

## **PinkMonkey Literature Notes on . . .**

### **Sample MonkeyNotes**

**Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.**

# *The Da Vinci Code*

by

**Dan Brown**

**2003**



**MonkeyNotes by Laurie Lahey**

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Please note that the following summary and analysis will give away information about the plot if you have not yet finished reading the book.

## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### Setting

This novel journeys through Paris, London, and just south of Edinburgh, Scotland. The plot also....

## CHARACTER LIST

### Major Characters

**Robert Langdon** - Robert is one of the novel's two protagonists. He is a professor of symbology at Harvard University. He finds himself entangled in a murder-mystery plot while on a visit to France.

**Sophie Neveu** - Sophie is the novel's other protagonist. She works for the Department of Cryptology in Paris. She is the granddaughter of the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion. Sophie embarks on a journey not only to find the Holy Grail but also the truth about her family.

**Sir Lee Teabing** - Teabing is a former British Royal Historian who studies the history of Christianity. He is an eccentric old man who has been crippled by polio. He has spent his entire life searching for the Grail.

### Minor Characters

**Jacques Saunière** - Saunière is the Grand Master of the Priory of Sion. He is also a prominent Parisian and renowned Louvre curator. The novel begins with Saunière's murder investigation and.....

**Lieutenant Jérôme Collet** - Collet is Fache's subordinate. He wavers between.....

**Silas** - Silas is an albino monk whom the Teacher uses to carry out the murders. Silas is somewhat of a brute. He is not particularly intelligent and he is very strong. He was abused as a child and.....

**The Teacher** - The Teacher is the mastermind who was able to infiltrate The Priory. He .....

**Bezu Fache** - Fache is the police captain. Collet tells Langdon that Fache is known as "the bull"; however, it should also be noted that "fache" means anger in French. Whenever an author picks a.....

**Bishop Manuel Aringarosa** - Aringarosa saved Silas many years ago when he was a simple Spanish priest. When we meet Aringarosa, he is a powerful bishop in the United States who is in charge of Opus Dei. The Teacher enlists the services of Silas through Aringarosa and pretends to want.....

**Sister Sandrine Biell** - Sister Sandrine lives at the Church of Saint-Sulpice. She was contacted by the brotherhood years ago and given a list of numbers to call if anyone every came.....

**André Vernet** - Vernet is a personal friend of Jacques Saunière and the president of the Swiss Bank in Paris. Initially, he assists Sophie and Langdon in escaping from the bank. However, when he.....

**Rémy Legaludec** - Rémy is Teabing's manservant. Teabing has promised him a large sum.....

**Marie Chauvel** - Marie is Sophie's grandmother and Saunière's widow. She has lived.....

## CONFLICT

The conflict of a plot is the major problem experienced by the protagonist. In this novel, the major problem for Langdon and Sophie is trying to uncover the clues left by Jacques Saunière.

**Protagonist** - The protagonist of a story is the main character who traditionally undergoes some sort of change. He or she must usually overcome some opposing force. The balance of female/male, yin/yang, chalice/blade is carried through in Brown's characters. Sophie and Langdon are both the protagonists of.....

**Antagonist** - The antagonist of a story is the character that provides an obstacle for.....

**Climax** - The climax of a plot is the major turning point that allows the protagonist to resolve the conflict. In this novel the climax occurs when Teabing holds Langdon and Sophie at gunpoint in.....

**Outcome** - The outcome, resolution, or denouement occurs in the final chapters when Sophie learns.....

## SHORT PLOT SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Because this novel is a mystery, much of the plot is revealed in flashbacks and may be confusing. This synopsis will recount the major plot events chronologically.

Five months before the novel begins, Bishop Aringarosa is called to the Vatican and told that the Pope no longer wants the Catholic Church to be associated with Opus Dei (*Opus Dei (Latin: "The Work of God") is a controversial Catholic organization founded to foster Christian principles and promote the church*). The Church has decided to give Opus Dei twenty-million euro, which the Church had earlier borrowed from Opus Dei. A few weeks later, Aringarosa receives a call from Lee Teabing, who disguises himself as a devout Frenchman and calls himself "the Teacher." Teabing tells Aringarosa that he knows how to find the Holy Grail. (*The Holy Grail - of legend and literature, it is commonly thought to be the cup or chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper. It is said to possess miraculous powers.*)

For twenty-million euro—money that Teabing does not need, but uses as a cover—Teabing will share the Grail with Aringarosa who can use it to bargain with the Church. In the meantime Teabing has bugged the homes and offices of prominent Parisians whom he suspects are at the top of the Priory of Sion. When Teabing has enough information he tells Silas, the albino monk, to kill the Grand Master and his *sénéchaux*. Silas must first demand to know where the keystone is. When he kills the men, they each give him the same incorrect answer.

