresses his discontent over playing second fiddle to a woman. I daresay Peter was something of a sexist.'



Sophie was trying to keep up. 'This is *Saint Peter*. The rock on which Jesus built his Church.'

'The same, except for one catch. According to these unaltered gospels, it was not *Peter* to whom Christ gave directions with which to establish the Christian Church. It was *Mary Magdalene*.'

Sophie looked at him. "You're saying the Christian Church was to be carried on by a *woman*?"

During this exchange, the feminist message of this alternative version of Christianity is given to and interpreted for the bewildered, "surprised," incredulous Neveu, who glances back to Langdon for his reassuring nods as Teabing relates the controversial claims. Teabing eventually addresses her as "my dear child," as he answers her questions, and his "words seemed to echo across the ballroom and back before they fully registered in Sophie's mind." The ideas that seem incredulous to Neveu are markedly simple. When she is told that "history is always written by the winners.... By its very nature, history is always a one-sided account," Brown writes, "Sophie had never thought of it that way." That an educated cryptologist would not have deduced that history could be manipulated seems quite astonishing, to say the least.

Ultimately, while the novel attempts to proclaim the feminist secret at the heart of the "greatest cover-up in human history," it conceals its own subordination of femininity in a narrative that moves so quickly readers hardly pause to actually consider what it suggests about its female characters in particular, and femininity in general.

Source: Kathleen Helal, Critical Essay on *The Da Vinci Code*, in *Literary Newsmakers for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Lacy questions the validity of Brown's research in The Da Vinci Code, and whether or not accuracy is important in a work of fiction such as this.

Source: Norris J Lacy, "The Da Vinci Code: Dan Brown and The Grail That Never Was," in *Arthuriana*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2004, pp. 81-89.



Quotes

"He was trapped inside the Grand Gallery, and there existed only one person on earth to whom he could pass the torch. Sauniere gazed up at the walls of his opulent prison. A collection of the world's most famous paintings seemed to smile down on him like old friends. Wincing in pain, he summoned all of his faculties and strength. The desperate task before him, he knew, would require every remaining second of his life." Prologue, pg. 5

"We fear what we do not understand, Aringarosa thought, wondering if these critics had any idea how many lives Opus Dei had enriched. The group enjoyed the full endorsement and blessing of the Vatican. Opus Dei is a personal prelature of the Pope himself. Recently, however, opus Dei had found itself threatened by a force infinitely more powerful than the media—an unexpected foe from which Aringarosa could not possibly hide. Five months ago, the kaleidoscope of power had been shaken, and Aringarosa was still reeling from the blow." Chapter 5, pg. 30

"Langdon turned to see a young woman approaching. She was moving down the corridor toward them with long, fluid strides—a haunting certainty to her gait. Dressed casually in knee-length, cream-colored Irish sweater over black leggings, she was attractive and looked to be about thirty. Her thick burgundy hair fell unstyled to her shoulders, framing the warmth of her face. Unlike the waifish, cookie-cutter blondes that adorned the Harvard dorm room walls, this woman was healthy with an unembellished beauty and genuineness that radiated a striking personal confidence." Chapter 9, pg. 50

"His name was not Silas then, although he didn't recall the name his parents had given him. He had left home when he was seven. His drunken father, a burly dockworker, enraged by the arrival of an albino son, beat his mother regularly, blaming her for the boy's embarrassing condition. When the boy tried to defend her, he too was badly beaten." Chapter 10, pg. 55

"'Whatever my grandfather was trying to tell me, I don't think he wanted anyone else to hear it. Not even the police.' Clearly, her grandfather had done everything in his power to send a confidential transmission directly to her." Chapter 21, pg. 102

"If all went as planned tonight in Paris, Aringarosa would soon be in possession of something that would make him the most powerful man in Christendom." Chapter 22, pg. 107

"They call themselves the Priore de Sion - the Priory of Sion. They're based here in France and attract powerful members from all over Europe. In fact, they are one of the oldest surviving secret societies on earth—the Priory's membership has included some of history's most cultured individuals: men like Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton Victor Hugo.' He paused, his voice brimming now with academic zeal. 'And, Leonardo da Vinci.'" Chapter 23, pg. 113



