



## The Name of the Rose

*Umberto Eco , William Weaver (Translator) , Seán Barrett (Reading)*

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The year is 1327. Benedictines in a wealthy Italian abbey are suspected of heresy, and Brother William of Baskerville arrives to investigate. When his delicate mission is suddenly overshadowed by seven bizarre deaths, Brother William turns detective. His tools are the logic of Aristotle, the theology of Aquinas, the empirical insights of Roger Bacon—all sharpened to a glistening edge by wry humor and a ferocious curiosity. He collects evidence, deciphers secret symbols and coded manuscripts, and digs into the eerie labyrinth of the abbey, where “the most interesting things happen at night.”

### The Name of the Rose Details

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Author : Umberto Eco , William Weaver (Translator) , Seán Barrett (Reading)

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## From Reader Review The Name of the Rose for online ebook

### Kevin Neilson says

What a didactic, tedious, prolix piece of trash! Eco writes whole paragraphs in Latin and then leaves them untranslated, because he's such an awesome polyglot that chicks want to do him. Readers are also expected to know Dutch. Eco likes to hear himself talk, too. Want to hear pedantic 14th-century theological arguments that stretch on for pages and have nothing to do with the plot? You've got it! Want a lame Dan Brown mystery, with the same stilted dialogue, but embellished with entire chapters of the author showing off how much trivia he knows about ancient Arab codices? No problem! The guy is such a tool that this is how he describes himself on the jacket: *Umberto Eco is a world-famous specialist in semiotics, a distinguished historian, philosopher, aesthetician, and scholar whose interests range from St. Thomas Aquinas to James Joyce to Superman.* I'm going to hurl. Aesthetician? Please. More like *assthetician*.

Do you think I'm exaggerating? I've proof: I've copied this terrible passage wherein the hero discovers how to enter the secret chamber, using his knowledge of the genitive case in Latin. Be careful not to hurl as you read this.

[*The old Monk, William, and the narrator apprentice, Adso, are hiding out in the stables.:*]

To his right, the the third animal in line raised his head, sensing our presence, and whinnied. I smiled. "Tertius equi," I said.

"What?" William asked.

"Nothing. I was remembering poor Salvatore. He wanted to perform God knows what magic with that horse, and, with his fractured Latin he called him 'tertius equi.' Which would be the u."

"The u?" asked William, who had heard my prattle without paying much attention to it.

"Yes, because 'tertiu equi' does not mean the third horse, but the third of the horse, and the third letter of the word 'equus' is u. But this is all nonsense..."

William looked at me, and in the darkness I seemed to see his face transformed. "God bless you, Adso!" he said to me. "Why, of course, *suppositio materialis*, the discourse is presumed *de dicto* and not *de re*...What a fool I am!" He gave himself such a great blow on the forehead that I heard a clap, and I believe he hurt himself. "My boy, this is the second time today that wisdom has spoken through your mouth, first in dream and now in waking! Run, run to your cell and fetch the lamp, or, rather, both lamps we hid. Let no one see you, and join me in the church at once! Ask no questions."

...

I ran into the church. William was under the tripod and was rereading the parchment with Venantius's notes.

"Adso," he said to me, "'*primum et septimum de equator*' does not mean the first and seventh of four, but of the four, the word 'four'!" For a moment I still did not understand, but then I was enlightened: "Super thronos viginti quatuor! The writing! The verse! The words are carved over the mirror!"

"Come," William said, "perhaps we are still in time to save a life!"

## s.penkevich says

This is one of those rare near-perfect books that crosses through many genres and could be universally acclaimed. There are dozens of great reviews on here already, but this book struck me as so profound that I felt I needed to briefly put down my own thoughts. I could not bring myself to put this down and it was always a battle to not skip work and continue reading in the parking lot after lunch break. Eco crafts a novel that could be labeled as historical fiction, mystery, theology and philosophy, metafiction, a plot-boiler, literature, and many others - hell, there's even a bit of love and sex thrown in and of multiple sexual orientations! He essentially takes Sherlock Holmes and Watson and recasts them as monks in a 1300's Abbey where murder and theological debates appear around every corner. The two main plots, the murder mystery and the religious debates, weave together effortlessly, each feeding off each other as the tensions rise and the plot thickens.

