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The Da Vinci Code

THE BOOK

Author	Dan Brown
Publisher	Doubleday
Published	2003
Format	Hardcover, 9.4" x 6.6"
Pages	454
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> *...AN EXCELLENT THRILLER ...Dan Brown uses each of these characters to poke fun at their own culture and bring realism to the international scenarios necessary when dealing with secret societies, religious conspiracies, and the quest for what might be the ultimate mysteries of Christianity. The character who ties everything together and brings the proper sense of humanity and morality to the story, though, is Sophie Neveu. Dealing with the death of her beloved grandfather, coming to understand more of her past, and being the possessor of information that could change history and religion, she strikes the right tone of strength and vulnerability to make everything else in this novel believable...*

The Da Vinci Code *by* Dan Brown, Hardcover, 9.4" x 6.6".
Doubleday, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. . Publication Date March 2003. 454 pages, Category: Thrillers; Fiction, ISBN 10: 0-385-50420-9. ISBN 13: 978-0-385-50420-1. Price $24.95

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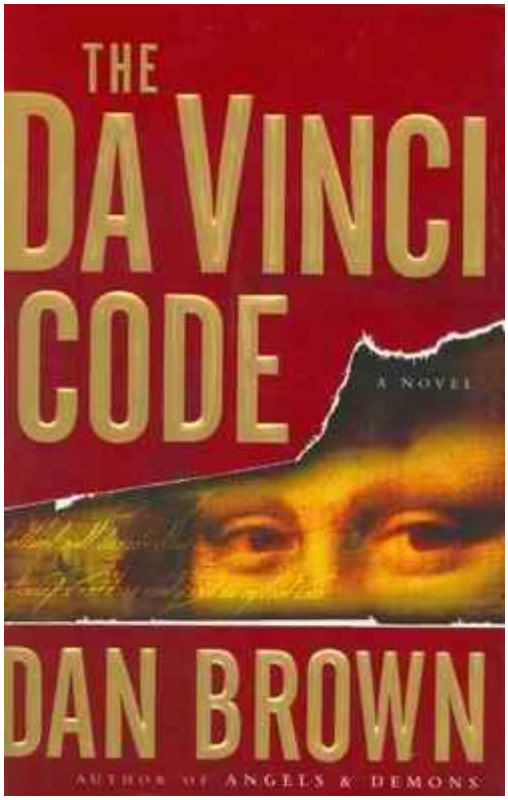

Robert Langdon (first introduced in *Angels and Demons*) is a Harvard Professor of art history and religious symbology. He has spent a lifetime exploring religions and theology and explaining the use of their symbols in art and history. He is a veritable gold mine of information about the Catholic church, pagan religions, and religious mysteries. As *The Da Vinci Code* begins, he is in Paris to give a speech and to meet with Jacques Saunière, the curator of the Louvre, although he's unaware of why Saunière wants to meet with him. Unfortunately, Saunière is murdered in the Grand Hall of the Louvre and the French police get Langdon out of bed, ostensibly to help them understand the information and symbols Saunière left at the murder scene. Actually, Langdon is their prime suspect and they want to see if he inadvertently gives incriminating information before they arrest him. Trapped within his own gallery, Saunière had enough time to leave clues to his killer and to the information for which he was murdered. Langdon, however, cannot understand the clues left behind and the captain of the French police, Bezu Fache, is certain that they point to Langdon as the killer.

They are interrupted at the murder scene by Sophie Neveu, a police cryptologist who claims to have broken the code of the seemingly random numbers left next to the corpse. Unknown to Bezu Fache, Sophie is also Saunière's granddaughter and she is certain the clues he left behind were meant for her and that Langdon is not only innocent, but the key to helping her understand it all. She manages to help Langdon fake an escape from the Louvre which sends Bezu Fache away long enough so Langdon and she can study the clues left behind by Saunière. The dead body is naked and lying spread-eagle with a circle around it. They realize that Saunière was duplicating Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting, "The Vitruvian Man." They quickly decipher the information which leads them to different paintings by Da Vinci, and Sophie finds the item left behind for her by her grandfather. She then understands why he didn't want it to fall into the hands of the police. She and

Langdon hit the road, one step ahead of the police and the people behind Saunière's murder who want what they've discovered.

