

THE #1 WORLDWIDE BESTSELLER ADAPTED FOR YOUNG ADULTS

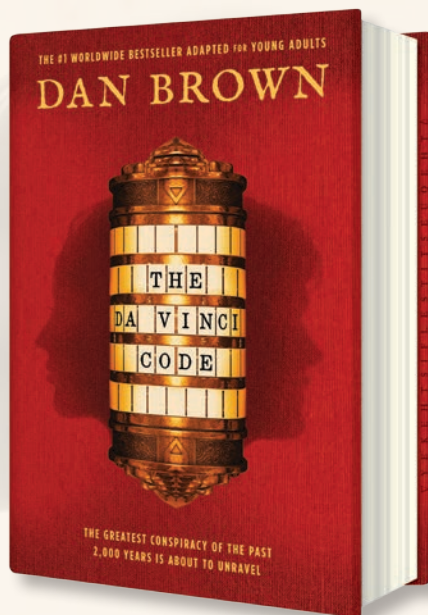
DAN BROWN



EDUCATORS' GUIDE

INCLUDES COMMON CORE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS

THE GREATEST CONSPIRACY OF THE PAST 2,000 YEARS IS ABOUT TO UNRAVEL



Grade 7 & up

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ABOUT THE BOOK

When an eminent curator is found shot to death at the Louvre surrounded by cryptic writings, the police have good reason to suspect Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor who specializes in religious symbols. Langdon narrowly escapes arrest with the help of Sophie Neveu, a police cryptographer and granddaughter of the dead man. The murder thrusts Robert and Sophie into a dangerous treasure hunt across Europe, chased by a ghostly assassin. If they can solve a series of coded messages in time, they may save one of the world's most valuable artifacts. Who can Robert and Sophie trust? The police captain called the Bull? The wealthy British knight obsessed with mythology? Can they even trust each other? A rich sense of the past combined with breathtaking action make this thriller hard to put down and impossible to forget.

This edition includes two maps as well as an 8-page photo insert which presents historical places, landmarks, and paintings.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DAN BROWN is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of numerous novels, including *The Da Vinci Code*, *Inferno*, *The Lost Symbol*, *Angels & Demons*, *Deception Point*, and *Digital Fortress*. He lives in New England with his wife and is a graduate of Amherst College and Phillips Exeter Academy, where he spent time as an English teacher before turning his efforts fully to writing. Visit him at danbrown.com and follow him at @AuthorDanBrown on Twitter.

PRE-READING DISCUSSION

Talk about art and its role in society. Is art important? Why, or why not? Expand the discussion to historical artifacts such as you'd see in a museum. Why do museums collect and display objects from the past? What can such objects tell us? How does art change the viewer's perspective on the world?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is da Vinci's name in the title? Describe the different ways that he appears in the narrative. How is his art important to the plot? What other interests of his are included? Do you think it's an effective title for this novel? Why, or why not?

2. Discuss Robert Langdon's character and interests, giving examples from the text. How does he get pulled into the series of dangerous adventures, starting at the Louvre? In what ways is he an unlikely hero for a thriller?

3. Robert and Sophie quickly become allies. Analyze Sophie's personality and her skills, and compare them to Robert's. How do Sophie and Robert help each other? What is their relationship like at the end of the novel?

4. Even though he dies at the beginning, Jacques Saunière is central to the story. Explain who he is and his role in the plot. What do flashbacks tell you about his history with Sophie, and how does that history prove important? Describe the Priory of Sion and his place in it.

5. When did you first realize that puzzles and riddles would be key elements in the novel? Choose a few of the puzzles and riddles that Robert and Sophie encounter and examine how they solve them. What

strengths do each of them bring to the problems? How does Sophie's past relate to their current treasure hunt?

6. Identify different ways in which secrecy, a major theme in the novel, matters in the plot in terms of individuals and in terms of secret societies. What is secrecy used for? How does the title reflect the emphasis on secrecy?

7. The author is a master at building suspense. Find specific examples of suspense and analyze narrative techniques that he uses. What role does secrecy play in creating suspense?

8. An early description of Captain Fache, whose nickname is the Bull, says that he "carried himself like an angry ox, his wide shoulders thrown back and his chin tucked hard into his chest." (p. 18) How do the nickname and description color the reader's view of him? Describe his interactions with Bishop Aringarosa. Discuss whether or not Fache treats Robert and Sophie fairly.

9. Describe Bishop Aringarosa and Opus Dei. What is the bishop's attitude toward the Priory of Sion and the Grail? Why is the bishop's relationship with the Vatican strained?

10. What are some of Silas's unusual characteristics? Discuss what the flashbacks

about him show. Talk about his history and interactions with the bishop. How and why does Silas diverge from the bishop's plans, and what are the consequences?

11. Leigh Teabing is another complicated character. What are your first impressions of him? What is your view of him at the end of the novel? Explore how the author keeps certain aspects of Teabing hidden from the reader. Why is he so intent on finding the secret of the Grail and making it public? Would you call Teabing a villain? Justify your viewpoint.

12. Captain Fache, Bishop Aringarosa, and Sir Leigh Teabing each have a sort of assistant: Lieutenant Collet, Silas, and Rémy. Compare and contrast the relationships of the three pairs of men. How do the three more powerful men treat their assistants? What do those interactions show about their characters?

13. The book opens with a list of facts, then moves to a prologue. Why might the author start it this way? Discuss the transition between the prologue and the first chapter. What happens in the epilogue? How does it relate to the rest of the novel, including the prologue and the first chapter?

14. Identify the narrative point of view and consider why the author chose it. Give examples of where the text reveals certain characters' thoughts. Whose thoughts and unspoken feelings are revealed? Whose are not? Why did the author make those choices? How would the book have been different if it were told in Langdon's first-person voice?