This is no simple plot-driven thriller however. Eco brings a tome of medieval and christian history to the table, working it as a period piece and educates the reader as well as entertains. This has drawn a lot of comparisons to works such as Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code, yet Eco surpasses Brown in almost every category. This book truly deserve to be considered "literature", as there is much more to it than a history and research tossed into a plot. Eco can spit prose with the best of them and he will keep your dictionary close at hand. His character's speech is all believable and what fascinated me the most was how expertly he wrote the theological arguments between the Abbey occupants. Through these characters, many which were real people, he presents believable, and often fiery, multifaceted discussions on a range of topics such as heretics, vows of poverty, and gospel interpretations. Eco has a vast knowledge of medieval studies and it shows. He is also a professor of semiotics, which play a critical role in this novel. William's method of deduction hinges on his ability to "read the signs" in the world around him. He carefully crafts syllogisms, which brought me back to my logic and reasoning courses at MSU, to produce his theories. Eco puts his best foot forward and gives the reader a good introduction to his own fields of study with Rose. However, he also throws in the loophole that the world may not be comprised of any inherent meaning and that it is senseless to try to apply meaning to randomness. This could present quiet a dilemma for a monk who's life draws meaning from the gospels.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this novel was that it was a book about books. The whole novel spins around several texts, such as Aristotle and Revelations, but is made up of other books. He even draws the readers attention to this as William explains to Adso how the contents of one book can be discerned by reading other books. He strings together hefty allusions to other medieval texts and also to one of Eco's, and one of my own, personal favorite authors: Jorge Luis Borges. This novel is saturated with allusions to Borges works, there is even a blind librarian (much like the real Borges) named Jorge of Burgos. I would highly recommend picking up a copy of his collected fictions, simply because it is a phenomenal read, and to read selected stories such as *The Library of Babel* simultaneously with The Name of the Rose as Eco drew much of his inspiration for this book from Borges story. The scenes in the labyrinthine library of the abbey are gold, I wanted to get lost with William and Adso as they flipped through great works together while trying to make sense of their obfuscating surroundings. Eco's use of metafiction greatly adds to this novel, as an acute reading will show Eco is often talking more about the book itself than the actual plot with his two leads. He also leaves in plenty of untranslated Latin while having William conclude that true scholars must first master languages, and to key in on the idea that this book was a text found and translated by the character of Eco. He leaves some detective work for the reader, and I thank him for that.

You really need to read this book. There are scant few people who would not find something of interest within it's pages. It is a deep, dense ocean of a novel and not a little plot-driven pool to be waded through just for enjoyment, but with just a little effort it will provide a fountain of enjoyment. That was a weird, out of place and senseless string of water metaphors, but you get the idea. Easily a 5/5





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## Lawyer says

"The Name of the Rose" is not a book to be picked up lightly with the expectation that you, the reader, are about to embark on a traditional work of historical fiction. Umberto Eco expects much from the reader of this book. Almost immediately the unsuspecting reader will find himself dropped into the midst of the High Middle Ages, a society completely foreign for the majority of modern readers.

In historical context, the story occurs during the time the Papacy had moved from its traditional location in Italy to Avignon. John XXII is a Pope brought to the head of the Holy Roman Church by the King of France. John is not the first Pope to leave the Church's Italian home.

However, it is 1327, and great dissatisfaction pervades Europe that a French King should have political influence over the Church. Traditionally, following the division of the Roman Empire between West and East, the secular protection of the Church had fallen to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, a title held by members of the royal families of Germany. In that year, Louis IV would declare himself the King of Italy and in 1328 he would crown himself the next Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

Louis' entrance into Italy was inevitable, as King Phillip of France had encouraged an alliance with the "French" Pope through his connection with the King of Naples. Louis' sympathies, or perhaps his political acumen, led him to support the Franciscan Order, committed to the life of poverty. This was in direct contradiction to the Papal Bulls issued by John XXII, who saw the Franciscan Orders as a disruptive force among the common people. Off shoots of the Franciscan's, particularly the Pseudo-Apostles, led by Fra Dolcino, had led to absolute chaos in Italy. Dolcino's common followers attacked the wealthy to bring about a universal state of poverty. There should be no rich. There should be no poor. The ultimate goal of Dolcino was to abolish the need of the Church and place it under the authority of the people. Under this theory, there was no need for Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, or ecclesiastical offices of any type.