Meanwhile, Harvard professor, Robert Langdon is in Paris to give a speech about his research. He is woken in the middle of the night by Lieutenant Collet because the Paris police need his help solving the murder of Jacques Saunière. The police captain, Bezu Fache, is actually bringing Langdon to the scene because.....

## THEMES

### Major Theme

**"Mystery and Wonderment That Serve Our Souls"** - The major theme of this novel is expressed in a quotation by Marie Chauvel in the resolution. In this novel people believe in things, or are inspired by.....

### Minor Themes

**The Sacred Feminine** - On one level, the main characters in this novel are discussing and searching for symbolic representations of the sacred feminine. However, on another, more subtle, level Brown portrays women's power. Through Sophie Neveu, Brown illustrates an intelligent and.....

**Fanaticism** - While this novel promotes faith, it also cautions against pursuing one's beliefs to the point of fanaticism. Brown offers two examples of characters that become fanatics: Silas and.....

## **MOOD**

The mood is suspenseful. Brown creates a feeling of suspense in this novel in three ways: he keeps.....

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION / BIOGRAPHY**

Dan Brown was born on June 22, 1964 in Exeter, New Hampshire where he attended the prestigious Phillips Exeter. He is the son of a prominent math professor and a musician. He graduated from Amherst College in 1986. He married his wife, Blythe, an art historian and painter. Until he became a.....

## **LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

While this novel has taken the world by storm, revealing conspiracy theories and conjectures that have never been heard by many people, much of these ideas have existed for centuries. For example the books listed in Chapter 60, which are named as part of Teabing's library, are real. The complete information on these books is as follows:

Picknet, Lynn and Clive Prince. *The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ*. Touchstone, 1998.....

## **Genre**

Fiction, Mystery

## **CHAPTERS SUMMARIES WITH NOTES**

### **Prologue**

#### **Summary**

Jacques Saunière, a renowned curator at the Louvre, is working late at the museum. He is being chased by a large albino man. The albino has discovered some information that Jacques has apparently guarded very carefully. The man tries to extract the remaining information from Jacques. Finally, Jacques tells the man he will share the secret. Jacques recites a carefully rehearsed lie. The albino is satisfied because "the others" have given him the same information. Jacques is shocked because this means that the albino has uncovered his true identity, as well as the true identities of his three *sénéchaux*. The albino shoots Jacques in the stomach. As he lay dying in the Grand Gallery, Jacques thinks about how he must pass on the true secret or it will die with him. There is only one person he can share the secret with and the only tools he has are the paintings.

#### **Notes**

In a novel, the prologue is a section that offers introductory information before the exposition. Unlike the exposition, which offers background information on the main characters and critical aspects of the plot, this prologue works to grab the reader's attention. These last minutes of Jacques's life provide a mystery that will fuel the exposition: throughout the exposition, we learn about the main characters as they try to solve the mysterious final moments of Jacques's life.

### **Chapters 1-5**

#### **Summary**

Robert Langdon, an American professor from Harvard, is awakened in the middle of the night by a phone call. Langdon is staying at the Ritz in Paris where he has just delivered a lecture on religious symbology. The phone call is from the concierge who tells Langdon there is a very important man who wants to see him. Langdon asks the concierge to take the man's number so he can call him the following day. Minutes later, the concierge calls again to tell Langdon that the visitor is coming to his room.

Soon after, Lieutenant Jérôme Collet knocks at Langdon's door. Collet works for the DCPJ, the French equivalent of the U.S. FBI. Collet says he has been sent to ask for Langdon's help in investigating the death of Jacques Saunière. The DCPJ learned from Jacques Saunière's date-book that he was scheduled to meet with Langdon that evening. Collet shows Langdon a strange picture of Jacques's corpse. Collet tells Langdon that Jacques situated himself in the odd position before he died.