"During their years in Jerusalem, the Priory learned of a stash of hidden documents buried beneath the ruins of Herod's temple, which had been built atop the earlier ruins of Solomon's Temple. These documents, they believed, corroborated Godefroi's powerful secret and were so explosive in nature that the Church would stop a nothing to get them." Chapter 37, pg. 158

"Langdon grinned again. 'The Holy Grail is arguably the most sought-after treasure in human history. The Grail has spawned legends, wars, and lifelong quests.'" Chapter 38, pg. 164

"Leonardo knew where the Grail resided during his lifetime. That hiding place had probably not changed to this day. For this reason, Grail enthusiasts still pored over Da Vinci's art and diaries in hopes of unearthing a hidden clue as to the Grail's current location." Chapter 40, pg. 169

"The bishop had seemed hopeful for the first time. 'Silas,' he whispered, 'God has bestowed upon us an opportunity to protect *The Way*. Our battle, like all battles, will take sacrifice. Will you be a soldier of God?'" Chapter 46, pg. 195

"Vinegar and papyrus, Sophie thought. If someone attempted to force open the cryptex, the glass vial would break, and the vinegar would quickly dissolve the papyrus. By the time anyone extracted the secret message, it would be a glob of meaningless pulp." Chapter 47, pg. 201

"Langdon was starting to feel the ponderous weight of responsibility, the prospect that he and Sophie might actually be holding an encrypted set of directions to one of the most enduring mysteries of all time." Chapter 50, pg. 214

"By confusing pagan symbols, dates, and rituals into the growing Christian tradition, he created a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties." Chapter 55, pg. 232

"When Grail legend speaks of 'the chalice that held the blood of Christ'□it speaks, in fact of Mary Magdalene - the female womb that carried Jesus' royal bloodline." Chapter 58, pg. 249

"When the Church outlawed speaking of the shunned Mary Magdalene, her story and importance had to be passed on through more discreet channels□channels that supported the metaphor and symbolism." Chapter 61, pg. 261

"And believe me, if the Church finds the Holy Grail, they will destroy it. The documents and the relics of the blessed Mary Magdalene as well." Chapter 62, pg. 268

"My dear, imagine that you are suddenly holding a map that reveals the location of the Holy Grail. In that moment, you will be in possession of a truth capable of altering history forever. You will be the keeper of a truth that man has sought for centuries. You will be faced with the responsibility of revealing that truth to the world. The individual



who does so will be revered by many and despised by many. The question is whether you will have the necessary strength to carry out that task." Chapter 69, pg. 294

"To quote your words, 'You do not find the Grail, the Grail finds you.' I am going to trust that the Grail has found me for a reason, and when the time comes, I will know what to do." Chapter 69, pg. 295

"For centuries, men like Da Vinci, Botticelli, and Newton risked everything to protect the documents and carry out that charge. And now, at the ultimate moment of truth, Jacques Sauniere changed his mind." Chapter 99, pg. 407

"I can only imagine the terror the Church wielded over your grandfather these past years, threatening to kill you if he dared release the Sangreal secret, threatening to finish the job they started unless Sauniere influenced the Priory to reconsider its ancient vow." Chapter 99, pg. 408

"And so Langdon had remained, standing beside Sophie and listening in mute astonishment while Marie told the story of Sophie's late parents. Incredibly, both had been from Merovingian families - direct descendants of Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ." Chapter 105, pg. 442

"I am sorry that after all your hard work, you will be leaving Rosslyn without any real answers. And yet, something tells me you will eventually find what you seek. One day it will dawn on you." Chapter 105, pg. 447

"The quest for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one. With a sudden upwelling of reverence, Robert Langdon fell to his knees. For a moment, he thought he heard a woman's voice—the wisdom of the ages—whispering up from the chasms of the earth." Epilogue, pg. 454