William of Baskerville's purpose in going to the Abbey of Melko is as an emissary of the Imperial Theologians to negotiate a meeting between legations appointed by the Pope and Louis to resolve the conflict between the Papacy, the Minorite or Franciscan orders, and Louis. What is at stake is a reinterpretation between Church and State. That the underlying issue concerns who will wield true power in Europe is obvious.

However, William's true mission is delayed. For, upon his arrival, he discovers that a young Illuminator in the Abbey's Scriptorium has met an untimely death. Was it murder or suicide? The death of a second monk, clearly indicates that someone in the closed society of the Abbey of Melk is a murderer.

Accompanied by his scribe, Adso, William sets out to investigate the deaths of the two monks. The mystery only deepens as more deaths occur. The circumstances seem to follow the sounding of the trumpets as revealed in the Revelation of John.

Eco continues to complicate the facts of William's case by revealing that the Abbey contains one of the finest libraries known in the contemporary world. Interestingly, no one but the Librarian, his assistant, or someone with the permission of the Abbot himself can gain entry to the library, which is protected by a labyrinth seemingly incapable of being navigated.

William of Baskerville is the equivalent of a Medieval Sherlock Holmes. Adso, whose French name happens to be Adson, conveniently rhyming with Watson. William is a man committed to logic. He is a student of Roger Bacon. He is a contemporary of William of Occam. It should come as no surprise that he is capable of the art of deduction through that logic, nor that he should be in possession of a pair of optical lenses, serving him as eyeglasses enabling him to read the tiny writing of a murdered monk, barely perceptible to the naked eye. The monk's almost invisible writing lead William and Adso to discover the secrets of the labyrinth and to search for a book that seems to hold the motive for the accumulating bodies, day by day.

The Abbot pointedly tells William that the matter of these deaths must be resolved prior to the arrival of the two legations. The Papal legation is headed by Bernard of Gui, an infamous inquisitor who has burned many a heretic in his long history as a defender of the faith. Surely Bernard will take over the question of the deaths at the Abbey and use them to strengthen the Pope's position that the Franciscan's philosophy of the poverty of Christ be eliminated by the Pope.

William and Adso's exploration of the labyrinth to discover a missing book, the seeming motive for the murders, intensify. And they succeed in discovering their way through the labyrinth. However, they are unsuccessful in unraveling an endless thread of textual clues leading from one manuscript to the next prior to the arrival of the two opposed legations.

As feared, the discovery of yet another body, the herbalist Severinus, leads Bernard Gui to take over the inquisition to root out the evil present in the abbey. Bernard is ruthless. Torture is an accepted practice to disclose the works of the devil. As expected, Bernard announces he intends to inform the Pope that the Franciscan orders of Poverty should be prohibited.

Nevertheless, William and Adso will solve the mystery of the labyrinth, the secret manuscript it contains, and the identity of the murderer. In keeping with my practice not to reveal any spoilers of plot, I will not address the identity of the murderer, nor the motive for the crimes.

But, I will say this. "The Name of the Rose" is a labyrinth complete within itself. While a labyrinth may contain a solution, and one may escape its twists and turns, it is not always possible to end up with an answer that leaves no ambiguity. There is more than one labyrinth present in Eco's wonderful work. One question relates to the interpretation of knowledge itself. Is knowledge finite? Are there universal truths? Or is it a matter of what appears to be the truth only subject to interpretation by individuals?

To the librarians of the Abbey Melko, knowledge was something to be protected from disclosure. As I mentioned to one friend, the library took on the connotation of Eden's Tree of Life, from which man and woman were forbidden to eat. It was knowledge gained from eating the forbidden fruit that led to the loss of innocence. Considering that the library contained many works considered by the librarians to be the work of infidels, it would be their purpose to hide those works from the innocent. Yet, the mere possession of that knowledge also led to its misinterpretation and the accusation of heresy.

Clearly, during the heated debate between the Papal and Imperial Legations, knowledge did not exist independent of the thinker's perception. One postulation of a particular theological theorem was subject to debate on the most minute detail out of political motivation.

