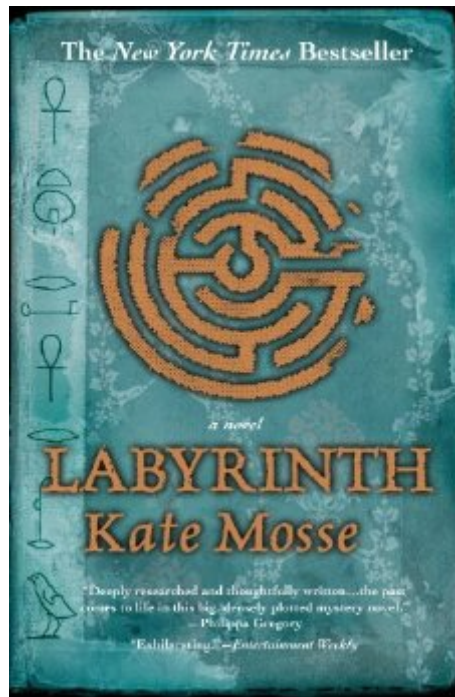


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Labyrinth (Languedoc Trilogy Book 1)



Synopsis

July 2005. In the Pyrenees mountains near Carcassonne, Alice, a volunteer at an archaeological dig, stumbles into a cave and makes a startling discovery—two crumbling skeletons, strange writings on the walls, and the pattern of a labyrinth. Eight hundred years earlier, on the eve of a brutal crusade that will rip apart southern France, a young woman named Alais is given a ring and a mysterious book for safekeeping by her father. The book, he says, contains the secret of the true Grail, and the ring, inscribed with a labyrinth, will identify a guardian of the Grail. Now, as crusading armies gather outside the city walls of Carcassonne, it will take a tremendous sacrifice to keep the secret of the labyrinth safe.

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Customer Reviews

I was very much looking forward to this book. I know it has been a big hit in England, and I am a fan of this type of fiction. Saying that, I was very disappointed. Brief summary, no spoilers: The book starts off in the present, with Alice Tanner working on an archaeological dig. She is our stereotypical heroine, spunky and smart, with a bit of a temper. Alice stumbles on a discovery - a hidden cave which contains 2 old skeletons along with some bizarre old relics, including a ring with a labyrinth

pattern on it. The police come to the site, and we meet some of the characters that inhabit the present day sections of this novel. There are questionable police officers, a malevolent and mysterious official named Authie, along with Alice's friend Shelagh, who is also working on the dig. Shortly we will meet a strange (and wise) old man named Audric Baillard. We then are introduced to an obviously evil (and wealthy and beautiful, of course) woman named Marie-Cecile and her equally rotten-to-the-core son, Francois-Baptiste. No shades of gray here, these characters are almost cartoonish in their one-dimensional evil. The story goes back and forth in time. We meet Alice's counterpart, a heroic (and spunky and smart) woman named Alais, starting in the year 1209. She is a noble woman, and finds out her father is part of a mysterious sect that is entrusted with keeping the secrets of the Grail. This is a long book, and though I do admit that I found *parts* of it a page-turner, a lot of it was not. I found myself looking forward to finishing, because I figured with all this detail and action, the ending would be spectacular. It wasn't. Pick up this book and read a couple of chapters. If it grabs you, then this may be the book for you. If not, don't expect it to get any better.

I approached this book with mixed emotions. I am not an advocate of the format this book takes, i.e. switching between the present day and then back several hundred years. This style has a tendency to make the story disjointed to say the least. However in this particular book it seemed to work quite well and I cannot think of any other way the story could have been told. The book begins on July 4 2005 at an archaeological dig in the mountains in South Western France. Alice a volunteer at the dig has decided to do a little work away from the other members of the dig. She finds something (either by chance or destiny) that will change her life and the lives of many of the people around her. She has unearthed a time bomb that has been ticking away for centuries. . . This book is a unique twist on the much told tale of the Grail and to go too deeply into the plot would be to spoil the book for the reader. As I have said the plot twists and turns, backwards and forwards through the centuries. It involves a family in the early 13th century, who have been given the task of helping to protect ancient books and symbols that will allow the grail to be used, for good or evil. There are people in the 21st. Century that are drawn back into the past by blood ties with the Pelletier family. They become involved in a sequence of events that they have no control over and become inextricably tied up with the fate of the Cathars 800 years ago. I enjoyed this book immensely. It was totally unlike anything I had read about the subject before.

I was really excited about Labyrinth when I first heard about it - finally, a great historical adventure

with ****women**** as the protagonists! Medieval heretics, Grial legends, historical accuracy, lots of suspense - I settled down happily to enjoy a thumping good read. Unfortunately, the novel fell far short of my expectations. It's not a bad novel by any means, and I really liked the parallel structure of the modern story featuring Alice Tanner and the medieval one featuring Alais and the Cathars. But - where was the editor?? Far too much of Labyrinth drags horribly as Mosse describes every single tiny little thing that her characters can see, smell, taste. I love sensory detail in novels, but there's waaaay too much here, and the novel keeps stopping dead while Mosse gets carried away in description. At the same time, the characters aren't described in anything like as much detail as I wanted. Alice remained a complete cipher to me to the last page. She's far from being the strong, capable protagonist I'd hoped for, and I was intensely irritated when she meets Will - another main character - by complete coincidence. Important plot points should not turn on coincidence. The writing is - over-done, to say the least. Lots of over-wrought similes which I had to go back and read again as they didn't make much sense, many disjointed sentences and fragments, and lots of untranslated French, which didn't bother me but which would probably irritate readers who don't understand the language. The ending is a huge disappointment that falls totally flat. For me, the best aspect of the novel was Mosse's depiction of Southern France, which made me want to jump on the next plane to Carcassonne. A career with the French Tourism Board beckons for Kate Mosse, perhaps? With a damn good edit to tidy up the language and the numerous plot holes, this could have been a truly excellent novel. Very disappointing.

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