Adaptations

- *The Da Vinci Code* was released in 2003 as an unabridged version on audiocassette and audio CD. It is narrated by Paul Michael and is available from Random House Audio.
- The film version of *The Da Vinci Code* stars Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, Audrey Tatou as Sophie Neveu, and Ian McKellen as Leigh Teabing. It is directed by Ron Howard, produced by Columbia Pictures, and is set for release in 2006.
- The official website written and updated by Dan Brown himself, www.danbrown.com, is an interesting and interactive website, but it is also primarily geared toward promoting sales of his novels.
- *ABC News Presents: Jesus, Mary and Da Vinci* is an hour-long documentary hosted by Elizabeth Vargas, produced by Koch Vision, 2004. Vargas interviews Dan Brown himself, as well as Karen King and Elaine Pagels, both Gnostic Gospel scholars, and Richard McBrien and Darrell Bock, both Christian scholars. It presents competing views of the novel's controversial claims about Christian history, and is available on DVD from Koch Vision Studios.
- *Breaking the "Da Vinci Code"* is an hour-long documentary featuring authors of books disproving the theories put forth in the novel, including Darrell Bock. It is produced by Grizzly Adams Family, 2005, and is available on DVD.
- *Cracking the "Da Vinci Code"* is a documentary that runs an hour and a half and was produced by Ardustry Home Entertainment in 2004. Host and author Simon Cox defends the legend of the Holy Grail. It is available on DVD from Ardustry Home Entertainment.
- *"Da Vinci Code" Decoded* is a three-hour documentary introduced by Dan Brown, produced by The Disinformation Company, 2004. It features interviews with the authors of books Brown used when researching for his novel and is available on DVD.
- *Exploring the "Da Vinci Code"* is a video tour of the famous locations to which the novel refers, hosted by Henry Lincoln, one of the authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, and released in 2005 by The Disinformation Company. It is available on DVD.

What Do I Read Next?

- *Digital Fortress* (1998), Dan Brown's first novel, explores the secret world of the National Security Agency. The title refers to an unbreakable code that former programmer Ensei Tankado uses to paralyze TRNSLTR, a computer used to monitor private terrorist communications.
- Professor Robert Langdon makes his first appearance in Dan Brown's second novel, *Angels and Demons* (2000). Already a famous symbologist, Langdon is recruited to interpret a symbol that has been branded on a murdered scientist. As the novel progresses, he is called to interpret further murder scenes and comes to discover the symbols that connect them are all related to a group known as the Illuminati, an ancient secret society formed in opposition against the Catholic Church.
- Brown's third novel, *Deception Point* (2001), is a political thriller that begins with the NASA discovery of an object in the Arctic that would solidify the status of the space agency. Intelligence analyst Rachel Sexton is sent to verify its authenticity, but when she finds the discovery has been staged, she and her academic colleague Michael Tolland are hunted by assassins before they can notify the president of the United States of their find. The book follows them as they work to learn the truth behind the scientific deception.
- *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1983), by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, is the bestseller from which Brown draws many of his theories. The book combines history and speculation about the Knights Templar and the Priory of Sion.
- Margaret Starbird examines the evidence of the idea that Mary Magdalene played a central role in Jesus' ministry in *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail* (1993). Most strikingly, Starbird argues that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus and that the Holy Grail is the secret of their relationship.
- In *The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ* (1998), Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince present their view of what secret societies such as the Freemasons, the Cathars, and the Knights Templar believed about the roles of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and John the Baptist.
- In *The Gnostic Gospels* (1989), Elaine Pagels imagines what Christianity would be like if the Gnostic texts were included in the Bible. Her book is considered one of the most accessible guides to the philosophies of Gnosticism and its implications for Christianity.
- Marvin Meyer, Professor of Bible and Christian Studies, summarizes the history of Mary Magdalene's changing reputation and explores his theory that she had an intimate relationship with Jesus in *The Gospels of Mary: The Secret Tradition of Mary Magdalene, the Companion of Jesus* (2004).
- *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus* (2005), compiled and translated by Marvin Meyer, is a complete collection of the Nag Hammadi library, the set of ancient papyrus manuscripts found in the 1940s. These fragments include many of the Gnostic

texts to which Brown's novel refers, from the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary to the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Truth.