But, Adso may well have had the most significant statement to make regarding books and their contents. It will be one of my favorite passages:

*"Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things, human or divine, that lie outside books. Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves. In the light of this reflection, the library seemed all the more disturbing to me. It*

*was then the place of long, centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing, a receptacle of powers not to ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those who had produced them or had been their conveyors."*

Even William was subject to hearing words so familiar, he knew he had read them before, but could not remember the name of the book. *"It seemed to me, as I read this page, that I had read some of these words before, and some phrases that are almost the same, which I have seen elsewhere, return to my mind?"*

Books find themselves the creator of other books, when they become so deeply planted in our subconscious. A famous contemporary example is found in Nabokov's "Lolita." Nabokov's character first appeared in a short story "Lolita," written in 1916 by Heinz von Eschwege. The story lines are quite similar. Nabokov has been said to have created artistic improprieties, or been subject to a phenomenon known as "cryptomnesia," a hidden memory of a story he had once read. Michael Marr, author of "The Two Lolitas," wrote, "Literature has always been a huge crucible in which familiar themes are continually recast..."

Perhaps James Baldwin said it best. *"It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive."*

As "The Name of the Rose" contains a multitude of Latin phrases, I think it fitting to add one more, not included in the book itself. That is "sub rosa." The concept first appears in Egyptian culture. The rose was the symbol of the Egyptian God Horus, most often represented by a child holding his finger to his mouth as if he were saying, "Shhhh." It became symbolic of silence. It reappears in Greek and Roman mythology. Venus/Aphrodite gave a rose to Cupid which served as a symbol of silence regarding her many indiscretions in love.

By the Middle Ages, the rose had a definite meaning. In those times, when a party of individuals met in a council hall, a rose was hung over the table. Whatever was discussed "under the rose" was secret and all parties meeting under the rose agreed that the subject of their discussions was confidential. Much lies under the surface of this novel. It was deemed by the characters to be secret. And so, I believe Eco would have us treat this novel in modo sub rosa, leaving each reader to discover its secrets in their own manner. The further one delves, the more secrets remain to be discovered.

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## Jason Pettus says

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted here illegally.)

**The CCLaP 100:** In which I read a hundred so-called "classics" and then write reports on whether or not I think they deserve the label

Book #7: The Name of the Rose, by Umberto Eco

### *The story in a nutshell:*

In one of the more fascinating stories of how a novelist was first drawn to his profession, scholar Umberto Eco was actually an Italian history professor and Medieval expert for years before ever turning to creative writing; according to legend, it was his thrilling and exacting retelling of actual Dark Age stories that

inspired his friends to keep urging him to write a novel based in those times, which he finally did in the late 1970s. As such, then, *The Name of the Rose* is a bizarre amalgam that you scarcely ever find in contemporary literature -- a genre actioner (murder mystery) with a lot of melodramatic elements at its core, but at the same time a detailed historical look at actual 1300s Europe, with a big part of the reason to read this book being so that one can be exposed to the meticulous detail of Eco's prose on the subject, from the period's clothing and architecture to its religious structures and philosophies. But on top of this, turns out that Eco is a postmodernist and accomplished semiotics expert as well, turning the book not just into a potboiler mystery and historical novel but indeed an entire thesis on the nature of language itself, on the meaning behind symbols, and on why human behavior repeats itself so often no matter which age you study, and no matter what the rationale behind such behavior during any given age.

Plotwise it's the story of a Franciscan monk named William of Baskerville, which is just the start of the sly references to Sherlock Holmes Eco deliberately inserts; turns out that William is also British, a champion of logic and deductive reasoning, and even has a clueless teenage assistant named Adso who stands in symbolically for the equally clueless audience. William is in Italy, helping a fellow monk investigate a mysterious death in the fortified abbey where the man leads; turns out, in fact, that this is one of the largest and most renowned of all the Christian Dark-Age monastery libraries, attracting an international team of egghead monks and a scholarly atmosphere more akin to modern universities. Both the novel and the investigation take place over seven days at this fortress/abbey, where William and Adso spend their time gathering clues, pontificating on all kinds of subjects that intellectuals in the 1300s pontificated on, and examining in detail such historical details as the church's then-ongoing debate over whether it's better to be rich or poor, as well as why the Benedictine monks and the Franciscan ones hated each other so intensely back then in the first place. This being a murder mystery, of course, the actual plot is something best left for the reader to discover on their own, although I'll warn you that the actual "whodunit" part isn't very suspenseful; as mentioned above, the real point of this being a murder mystery is for Eco to show just how similarly humans behaved back then as we do now, even as the times themselves inspire completely different motivations and excuses. (So in other words, a lot less "I love my baby's mamma" in the 1300s, a lot more "The devil made me do it.")

