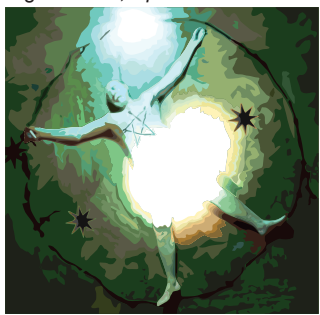


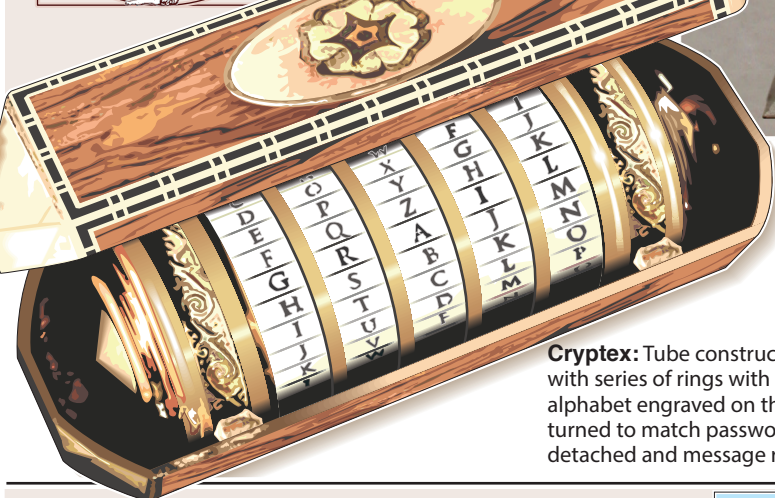
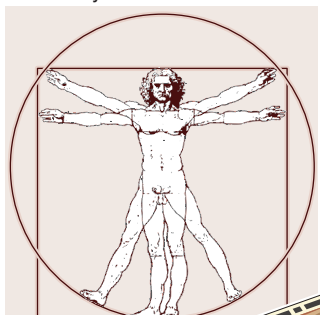
THE DA VINCI CODE



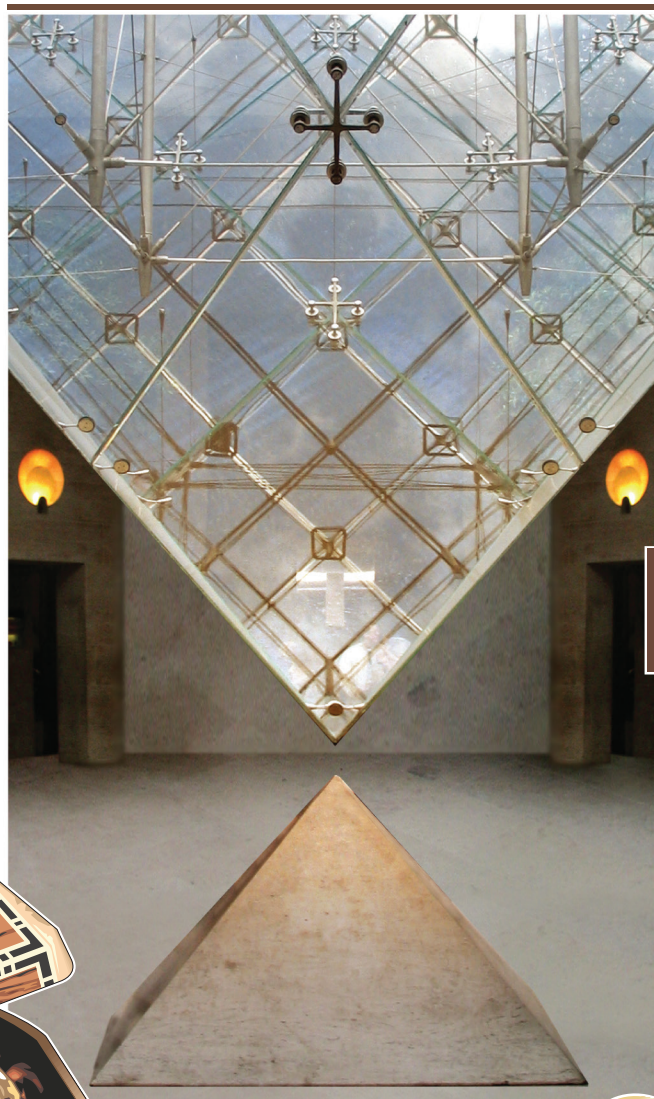
DAN BROWN'S murder suspense novel starts and finishes in the Louvre Museum in Paris. During a breathless 48-hour period in the lives of Harvard Professor Robert Langdon and cryptologist Sophie Neveu, the pair unravel a religious conspiracy involving *Leonardo da Vinci*, a secret society called the *Priory of Sion*, and the controversial Catholic organization, *Opus Dei*.



After delivering a lecture in Paris, Langdon (*Tom Hanks*) receives a late-night summons to the Louvre from police captain Bezu Fache (*Jean Reno*). The man Langdon expected to meet earlier in the day – Jacques Saunière (*Jean-Pierre Marielle*), the elderly curator of the Louvre –



The plot of the film adaptation of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* – due to premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May – revolves around a conspiracy by the Catholic Church to hide Christ's marriage to Mary Magdalene and a bloodline that survives from the marriage to the present day



Secret message written on papyrus. Glass tube contains vinegar. If cryptex is smashed, glass tube will break and vinegar will destroy papyrus.

