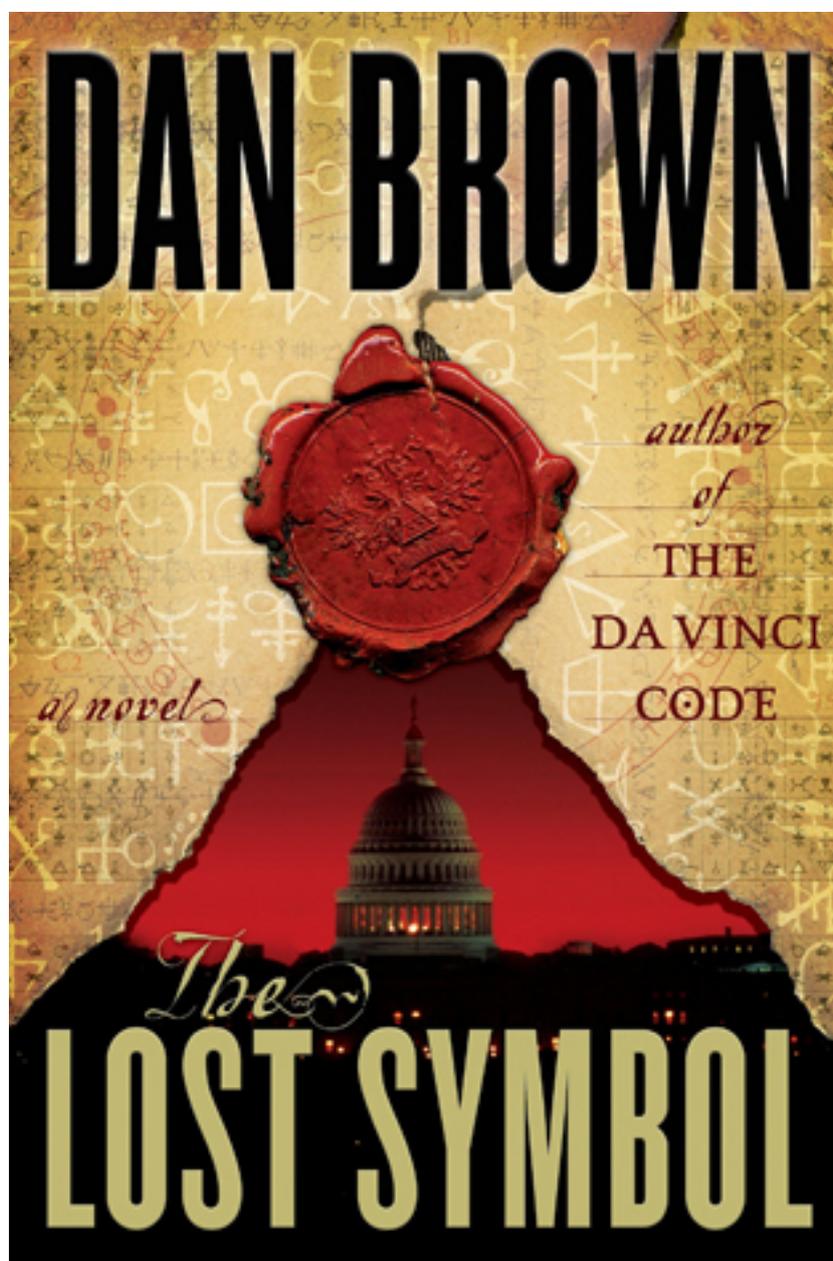


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Dan Brown

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What people Say:

Grampus

I don't get all the haters of the Dan Brown books. Are you really going in with the expectation that these books are going to be award-winning, works of art? If so, do you critique every book you read with that same expectation? It would be a pity if you did.

Like movies, I don't expect every one I watch to be an Academy Award winner. If I did, that would certainly narrow the number of films I'd see. No, I go to be entertained (whatever that may mean on any particular day). That's the way I look

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Like movies, I don't expect every one I watch to be an Academy Award winner. If I did, that would certainly narrow the number of films I'd see. No, I go to be entertained (whatever that may mean on any particular day). That's the way I look at the books I read, particularly fiction, and I think Dan Brown's books are very entertaining. They are a

escape.

We've all seen the stats that show how few books Americans are reading these days (present company excluded) and I think these types of books are an excellent way to get the masses to pick up, read, listen and get back involved in books. That's what it is all about! Like starting children with books from an early age, once they're in, who knows where it can lead them. I want more of my friends to read books and if this is the hook, then I'm happy to bait it and reel them in.

My personal opinion of the Lost

Symbol was that I liked it, but after reading all his other books I found this one more predictable. Still it was entertaining and I recommend it. I think many others will enjoy it as well.

Becky

This book is both poorly written and impossible to put down.

I think that about sums it up.

Jayson

| Very Unsatisfactory

Its secret society has no intriguing back-story, the villain is inappropriate and asinine, and the end revelation is lame.

Meg

I have such issues rating Dan Brown books... I want 1.5 stars, I think. Snark ahead.

Here's the deal: the man can't write. He's a name-brand & url spewing, Wikipedia-like fountain of knowledge, who CAN'T HANDLE VERB TENSES. He also likes really short sentences. That aren't sentences at all. Really. Expect iPhone, Twitter, and Google shout-outs, too. I'm almost surprised he didn't mention the inevitable hash #thelostsymbol and tell us to use it when we tweet about what we just learned.

On the flip

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On the flip side, who doesn't love a good romp around a famous city solving mysteries with art and science and religion? You know the drill, and the formula hasn't changed here in the slightest.