#### *The argument for it being a classic:*

Fans of this novel (and there are a whole lot of them; it's hard to dislike this book, frankly) argue that this book deserves the "classic" label more quickly than a lot of other contemporary novels do (after all, the book's only 27 years old at this point), precisely because it deals with issues from an age of classics; so in other words, because it's set in Medieval times, is written in Dark Age vernacular and includes historical details worthily accurate of the respected academe Eco is, fans claim that of course *The Name of the Rose* will eventually be a classic, such a foregone conclusion that we might as well declare it one now. Ah, but there's also a much stronger argument for this being considered a classic right now; as mentioned, many of those who study the esoteric academic field of semiotics claim that the novel is a perfect example of what they do, explained in layman's terms so that non-academes can finally get it. As such, then, these people claim that *The Name of the Rose* is not just an exciting *DaVinci-Code*-style historical thriller, but also a densely layered examination of stories about stories about stories, of symbols about symbols about symbols, of the meaning behind meaning behind meaning. Yeah, see what they mean when they say that semiotics is a hard thing to explain to the general public?

#### *The argument against:*

The main argument against this being a classic seems to be one brought up a lot with well-written yet contemporary books ("contemporary" in this case being any less than half a century old) -- that the book is simply too new to be able to reasonably judge whether it should rightly be called a timeless classic, one of those fabled "books you should read before you die." For just one example, when *The Name of the Rose* first came out in 1980, it was the first time anyone had ever tried setting a rational Holmesian-style mystery story within a Medieval monastery; in the years since, we've had all kinds of projects on the subject, including a popular weekly BBC/Masterpiece series. It's a great book, even its critics are quick to point out, even if

somewhat on the dry side at points (ugh, all those debates about papal decrees); but who's to say if anyone's going to even remember this novel a hundred years from now, or the notoriously spotty career Eco has since had as a novelist. (Don't forget, Eco is mostly a scholar and historian; although considered a rockstar in the academic world, his reputation as a writer of fiction is much more contentious.)

*My verdict:*

So let's make it clear right off the bat -- that from a pure entertainment standpoint, *The Name of the Rose* is one of the most delightful novels I've read in years, *years*. It's funny, it's smart, it's insightful, it's thrilling, it's nerdy; Cheese And Rice, it's everything a lover of books could possibly ever want from a well-done one. But is it a classic? Well, unfortunately, I think I'm going to have to agree with the critics on this one; that although it could very well become a classic one day, one of those *Catcher in the Rye* style "one-hit wonders" that populate so many lists, I think it's simply too early to make such a call either in a positive or negative way, especially considering Eco's otherwise spotty career as a novelist. That's part of the point of "classics" lists existing, after all, and why those who care about such lists take them so seriously; because ultimately such a designation should reflect not only how good a book itself is, but how well it's stood the test of time, of how relevant it's continued to be to generation after generation, of how timeless the author's style and word-choice. One always has to be careful when adding newish books to such lists, especially novels less than 30 years old, because we have no idea at this point how such books are going to stand the test of time; load up your classics list with such titles, and your list suddenly becomes worthless fluff, as relevant and important as a whole evening of handing out freakin' Quill Awards. It's for this reason that I'm excluding *The Name of the Rose* from my own personal Canon, although still highly encourage all of you to actually read it, just from the standpoint of pure enjoyment.

**Is it a classic?** Not yet

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**Huda Yahya says**

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## Nandakishore Varma says

This is one humdinger of a book - medieval history, Gothic noir and classic whodunit rolled into one. It's very slow - but taking your time to read it slowly provides rich dividends, IMO. This is a book to be savoured.