Cryptex: Tube constructed with series of rings with letters of alphabet engraved on them. When rings are turned to match password, end cap can be detached and message removed.

masterpiece, *Madonna of the Rocks*. Hidden behind the painting, Neveu finds a key with the emblem of the *Priory of Sion* and an address which leads them to the *Depository Bank of Zurich*.



Was Saunière the last *Grand Master of the Priory of Sion*? Unable to break the code that will open the cryptex, Langdon and Neveu travel to Château Villette, the residence of art historian Sir Leigh Teabing (*Ian McKellen*).



At Villette they survive a murderous attack by Silas, restrain the monk, and with Fache's men closing in, flee in Teabing's private plane to Britain. During the flight they uncover the password to the cryptex only to find a second cylinder inside containing a clue in the form of a verse of poetry.

In London lies a knight a Pope interred. His labour's fruit a Holy wrath incurred. You seek the orb that ought be on his tomb. It speaks of Rosy flesh and seeded womb.

In London the Grail quest takes an unexpected series of twists and turns. With the crazed Silas on the loose once again, Langdon, Neveu and Teabing follow more clues to the ancient Knights Templar's Temple Church and to Westminster Abbey.

After more surprises, the second Cryptex code is broken and Langdon and Neveu journey to Rosslyn Chapel – Scotland's most famous Templar temple – where the secret of their quest is revealed.

Meanwhile, at Saint Sulpice, Saunière's killer, an albino monk named Silas (*Paul Bettany*), is searching for the so-called Priory keystone – the coded stone which will guide him to the Holy Grail. When he discovers he has been tricked by Saunière Silas is so enraged he kills again.

On the run from the police, Langdon and Neveu use the key and the Fibonacci sequence to retrieve Saunière's safe deposit box at the Depository Bank of Zurich.

To Langdon's astonishment, the box contains an exquisite stone cylinder – a cryptex. Reading the symbols around the device, Langdon wonders if he is holding the Priory keystone.



DVC – Fact and fallacy

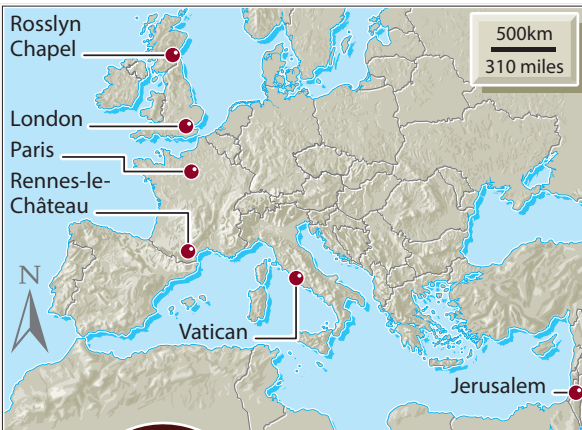


■ **Opus Dei:** Roman Catholic institution founded by Spanish priest **Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer** (left) in 1928. Its mission is to spread the message that work and ordinary life are opportunities for growing closer to God, for serving others, and for improving society. Opus Dei – Latin for God's Work – has around 85,000 members in 61 countries, both men and women; 98% are laypersons, most of whom are married. The remaining 2% are priests. **DVC** features the controversial practice of **corporal mortification** in which numerary members of Opus Dei use a cilice, a spiked chain worn around

the upper thigh; and discipline, flogging themselves with a cord-like whip. Escrivá died in 1975. Pope John Paul II proclaimed him a saint in 2002.

■ **Holy Grail:** In Christian mythology the **Grail** was the dish or cup used by Jesus at the **Last Supper**. Many versions of the story have **Joseph of Arimathea** using the Grail to catch Christ's blood and then taking the vessel to Britain, where he founds a line of guardians to protect it.

■ **Knights Templar:** Created in the aftermath of the First Crusade of 1096 and originally headquartered on the **Temple Mount** in Jerusalem. They grew in membership, wealth and power until they became Europe's bankers.



The order fell foul of French **King Philip IV** and was suddenly and forcibly disbanded in 1312. **Robert the Bruce** offered them sanctuary in Scotland. Legends include finding the Holy Grail while based on Temple Mount.

■ **Priory of Sion:** Co-founded in France in 1956 as a social association by **Pierre Plantard** (right) and **André Bonhomme**, it was disbanded in 1957. ■ **Bérengr Saunière:** Although not mentioned in **DVC**, his last name is borrowed by Dan Brown. Saunière was appointed parish priest of **Rennes-le-Château**, a small French village in the eastern Pyrenees, in 1885. Although from a poor background, he spent vast sums of money to refurbish the church and build a **Tower of the Magdalene**. After his death in 1917, speculation on the source of the priest's money ranged from a lost treasure of the Templars to buried Visigoth gold. ■ **Plantard's hoax:** During the 1960s a series of fake documents were lodged

in the **Bibliothèque Nationale** in Paris by Plantard and others. Known as **Les Dossiers Secrets**, the documents listed numerous members of the Priory of Sion, including **Sir Isaac Newton, Nicholas Flamel, Victor Hugo, Botticelli** and **Leonardo da Vinci**. Plantard also claimed to be a direct descendant of the Merovingian line of French kings, saying that Saunière had discovered documents during the refurbishment of his church that "proved" his assertions. The story was later embellished by claims that Jesus Christ had married Mary Magdalene and had a child. Mary and the child fled to Gaul for safety, where descendants of Christ's bloodline eventually married into the Merovingian dynasty.