15. While most chapters follow Robert and Sophie, sometimes the focus switches to other characters such as the bishop, Silas, or Fache. How does the author

make transitions from one character or one setting to the next? Examine how this structure affects pace and suspense, giving specific examples.

16. In the taxi on the way to the bank, Langdon thinks, "Everyone loves a conspiracy," (p. 151) which the librarian at the King's College library also says (p. 324). What do they mean? In what way is the search for the Grail related to conspiracies? What strands of the novel's plot would you label as conspiracy, and why?

17. How is the Grail connected to the idea of the sacred feminine? What events and documents are presented as evidence that the Catholic Church suppressed the religious importance of women? Explain Mary Magdalene's role in this interpretation of history. If this interpretation is true, how does it show that "History is always written by the winners"? (p. 229)

18. Marie Chauvel tells Langdon that the Priory of Sion believes the Grail should never be unveiled. "It is the mystery and wonderment that serve our souls, not the Grail itself." (p. 392) She suggests that, as an unattainable treasure, the Grail inspires people. What does she mean by her statement? Why would it be better not to reveal the Grail? How can something unattainable be more valuable than something known and available?

 The discussion questions correlate to Common Core Standard CCSS.RL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1; CCSS.RL.6.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9.2; CCSS.RL.6.3, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3; CCSS.RL.6.4, 7.4, 8.4, 9.4; CCSS.RL.6.5, 9.5; CCSS.RL.6.6, 7.6, 8.6; CCSS.SL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1.

ACTIVITIES

The Da Vinci Code refers to many religious and mythological symbols such as the pentacle, the rose, the square cross, and so on. Have each student choose a symbol and gather information on it from the book and other sources. Students should then write a poem that incorporates the symbol, and illustrate it in the medium of their choice.

☉ Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.6.7, 7.7, 8.7, 9.7.

During their adventures, the characters visit important historical buildings, often described in some detail. As a class, make a list of the buildings and their locations. Pairs of students can select a building to research in digital and print resources. They should prepare a presentation with images of the building and present it to the class, explaining the building's history and architectural features.

☉ Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.6.7, 7.7, 8.7, 9.7; CCSS.SL.6.5, 7.5, 8.5, 9.5.

Three organizations that involve secrecy appear in the novel: Opus Dei, the Priory of Sion, and the Knights Templar. Some of the suspense comes from secretive actions of those societies, past and present. Have students write short stories that involve a secret society, either real or imagined. The stories should entail as much suspense as possible, modeled on the techniques used in *The Da Vinci Code*.

☉ Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.6.3, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3.

Have students take on the role of a reporter who is covering one of the deaths or

arrests in the novel. They can convey the information in a newspaper article or on camera, using the five Ws—Who, What, Where, When, and Why. Their stories should combine information from the narrative and quotes they invent from characters involved in the event.

☉ Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.W.6.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9.2; CCSS.W.6.3, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3.


Author Raymond Chandler gave this advice about writing suspense fiction: “When things slow down, bring in a man with a gun.” Have students discuss the extent to which Dan Brown follows this advice and how effective it is in creating an exciting story. Over a week or two, have students collect examples of books, films, television shows, or other media that also employ this approach. Students can share their findings in a follow-up discussion.

☉ Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.RL.6.5, 9.5; CCSS.SL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1.


A reader's impression of a main character usually changes as the story progresses and more aspects of the character's personality are revealed. Have students choose one of the book's important characters and write a letter to that fictional person. The letter will describe the student's first impression of the character and how that view changed during reading. The letter should express an emotional reaction such as admiration, surprise, or disappointment, and explain what the reaction is based on.

☉ Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.RL.6.3, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3; CCSS.W.6.3, 7.3, 8.3, 9.3.

The version of *The Da Vinci Code* written for adults has been translated into dozens of languages. The book jackets from different countries are displayed at the author's website (danbrown.com/world-editions/). After reading the book, have students look at the various cover designs and compare them. What aspects of the book do the covers reflect? Which covers would be most effective in attracting readers? Compare and contrast the US adult book jacket with that of the young-adult adaptation. Students can then create their own dust jackets to display in the classroom.

 Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.SL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1.

The novel has multiple references to codes, ciphers, and mathematical concepts, including the Atbash Cipher, Phi/the Golden Ratio, the Fibonacci sequence, the Vitruvian Man, anagrams, the cryptex, and more. Have students break into small groups in which each student chooses a different code or math concept to research. They should report their findings back to the group and, if possible, demonstrate the concept. This could entail writing a message in the Atbash Cipher or as an anagram and having others decipher it, or bringing in photographs of the Fibonacci sequence in nature.

 Correlates to Common Core Standard CCSS.SL.6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1; CCSS.SL.6.4, 7.4, 8.4, 9.4.

INTERNET RESOURCES

CIA BREAK THE CODE PAGE

cia.gov/kids-page/games/break-the-code
Codes for students to try to break.

LOUVRE MUSEUM

louvre.fr/en
General information on the Louvre
A page on the Louvre website highlights the artwork mentioned in *The Da Vinci Code*: louvre.fr/en/routes/da-vinci-code

OPUS DEI

opusdei.org/en-us
Includes information and videos about the organization

ROSSLYN CHAPEL

rosslynchapel.com
History and photographs of the church

SAINT-SULPICE CHURCH

sacred-destinations.com/france/paris-st-sulpice
History and photographs of the church

TEMPLE CHURCH

templechurch.com/history-2
History and a timeline of the church

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

westminster-abbey.org/our-history
Photographs and information on the history and architecture of the church

Guide prepared by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee, who now gives workshops for educators on children's and young adult books.

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