Brother William of Baskerville - the name, as well as his appearance marks him as a sort of medieval Sherlock Holmes - is the detective par excellence, and Adso of Melk is the perfect Watson. The story unfolds in the fashion of the classic mystery. The secret, when it is revealed, is sufficiently shocking - and points a finger to a real historic puzzle.

A word of advice: please don't watch the movie before you read the book.

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**PS: Umberto Eco incidentally passed away the day I originally posted this review. So let this be my tribute to a great writer.**

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## Tim says

If I had to spend a year on a desert island and was only allowed to take one book, this would be it.

At the time of its publication, one reviewer described `The Name of the Rose' as "a book about everything". At first glance, it may seem to be a book largely about obscure Fourteenth Century religious controversies, heresies and sects, with a murder mystery mixed in. But this is a book that rewards repeat readings (I've just finished it for the seventh time), and the heart of the novel is in its exposition of semiotics - the world as a blizzard of signs and life and thought as their constant interpretation. Just as Brother William of Baskerville guides the naïve Adso through the world of the monastery and the wider world of knowledge and reason, so Eco guides the reader through a story where few things are what they seem and everything can be read several ways.

Even the `obscure Fourteenth Century sects', which many readers find bewildering, dull or both, represent far more than they seem at first glance. The long controversy over the poverty of Christ and its application in the medieval Church forms the focus for a wide-ranging analysis of how ideals can motivate and inspire different people in different ways. In this novel we find skeptics (like William), mystical non-conformists (like Umbertino de Casale), terrorists and revolutionaries (like the Dolcinite heretics) and rigid fundamentalists (like Jorge and Bernard Gui). At the time of its first publication, the parallels between the book's religious politics and modern manifestations of the same ways of thinking, including Cold War political expediency and terrorists like the Red Brigades, would have been obvious to Italian readers. These days, in the wake of 9/11 and the Iraq War, Eco's analysis has not lost any of its resonance.

Some warnings for new readers - if you think (the truly appalling) `The Da Vinci Code' was "masterful writing", you probably want to save yourself time and effort and read something else. It's not as daunting as many make out, but "Rose" is far from a light read. Eco also deliberately made the first 100 pages a difficult read, but stick with it. All those obscure politics and odd names do make some sense after a while.

Secondly, many reviewers have complained about the untranslated Latin passages. Despite what some of them have said, these are rarely more than a line or two and usually short lines at that. Medievalists will recognise most of them anyway (they are quotes from the Vulgate, Occam and Aquinas and so on, and usually famous ones), but non-specialists will usually get the essence of them from their contexts. In almost all cases they are roughly translated or paraphrased in the dialogue that precedes or follows them anyway, so they aren't actually 'untranslated' at all - they just look that way.

Thirdly, people who approach this novel merely as a medieval whodunit a la the Brother Caedfel mysteries are likely to find 'Rose' a strain. While the mystery story forms the basis of the plot, there is a lot more to this novel than plot. Some have said they found the mystery clichéd and derivative of other mysteries. Ummm ... yes - Eco is a postmodernist. It's \*meant\* to be derivative.

The real joy of this novel is its layers of meaning, which is why it's one that can be read and re-read with new discoveries every time. It's a delight to read and great exercise for the mind and spirit, as well as a counter to those who think the Middle Ages was simply a period of superstition and ignorance. Far from being an anachronism or a prefiguration of more 'enlightened' times, William of Baskerville represents the medieval voices of reason, innovation and logic that are ignored by most popular representations of this badly misunderstood period.

A must read - but with your brain well and truly in high gear.