As a former DC resident of 7 years, I have to admit, I was expecting slightly more from the location, but Langdon and his companion du jour keep getting trapped in random places, so it's a bit disappointing on that front. He does get 10 points for a hilarious caper including the Blue Line out to the King Street station though and the Red Line to Tenleytown (yeah, Tenleytown shout-out, what up!)

This book's wacky science theme is Noetics, and the quasi-religious thing at hand is the Masons. Since the first thing that comes to mind re: Noetics is Fringe, I sort of expected a Pacey Witter guest appearance, but alas, it was not meant to be. I know absolutely zip about the Masons, but who wants to bet their membership applications go through the roof this month?

So my final verdict: did I hate it as much as Catcher in the Rye? No. (Will I ever hate any book as much as I hate Catcher in the Rye? Unlikely. BUT THERE'S TIME.) Is it the best Robert Langdon book? Not by a long shot. Angels & Demons still is the best of the trilogy. Is it still vaguely enjoyable in the way only a Dan Brown book can be? Yes. Does Dan Brown's copy editor need to be publicly humiliated? YES AND HIS NAME IS APPARENTLY JASON KAUFMAN (according to the Acknowledgements, so I'm not like, stalking anyone here) AND GOOD LORD MAN, ONLY YOU CAN

EDIT THIS INTO SOMETHING ENJOYABLE. EVERY TIME DAN BROWN DOESN'T KNOW HOW A VERB WORKS, KITTENS DIE.

John

I liked Angels and Demons and I really liked The DaVinci Code but this latest of Dan Browns thrillers was barely worth the time, and definitely not worth the money.

The Lost Symbol follows the familiar Dan Brown formula - an ominous conspiracy, a threat to end the world as we know it, a relentless villain, and a search for hidden secrets which require the decoding of obscure clues. This formula has given us a couple of fine thrillers, and has taken advantage of the authors familiarity with arcan

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The Lost Symbol follows the familiar Dan Brown formula - an ominous conspiracy, a threat to end the world as we know it, a relentless villain, and a search for hidden secrets which require the decoding of obscure clues. This formula has given us a couple of fine thrillers, and has taken advantage of the authors familiarity with arcane history, philology, symbolism, art and architecture. But even this intriguing texture would not be terribly interesting without the intrepid symbologist Robert Langdon to lead us through the perilous labyrinth at high speed. This time, Langdon must find the Freemasonâ€™s grand secret hidden in Washington, D.C. and evade both the CIA and a brilliant but scary villain, while rescuing a kidnapped friend and his sister.

The DaVinci Code and Angels and Demons were both intriguing and thrilling enough to overcome Mr. Brown's weak writing. But because The Lost Symbolâ€™s plot is so much weaker, Brownâ€™s sophomoric writing becomes much more obvious and ever more bothersome as the work progresses. For example, the formulaic mini-cliffhangers at the end of nearly every chapter became trite and annoying manipulations. Brown also employed several set-pieces of lecture and discovery that annoyingly repeat themselves. This book is full of Brownian cliches.

I think that the credibility of this work is further undermined by using characters who are simultaneously brilliant and clueless. For instance, the intrepid and brilliant professor Langdon, who by now should be rather wary of mysterious invitations, flies to Washington D.C. at a moment's notice supposedly at a friend's request but without actually speaking to his friend. And even less credible, is that without direct confirmation, he brings with him a top-secret package that he swore to keep hidden at all costs.

Similarly, the brilliant scientist Katherine doesnâ€™t think to back up her lifeâ€™s work of scientific research, and she allows a man she's met only once into her "top secret" laboratory because she receives a TEXT message purportedly from her brother who she admits doesnâ€™t even know how to text. And these are not the only naive, and clueless people who should know better. The police and security guards are all hapless, and even the CIA director fails to question whether a suspect is lying when he says "I'll be there in 20 minutes."

More disappointing still is that the main character of Robert Langdon seems to have been dumbed down in this book. He repeatedly is adamant about thus and such only to be subsequently shocked when the true meaning is revealed. He always requires two attempts to decipher the true meaning of clues - the first one which is obvious and turns out to be wrong, followed by the shocking epiphany. One would think that a Harvard professor would eventually learn that things are not always what they seem. In this work Robert Langdon spends more time being lectured than he does solving mysteries or puzzles. My recollection is that he figured out absolutely nothing critical in the last third of the book.

Even more troubling than Brown's weak and cliched characterization is that as the thriller reaches its climax, it becomes clear that the pieces do not fit together well. For instance, for most of the story, both the villain, and the CIA insist the stakes couldn't be higher, but in the end we learn that the potential danger is merely some bad public relations for a few powerful Masons. Why then is the CIA involved in this extortion plot - especially since it is legally barred from domestic law enforcement? The author simply fails to provide justification for all the black opps of the CIA counter-conspiracy despite their central role in the story.

There are lots of problems with this book, but perhaps the its greatest flaw is Dan Brown's failure to ever explain the main premise for the book, something he calls the Ancient Mysteries. The primary force that propels the plot is the implicit promise that in the end, a tangible secret will be uncovered. While the protagonist keeps asking if this grand secret is merely metaphorical, he is assured by friends, enemies and even the CIA that the secret is literal and potentially dangerous. But, in the end we learn that the grand secret for which people are willing to sacrifice their lives and fortunes doesn't really exist. What exactly is the point of the pyramid and the secret codes and symbols if the grand mystery is already found in every church, in nearly every home, and in even in all the hotel rooms in the country? Doesn't that make the entire plot pointless to begin with?