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## Movie Review: National Treasure: Book of Secrets

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When I was a kid, one of the things that I loved most about movies was the feeling of excitement and anticipation of just being there. Going to the movies was an experience, and waiting for the film to start was half the fun.

For the first time in years, I had that same experience when I watched "National Treasure: Book of Secrets." The sequel to 2004's surprise blockbuster "[National Treasure](#)", this film uses many of the same stretches of logic that test the imagination and cause at least a couple of rolls of the eyes. However, it also takes viewers on a similar roller coaster ride that is a blast at every twist and turn.

**Rating:** PG  
**Country:** USA  
**Release Date:** December 21, 2007  
**Distributor:** Buena Vista  
**Director:**  
 • Jon Turteltaub  
**Cast:**  
 • Nicolas Cage  
 • Justin Bartha  
 • Diane Kruger  
 • Jon Voight  
 • Helen Mirren  
 • Ed Harris  
 • Harvey Keitel  
 • Bruce Greenwood  
**Related Sites:**  
 • [Official Site](#)  
 • [IMDb - National Treasure: Book of Secrets](#)

Of course, we have to put everything into perspective. Disney has rediscovered how to create an air of anticipation by doing what they've always done best -- cartoons. I was pleasantly surprised by the first new Goofy cartoon since 1961, "How to Hook up Your Home Theatre." The cartoon was completely modern, yet classic, and it put the audience in the mood for what was to come.

"Book of Secrets" will look and feel familiar to anyone who saw the first movie. Director [Jon Turteltaub](#) and producer [Jerry Bruckheimer](#) have crafted this film to appeal to fans of the original, while making it accessible to those who are starting with the second half of the series. The movie opens much as its predecessor did -- in the past. The plot focuses around John Wilkes Booth's assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, and we shouldn't be surprised to learn that somehow, Ben Gates ([Nicolas Cage](#)) is involved. It seems that just before the murder, Booth asked Gates' great-great-grandfather to interpret a cipher, and the answer cost the man his life.

**Grade:** B+



Fast-forward 142 years, and Ben, on the heels of his successful find of the Templar Treasure (from the first film) is now a prominent lecturer. The family, once considered crackpots, is respectable for the first time -- but not for long. Mitch Wilkinson ([Ed Harris](#)), another treasure hunter with a family tree that reaches into the Civil War, casts doubt about the reasons for the meeting between Booth and Gates.

Cagey treasure hunter

**"Cagey Treasure Hunter."** *The search for secrets takes Nicolas Cage and Diane Kruger to both Buckingham Palace and the White House.*

Wilkinson asserts that Ben's ancestor was the architect of the assassination -- and once again, the Gates family is plunged back into shame.

Predictably, Ben decides that he has to hunt for treasure one more time, not for riches, but to clear the family name. Along for the ride is the same crew that helped him achieve success the first time: Riley Poole ([Justin Bartha](#)), who is trading on the fame from the Templar Treasure, albeit unsuccessfully; Abigail Chase ([Diane Kruger](#)), Ben's now former flame, who still has connections within the government; and Patrick Gates ([Jon Voight](#)), Ben's dad, who is deeply wounded by the accusations made against his great-grandfather. A new addition is Emily Appleton ([Helen Mirren](#)), Ben's mom, a

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And just what is the treasure this time? Without revealing too much, it appears that the code that Booth wanted translated was yet another clue to a map that points to a treasure that rivals the gold of the Knights Templar. If the Confederates had been able to land their hands on this gold, so the theory goes, they could have used the funds to reengage the North in the Civil War indefinitely. The clues Ben finds will lead him and his compatriots to Paris, London and Mount Rushmore. It also takes the Gates clan into the Oval Office of the White House in search of the President's ([Bruce Greenwood](#)) legendary "secret book," a item that will have urban legend search engines working overtime. This book supposedly holds information ranging from the deepest secrets of George Washington to the truth about the Kennedy assassination and Area 51. It also has a key to the legendary City of Gold.

 Searching for clues

Does "Book of Secrets" play fast and loose with facts and history? Absolutely. There's no way that all of the dots connect -- at least not in a way that makes complete sense. And yet, the story is spun in such a way that we don't really care. This movie is not about "the truth." It's about having a great time in the theatre, much in the same way as we did with the movies of the ["Indiana Jones"](#) series. This is old-fashioned movie-making at its finest -- a thrill ride that would have been a blast in any generation.

**"The Treasure Hunt Continues."** *Ben Gates (Nicholas Cage) searches for more clues to help clear his family's name.*

Citing any of the actors specifically as outstanding might be possible, but it's not any one performance that makes "Book of Secrets" worth watching. Yes, Cage is engaging as the leader of the pack, Kruger is testy and gorgeous as his leading lady and Bartha is the necessary comic relief that keeps this from getting too boring. The additions of Oscar nominee Harris and Oscar winner Mirren were definite upgrades to the cast. But all

of them are passengers on a vehicle that is better than the sum of its parts. Turteltaub obviously understands this genre, and he works every nuance possible to keep the audience teetering on the edge. Further, he does it in a way that lets viewers of all ages enjoy the film. Parents should know up-front that some of the action might get a little perilous, but there's virtually no bad language to offend, and the violence is almost bloodless. Amazingly, the movie's action kept me so enraptured that it was after the movie was over that I realized those details.

Near the end of the end of the film, the President asks Ben about a "page 47" of the secret book, and questions whether or not Ben can help with that. Ben nods and says that the page is "life-altering" -- an obvious hint toward a possible "National Treasure 3." While this film could never be considered life-altering, it's enough fun that we can only hope that sequel becomes a reality.

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