



## *Pushing the Limits of Knowledge* Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

This theme explores the concept of knowledge, and how it overlaps and diverges with information and learning. In your discussions consider what makes different types of knowledge important over time.

### *The Lost Symbol*

**Dan Brown, Fiction.** As the story opens, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon is summoned unexpectedly to deliver an evening lecture in the U.S. Capitol Building. Within minutes of his arrival, however, the night takes a bizarre turn. A disturbing object - artfully encoded with five symbols - is discovered in the Capitol Building. Langdon recognizes the object as an ancient invitation...one meant to usher its recipient into a long-lost world of esoteric wisdom.

When Langdon's beloved mentor, Peter Solomon - a prominent Mason and philanthropist - is brutally kidnapped, Langdon realizes his only hope of saving Peter is to accept this mystical invitation and follow wherever it leads him. Langdon is instantly submerged into a clandestine world of Masonic secrets, hidden history, and never-before-seen locations - all of which seem to be dragging him toward a single, inconceivable truth. - *goodreads.com*

- How did *The Lost Symbol* change the way you think about the way buildings are designed and the intention of their architects? What most surprised you about the tributes to the past—and visions of the future—that are captured in the landmarks of Washington, D.C? How do our modern-day buildings capture and tell our history similarly to what we learn from edifices such as Egyptian pyramids or Roman ruins?
- At the heart of the novel is a quest to unlock wisdom, and the need to keep it "locked" because it can be used for destructive purposes. Do you believe that freedom of knowledge (such as a source like Wikipedia) is a blessing or a curse?
- We used to believe that the Mayan culture (in Mexico) was a peaceful agrarian society until a remarkable discovery unlocked the mystery of the Mayan glyphs revealing the challenges and wars in their history. What other mysteries do you think are still “unread” in other cultures and how might new science or technologies help uncover them?