Meanwhile the albino, whose name is Silas, returns to his bare room. He calls the Teacher to tell him that the three sénéchaux and the Grand Master are dead. Moreover, all four gave the same information before they died. Silas has learned from them that the keystone is located in the Church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. The Teacher says he will arrange for Silas to enter the church. Before Silas goes to the church, he beats himself with a heavy, knotted rope as punishment for his sins. Although Silas already wears a cilice, he believes he must further purify himself.

Langdon and Collet arrive at the Louvre. Inside Langdon meets Captain Bezu Fache, who informs Langdon that the photograph is only the beginning of what Saunière did. Fache questions Langdon about his arranged meeting with Saunière that evening. Langdon tells Fache that he has never met Saunière and it was Saunière who requested the meeting, which never occurred. Langdon tells Fache that he was looking forward to meeting Saunière because Saunière was knowledgeable in the subject of Langdon's latest book. Langdon hesitates to explain that the book is about the iconography of goddess worship. As Langdon anticipates, Fache has difficulty understanding the controversial topic.

Langdon asks Fache if the security cameras throughout the Louvre are real. Fache says they are not. Instead, the Louvre has a security system which seeks to contain intruders by sealing off rooms and exits. As Fache and Langdon near the murder scene, Fache tells his officers not to bother them for any reason.

The same evening, Bishop Manuel Aringarosa, the president-general of Opus Dei (a notorious Catholic organization), boards a plane. Earlier, he received a call telling him the keystone has been located. The caller asks for his influence in gaining access to Saint-Sulpice that evening.

## **Notes**

These chapters begin the novel's exposition, which lasts through chapter 20. The exposition is the section of a novel in which the main characters and main conflict are introduced. Any relevant background information is also given in this section. This novel will have two protagonists, or main characters who work to overcome some obstacle. In these chapters we meet the male protagonist, Robert Langdon.

We also meet the formidable Bezu Fache. We learn that his subordinates refer to him as "the bull." However, Brown leaves the meaning of his name, Fache, ambiguous. In French "fache" means angry. Often authors will use character's names to develop their characterization. In this case we should be aware that Brown presents Fache as an angry bull. As we will see, Fache is hot-tempered and stubborn.

In these chapters we are also introduced to an organization associated with the Catholic Church called Opus Dei. The web-site Brown gives, [www.odan.org](http://www.odan.org), supports much of his description of the organization.

In the exposition chapters Brown introduces a style of writing that supports the novel's mysterious, suspenseful tone. The chapters are short and filled with action; they constantly switch back and forth between various subplots which will converge. Brown frequently gives just enough information to keep the reader's attention, without revealing the whole story. For example, we learn that Saunière was found in an odd position but we do not learn how he arranged himself until a few chapters later. These techniques build suspense.....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Robert Langdon** - Keeping with the idea of male and female as a complimentary, essential pairing, Brown provides us with two protagonists. Robert Langdon is the male protagonist. He is a .....

**Sophie Neveu** - Sophie is the female protagonist. She, like Langdon, seeks to solve the clues left by her grandfather. Unlike Langdon, Sophie has just learned about the folklore surrounding the Grail. Sophie....

### PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

*The Da Vinci Code* is a suspenseful mystery, which encompasses a thrilling quest for the Holy Grail. The plot is imbued with as much historical truth as conjecture.

**Exposition** - The exposition of a plot is the place where the reader is introduced to the main characters and any important information to understand what is presently occurring. The first twenty chapters of this novel are its exposition. In these chapters, we meet the major .....

**Rising Action** - Rising action is the action that will lead to the climax (or the major turning point in the plot). In this novel the rising action is everything that happens before the police .....

**Climax** - The climax is the point in the plot where something happens to change the course of action of the main character. It is a decisive moment that will determine the outcome of the plot. The climax occurs when the police apprehend Teabing at Westminster Abbey. This is the major.....

**Outcome** - The outcome of the plot is when resolution occurs. The outcome in this novel occurs at Marie's house. Here Sophie and Langdon have successfully answered most of.....

### THEMES ANALYSIS

#### “Mystery and Wonderment That Serve Our Souls”

The major theme of this novel is expressed in a quotation by Marie Chauvel in the resolution. In this statement Marie refers to the mystery and wonderment of the Grail that serve people's souls. However, this message is also applied to religion throughout the novel. In this conversation, Marie explains that .....

