

## Introduction

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When you read any novel, even though it is “fiction,” in what ways do you expect it to be “true?”

What is your understanding of what “historical fiction” is? What are your expectations when you read a novel classified as “historical fiction?”

In what ways does *The Da Vinci Code* incorporate history into the plot? What are the devices and techniques that the author uses to give authority to the statements he makes about the past?

What strikes you as the most outrageous historical claims in this book? Why? What seem to you be the most reasonable? Why?

What are the primary sources that Dan Brown uses for the historical aspects of his novel? What do you think of these sources?

## Chapter 1: Secrets and Lies

What are the main assertions that Dan Brown makes about Jesus in *The Da Vinci Code*? What are the sources for these assertions?

What was Gnosticism? When were the Gnostic writings that Brown uses for his sources composed? What was their purpose?

## Chapter 2: Who Picked the Gospels?

What is a “gospel?” How were the gospels written and gathered into what we now call the New Testament? What is the basis for considering them reliable sources about the life and ministry of Jesus? Why do you think Dan Brown ignores them?

How does Dan Brown describe the compiling of what we now call the New Testament? In what ways is he wrong?

## Chapter 3: Divine Election

What does Dan Brown say about early Christian beliefs about Jesus? What evidence from the New Testament shows him to be wrong?

## Chapter 4: Toppled Kings?

Why is it false to say that the Gnostic writings present a “more human” picture of Jesus than the Gospels do?

What is the evidence that Jesus was married? What is the evidence that he was unmarried?

## Chapter 5: Mary, Called Magdalene

What role does Mary Magdalene play in the Gospels? Why was this important?

What does Dan Brown say about Mary Magdalene’s role in early Christianity? What is his evidence?

How has Mary Magdalene been remembered through Christian history and tradition?

## Chapter 6: The Age of the Goddess?

Dan Brown asserts that traditional Christianity has suppressed any feminine expressions in spirituality. How does the truth about Catholic spirituality, devotion, and religious life show him to be wrong?

## Chapter 7: Stolen Gods? Christianity and Mystery Religions

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown says that important Christian practices and beliefs were simply borrowed from paganism. What does the evidence from history show about this claim?

## Chapter 8: Surely He Got Leonardo da Vinci Right?

Who was Leonardo da Vinci? What was the focus of his art and work?

Why is Dan Brown’s interpretation of Leonardo’s *Last Supper* incorrect?

What are some of the other errors Brown makes about Leonardo and his work?

## Chapter 9: The Grail, the Priory, and the Knights Templar

What does Dan Brown say about the Holy Grail? What does European tradition say about it?

What does Dan Brown say about the Priory of Sion? If we know the Priory of Sion to be a fraudulent organization, what impact does this have on the historical assertions made in *The Da Vinci Code*?

## Chapter 10: The Catholic Code

How does *The Da Vinci Code* misrepresent the Christian world?

Some readers of *The Da Vinci Code* say that there is little we know for certain about early Christianity, therefore what the novel says about it “could be” true and is worth considering. What are the flaws in this argument?

How is the Gospel portrait of Jesus different from that presented in *The Da Vinci Code*?

Do you think a novel like *The Da Vinci Code* is harmful? Why or why not?