> *...Without giving more of the plot away, suffice it to say that everyone in this book is in the hunt for the secrets hidden by the Priory of Sion including the Grail. Some want to protect it, some want to expose it, and some want to destroy it. With the information provided to them by Jacques Saunière, Sophie and Langdon are ahead of everyone else, but police, assassins, and churchmen aren't far behind. The race is on, the tension is high, and the puzzles to be solved seem incomprehensible...*

All that occurs in the first few short chapters and it sets a pace which never wanes for the rest of the book. Sophie and Langdon manage to barely escape from many dicey situations, but never in an unbelievable way. They continue to solve each ensuing puzzle and riddle they encounter, leading them deeper into more mysteries they must comprehend. Jacques Saunière was much more than just the curator of the Louvre; he raised Sophie after her parents died in an accident and he constantly entertained her with puzzles, riddles, and secret information. Sophie and Langdon soon realize that he was also a member of a secret society called the Priory of Sion, which over the centuries had included men such as Da Vinci, Botticelli, Victor Hugo, and Isaac Newton. Langdon is more familiar with the Priory, and he tells Sophie the story of their long history and that they purportedly keep hidden documents concerning the truth about the early Catholic church that the church never wants revealed, and that they also allegedly know the hiding spot of the Holy Grail.

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Along the way, Langdon educates Sophie as well as the reader in large amounts of information concerning religions, symbols, history, and the story of the Holy Grail. Dan Brown is crafty enough to have Langdon present this in a way that comes across like a professor (which Langdon is) passing it on to his class without a lot of moralistic overtones. His explanations for clues and tricks hidden within Da Vinci's paintings make you want to go look at them all and see if it's true. His comments about the early church, the origins of the gospels, and the assimilation of pagan rituals and symbols into the church's practices and holy days makes sense when he tells them and they come across as easily understood historical facts, whether true or not. The pages turn quickly as the information is presented, the latest puzzle is solved, and the next escape is done by the skin of their teeth.

> *...The characters in The Da Vinci Code don't play second fiddle to the storyline. Robert Langdon is one of those highly intelligent people who doesn't use it to lord over those with inferior educations. He's even-tempered with a touch of sardonic wit and quick to admit when he doesn't know something. Bezu Fache is the hard-driving police captain, smart, thinking one step ahead, and always aware of the political implications of what he's doing...*

The characters in *The Da Vinci Code* don't play second fiddle to the storyline. Robert Langdon is one of those highly intelligent people who doesn't use it to lord over those with inferior educations. He's even-tempered with a touch of sardonic wit and quick to admit when he doesn't know something. Bezu Fache is the hard-driving police captain, smart, thinking one step ahead, and always aware of

the political implications of what he's doing. Silas, believing everything he's doing is for God, is an albino Opus Dei monk who murders by instruction from The Teacher, an unknown man who directs the search for the Priory's secrets. Leigh Teabing is an affluent and eccentric Englishman obsessed with the quest for the Grail and disparaging of most things French. Dan Brown uses each of these characters to poke fun at their own culture and bring realism to the international scenarios necessary when dealing with secret societies, religious conspiracies, and the quest for what might be the ultimate mysteries of Christianity. The character who ties everything together and brings the proper sense of humanity and morality to the story, though, is Sophie Neveu. Dealing with the death of her beloved grandfather, coming to understand more of her past, and being the possessor of information that could change history and religion, she strikes the right tone of strength and vulnerability to make everything else in this novel believable.



-Aswin Sayiram

Dr. Aswin Sayiram, is currently pursuing his undergrad MBBS at Sri Ramachandra Medical University, Chennai. He is a book lover associated with this journal since its inception.Apart from being a full time medical student he likes meeting people, hanging out with family. He has presented papers in conferences and has won two best paper awards. His undergraduate dissertation entitled "structure and functions of voluntary muscles" was elected as the best during the year 2006 from all the medical and paramedical colleges in Tamilnadu. He is keenly associated with occupational and general health research activities and has interest in management & organizational systems. He is a great lover of books. Dr. Sayiram may be contacted via Email by clicking here.

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-Editor-in-Chief