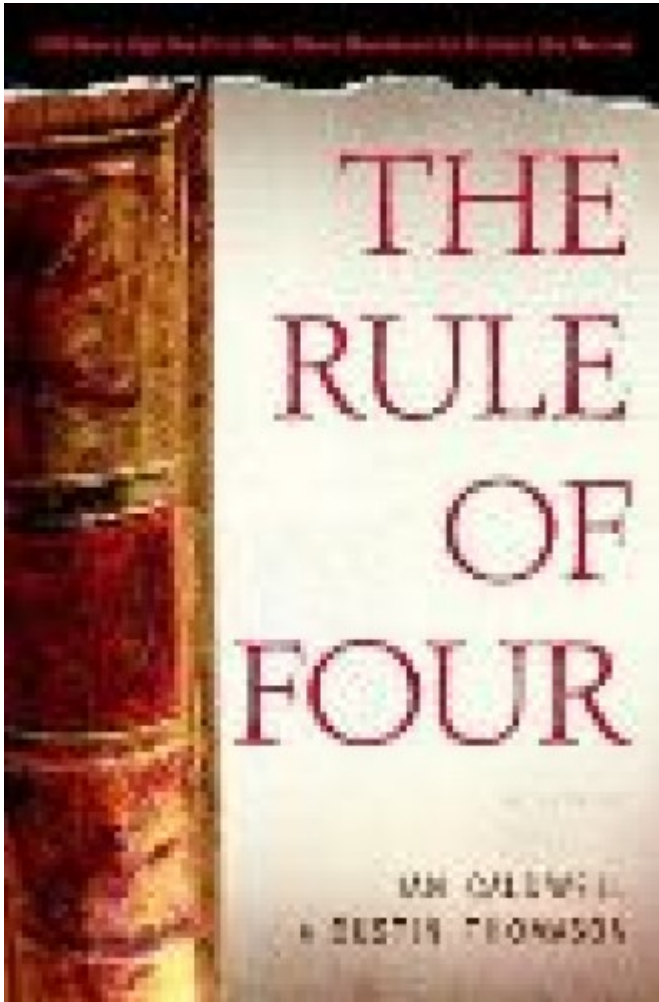


The Rule of Four

reviewed by [Trudy Bush](#) in the [February 22, 2005](#) issue

In Review



The Rule of Four

Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason

Dial

How has a novel so erudite maintained its place week after week on the *New York Times* best-seller list? Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason, both still in their 20s, give

us a *Da Vinci Code* thriller with an Ivy League education. Set at Princeton University, Caldwell's alma mater (Thomason went to Harvard), the book is as much about college friendship and romance as it is about the quest to solve an ancient puzzle—a quest that involves danger, mayhem and murder.

Fierce academic rivalries have wrecked the lives of the three older men who become obsessed with solving the riddle of a hypnotic Renaissance text. Two students, equally caught in the book's web, race through their senior year, coming ever closer to the solution—one that promises not only academic fame but treasure of an unexpected kind. The puzzles the two must solve (with more than a little help from their friends) are ingenious, and involve learning and imparting lots of Renaissance history.

This is a young man's book. It is as focused on resolving father-son issues and on exploring the nature of friendship and the meaning of life as it is on solving mysteries and escaping danger. But it may also appeal to some older readers, perhaps because it is soaked in nostalgia for an idyllic past.