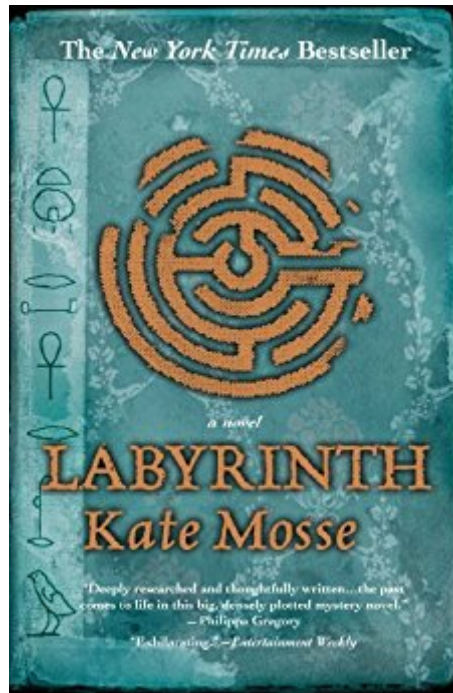


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Labyrinth (Languedoc Trilogy Book 1)



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

LABYRINTH by Kate Mosse is one of those books that have a superb beginning, and a not-so-good ending. I loved the way this book started, with naive young-for-her-age Alice Tanner volunteering at an archaeological dig in south-western France. Something draws her up the hillside. She finds an

old buckle. Then there is a rumbling sound and a huge boulder moves aside to show a door in the rock. Yes, I know this strains credulity, but the writing was so good, I bought it. After this set-up, we move back into the past, from July 2005 to July 1209. Alice Tanner is now 17-year-old Alais Pelletier, the favorite daughter of a Bertrand Pelletier, steward to Viscount Trencavel, who holds court at Carcassonne. Storm clouds are rumbling over this region as a huge army of French barons and Catholic priests is sweeping south to stamp out the Cathar heresy and grab those southern lands. Alais and her family get caught up in the "ethnic cleansing" that follows, as the northern French lords impose their ways upon the south, and try to eradicate the culture. As others have remarked, this story is too long. I agree. I found myself skipping large chunks of it towards the end. And I think the reason for that is because the author (perhaps in a rush to finish this book) allows her writing to become careless. For example, she puts large chunks of explanation into the mouth of Audric Baillard, which is boring for the reader to read. This is a pity, because the beginning of this book shows that Ms. Mosse can write compelling prose. Three stars.

This book is filled with well developed characters, at times stereotypical protagonists and villains. I'm glad I took 4 years of French because there are numerous references written in French that are not translated for the reader in the text, though the most difficult are. It's an intriguing story in the present day within another story from the 12th century in southern France. If you like historical fiction and suspense, give this book a try.

I live in an area where Languedoc is the local patois so the book was pretty much required-reading for me and I enjoyed it. The structure of the book is chronologically quite complicated but evidently well-researched. Her descriptions of landscape are evocative though I'm not sure what 'scrub' vegetation is and 'flint' seemed to turn up where it doesn't belong. (OK a bit nit-picking I know, but still.....) The brutality of this period makes the massacre at Oradour sur Glane in 1944 seem almost routine. I'm not too sure about the central theme though which is a bit Dennis Wheatley, or DaVinci Code-ish but the story rattles along in an exciting way towards a symbolic conclusion.

This story redeemed itself in the final 25% of the book. The first part was enjoyable enough, but not really compelling. I didn't feel drawn to find out what would happen next. I began at some point to draw some guesses about what would occur, who was really who, etc. I was right about the guesses, but could not have really foreseen everything. It really picked up for me when Alice arrived at the mountaintop home of Baillard and he told his story. The ending was ultimately satisfying. I'm

glad I didn't give up along the way. In the final analysis, I prefer this interpretation of the Grail story to the idea of a chalice or some other relic.

The book was great, except that I do not speak French and there were a lot of not translated passages, just a little frustrating!

This was one of the dullest books I've ever read especially for a suspense novel. Too bad, because the idea behind it was good. I kept hoping the plot would pick up. Maybe if it was made into a movie, it would 'read' better.

This was a fascinating historical novel that juxtaposes 11th century struggles with 21st century realizations. The deep spiritual and cultural insights were very engaging. I found it hard to put down. My only criticism was that I occasionally confused characters with similar names. But overall I loved it and can't wait to read her next book.

Labyrinth was an entertaining read, capturing my attention for a day and a half. However, let me add one caveat: when I read this book, I had been in bed sick for several weeks and was devouring any book that I could obtain. The plot was annoyingly transparent and the characters were exasperatingly shallow and underdeveloped, but the overall story **does** tickle the imagination. It reminded me of the Druid saying "the songs of our ancestors are also the songs of our children." That said, beware of the whiplash that the frequent time shifts in this book can cause! Two things I do appreciate are Ms. Mosse's research into the story of the Cathars and her appreciation of southern France. As a once-fluent Francophile, I had no problems with the French terms used, nor did I have any problems with the L'Occitane dialect used. Of course, I have no problem even when I am completely unfamiliar with a language, as I use online dictionaries if I don't know a word....and I **do** love learning new words. Native English speakers can be so damn lazy! Come on people, learn a thing or two! I do agree with others who've panned the poorly-executed similes and metaphors! Ugh, I was disgusted with quite a few. If you're looking for an easy, quick, read that is imaginative, this book might interest you. If you're looking for **literature**, don't bother with this novel: though it's partially a piece of historical fiction, it also reads like a trashy romance novel.

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