Topics for Discussion

Discuss your theories on why the subjects of the Holy Grail and Mary Magdalene are still relevant even today.

Discuss the effects that the different settings (i.e., the Louvre, Westminster Abbey) had on the story. Has this book awakened an interest in visiting these places?

Discuss the motivations of the book's villains. Discuss whether there is any validity to their interests/causes.

Discuss the relationship between Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu. How did they complement one another?

The Da Vinci Code has garnered much interest, both of praise and disdain. Discuss whether the book deserves such great interest and influence.

Many feel that the author did an effective job weaving fiction within truth. Discuss what aspects of the story you feel to be true and what is fiction?

Discuss your opinion of Sir Teabing. Is he a tragic or sympathetic character?

If you had to decide whether or not to reveal the secrets of the Holy Grail, what would you decide and what would be involved in making your decision?

Has this book and the author's descriptions of Da Vinci's artwork increased your interest in Da Vinci and his works such as *The Last Supper*?

Has this book affected your views on religion and the Catholic church? How so?

- With a partner, research the claims made in the novel about Leonardo da Vinci's paintings *Madonna of the Rocks* and *The Last Supper*. Prepare presentations that present different interpretations of the paintings, using evidence from your research.
- Leigh Teabing makes a number of declarations regarding the Council of Nicaea in 325. After conducting historical research on that event, stage a reenactment with other classmates of a debate that is likely to have taken place there. Conclude with your views on the authenticity of Teabing's statements.
- Though the first word in the novel is "Fact," Brown carefully words the claims he makes in the narrative. Using his statements on the first page, compose a list that indicates only what Brown claims is true in the novel, especially "descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals." Conduct research on one of those elements, such as *The Last Supper* or Rosslyn Chapel, to measure his accuracy. Prepare a presentation that lists each claim, followed by what you found in your research.
- Research one of the figures named in *Les Dossiers Secrets*. What information can you find to suggest that the person you choose was a member of the Priory

of Sion? What symbols and codes are left behind to show a connection to the secret society? Write a brief biography of that person, detailing what you found in your research.



Further Study

Bock, Darrell L., *Breaking the "Da Vinci Code": Answers to the Questions Everybody's Asking*, Nelson Books, 2004.

This guide focuses on the three centuries following the birth of Christ to examine the suggestions the novel makes about early Christian history. It largely discredits the theories Brown puts forth in the novel.

Burstein, Dan, *Secrets of the Code: The Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries Behind "The Da Vinci Code,"* CDS Books, 2004.

In a study almost as long as the novel itself, Burstein collects interviews and essays from historians, scientists, archeologists, and theologians, some of whom have contrasting views about the questions the novel raises. This is considered one of the most comprehensive guides to the topics the novel engages, such as what is known about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the Gnostic gospels, and secret societies.

Ehrman, Bart D, *Truth and Fiction in the "Da Vinci Code": A Historian Reveals What We Really Know about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

A Professor of Religious Studies, Bart Ehrman uses the novel not only to explore Christian history, but also to show what a religious historian does to uncover the truth about the past. Rather than attempting to invalidate the theories of the novel or delving into theological issues, Ehrman cites inaccuracies in the fiction to show how historians interpret topics such as the significance of the Gnostic gospels, the role Constantine played in shaping Christianity, and the relation between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

Morris, David, *The Art and Mythology of "The Da Vinci Code,"* Lamar Publishing, 2004.

Morris presents the artistic complement to Brown's novel in this comprehensive collection of photographs and illustrations of art and locations to which the novel refers, from da Vinci's paintings to the mythological images mentioned in the narrative. Each image is presented in the order in which it appears in the novel.

Welborn, Amy, *De-Coding Da Vinci: The Facts Behind the Fiction of "The Da Vinci Code,"* Our Sunday Visitor, 2004.

Though it is not the most comprehensive guide, Welborn's rebuttal of Brown's novel is extremely easy to read and concise. She systematically refutes many of the sensational claims Brown's characters make about Christian history from a Catholic point of view.



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The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently



studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“Night.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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