### POINT OF VIEW

Third person, omniscient. The story is told by an anonymous narrator who has access to the thoughts of the characters.

### IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS

Edition: Double Day, 2003

1. **“The keystone. It will lead us to our final goal.”** – Silas, p. 74

Silas thinks this as he is about to enter the Church of Saint-Sulpice, where he will find he has been lied to and kill Sister Sandrine. This quotation exemplifies the theme of fanaticism. Silas believes that the ends justify the means. He does not believe that it is wrong to murder in order to obtain the keystone because he will find the Grail.

2. **“...I've just demonstrated for your lady friend the unfortunate benefit of my condition. It seems everyone underestimates you.”** – Teabing, p. 278

Teabing says this after he injures Silas and gets the gun away from him. In hindsight, this statement is ironic because Teabing not only means that Silas underestimates him, but Sophie and Langdon as well. Teabing is the mastermind of the murders, but no one suspects him.....

## **SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS**

This novel is filled with symbols that are clearly explained throughout--such as how the chalice is symbolic of woman and the blade is symbolic of man. However, there are a few more ambiguous literary symbols which Brown uses as furthering forces in character and plot development.

**Langdon's Mickey Mouse Watch** - Throughout the novel Langdon wears his Mickey Mouse watch, which reminds him of how his interest in symbology began. Langdon also talks to his classes about how remnants of the Grail story are found in Disney stories. Disney, symbolized in the Mickey.....

## **IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY**

**Title:** *The Da Vinci Code*

**Author:** Dan Brown

**Date Published:** 2003

**Setting:** Paris, London and Scotland

**Genre:** Fiction, Mystery/Suspense

**Tense:** Past

**Meaning of the Title:** "Da Vinci Code" refers to the many clues about the Grail through out the centuries. While many have secretly passed on the truth of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, Leonardo Da Vinci is portrayed as an artist who made it his focus to transmit the truth. It is also plausible to consider.....

## **VOCABULARY / HISTORICAL REFERENCE**

**Déjà vu-** The feeling of having already experienced something.

**Cilice** - A coarse cloth. In this novel, the cilice is tied around the thigh and used in corporal mortification

**Spartan** - Bare and simple

**Aficionado** - An enthusiastic fan

**Sepulchral** - A burial vault.....

## **STUDY QUESTIONS / QUIZ**

### **Multiple Choice :**

1. Where did Jacques Saunière work?
  - A. The Musee d'Orsay
  - B. The Louvre
  - C. The Sorbonne
2. What is Robert Langdon's profession?

- A. Professor
- B. CIA agent
- C. Painter.....

### Answer Key

1. B 2. A .....

## ESSAY QUESTIONS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1. Write an essay describing the first encounter between Sophie and Langdon from Sophie's perspective. Is she sure he is innocent? How does she remain calm at the scene of her grandfather's murder?
2. What do you think happens to Teabing? Does he use his money to get out of going to jail? If he does not go to jail will he try to find the Grail? Do you think he will be successful?.....

## COMMENT ON THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

The study of literature is not like the study of math or science, or even history. While those disciplines are based largely upon fact, the study of literature is based upon interpretation and analysis. There are no clear-cut answers in literature, outside of the factual information about an author's life and the basic information about setting and characterization in a piece of literature. The rest is a highly subjective reading of what an author has written; each person brings a different set of values and a different background to the reading. As a result, no two people see the piece of literature in exactly the same light, and few critics agree on everything about a book or an author.

In this set of PinkMonkey Literature Notes, we at PinkMonkey.com have tried to give an objective literary analysis based upon the information actually found in the novel, book, or play. In the end, however, it is an individual interpretation, but one that we feel can be readily supported by the information that is presented in the guide. In your course of literature study, you or your professor/teacher may come up with a different interpretation of the mood or the theme or the conflict. Your interpretation, if it can be logically supported with information contained within the piece of literature, is just as correct as ours; so is the interpretation of your teacher or professor.

Literature is simply not a black or white situation; instead, there are many gray areas that are open to varying analyses. Your task is to come up with your own analysis that you can logically defend. Hopefully, these PinkMonkey Literature Notes will help you to accomplish that goal.

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