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## Mohammed Arabey says

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## Adriana says

I had wanted to read *The Name of the Rose* for a long time, mostly because I enjoy both fiction and non-fiction about the Middle Ages, and also because of its importance as a piece of modern Italian literature. Although I liked it for the most part, I have to admit that it disappointed me in many ways. As a mystery novel, I was expecting it to be a fast-paced page-turner, whereas in reality *The Name of the Rose* is very slow and ponderous. I appreciate the attention to detail and the minute and accurate descriptions of real historical events, but I feel that the narrators voice often became mired in these details, to the detriment of the plot. When the narrator, Adso, slipped into these trains of thought that were only tangential to the story, I frequently forgot what was going on by the time he emerged. In addition, much of the historical background read like a text-book, and not a novel. There were too many dates and names to keep track of, and while these elements may have been central to the story, who/what they were was never fully explained. On the positive side, the translation is done beautifully, and I can only imagine that the original Italian is even more agile and lyrical. For those who want to stick with a 500 page novel, *The Name of the Rose* can be quite rewarding. I feel that I learned a lot about life in a medieval Italian monastery, and about the most important philosophical and religious concerns of the time. I just would have preferred it if Eco had focused more on writing a cohesive, engaging novel, rather than a history lesson surrounded by the vague framework of a plot.

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## Matthew says

Go ahead, throw your tomatoes at me!

I know that in general this book is loved. Many count it amongst their favorites. I found it very dull and very boring. I had an extremely hard time staying interested in the story, which is weird for me and mystery/suspense stories. Never have I fought so hard to finish a book (in general, I do not DNF).

So, if you couldn't stand it either, let me know that I am not alone.

For those that loved it and are ready to launch rotten produce at me:

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## Whitaker says

Forget Christopher Hitchens. Away with that Richard Doggins guy. For a truly penetrating look at religion and atheism, Umberto Eco, he da man.

*The Name of the Rose* is a profoundly nihilistic book. It is ostensibly a book about a murder mystery: A man, a monk rather, Brother William, arrives with his assistant, Adso, at an abbey high in the Italian Alps. A murder has been committed, and Brother William will apply reason and logic—a Sherlock avant la lettre—to deduce the murderer. Or does he? He does indeed find out the process by which the victims die. And there is a villain.

The novel begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And it then proceeds to systematically dismantle all words—merely signifiers leading to other signifiers labyrinth without end. Umberto Eco stares in the abyss, and the abyss laughs mockingly back.

I was profoundly moved, depressed, and discombobulated. Five stars –whatever the hell that means.

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## Walter says

Eco's writing is so infectious, lively, and likeable that I thought it appropriate to pen my review in his style.

### 1. *In which I, as reader, feel used.*

Yes, I'm almost certain Eco wrote this thing for the sole purpose of informing us of how knowledgeable he is of the finer points of monastic orders, book trivia, and medieval philosophy.

Knowing most would not put up with this crap for 500 pages, he wisely chose to interrupt his many digressions on poverty, heretics, whether or not Jesus laughed, Aristotle, architecture, etc, with an amateurish mystery plot. It's pedantry disguised as fiction. I've been used.

### 2. *In which the pace sucks.*

Just when you thought it was getting interesting, just when the plot is getting meatier and it grabs your attention, here comes a dissertation or a long drawn description of doors, churches, parchments, beasts, characters that are totally irrelevant to the plot, and backstories that do nothing to shed light on the events. You must often wait a chapter or two to get back to the mystery that drove you to read this thing in the first place. Do yourself a favor and quit after he has solved his first "mystery" (page 25?).

### 3. *In which its heavy-handedness is offensive.*

Lurk around bookworms long enough and you're bound to find some pompous pseudo intellectual enraptured by the rich, textured, yet subtle literary clues so artfully crafted into this piece: "*You mean to tell me that Jorge De Burgos, the blind monk, is actually a nod to Jorge Luis Borges, the blind Argentinian writer? Whaaat?*" So clever...

I'm sure the late Borges heard this, face-palmed, and then turned in his grave.

**EDIT:** I have been duly informed, perhaps by the type referenced above, that Borges was actually alive when this "work" was published. He died shortly thereafter...

**4.** *In which the plot fails to deliver.*

Provided you made it as far as the end, all in hopes of finding a conclusion so stellar as to redeem the drudgery that preceded it, what one is most likely to find is disappointment. Most, by the time they get there, will already know who the culprit is, and given the setting and the tools the protagonists are carrying, what will happen in the final scene.

Is it a fantastic twist? A conspiracy centuries in the making? No. Just lunatic ravings akin to the ones that drove Eco to romanticize about love, lust, knowledge, etc...

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## **Jayson says**

**(A-) 84%** | Very Good

*Notes:* A medieval Sherlock Holmes manages sectarian politics and investigates serial murders in a dense but effective read.

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