Vagabond, the second entry in Bernard Cornwells Grail Quest series, has been eagerly anticipated by those who read the first book, and it doesnt disappoint. Thomas has managed to survive the battle of Crécy. Still nursing his wounds, he is dispatched by the king on a mission to look into the matter of his fathers inheritance, which is obscurely connected to the Holy Grail. This most precious relic of the Christian faith is a much sought-after object, offering the power of total victory in war to its owner. But Thomas finds himself in the middle of a battle against an army invading the North of England, and other shadowy forces pursuing the grail are prepared to slaughter anyone who stands in their way. In the ruins of his birthplace, Thomas discovers more about his father, and a dangerous voyage to France brings him up against his cousin and arch-enemy, Count of Astarc Guy Vexville. The stage is set for a merciless showdown.

Thomas is a protagonist drawn quite as pithily as his much-loved predecessor, and the sheer verve of Cornwells storytelling here is irresistible. We are plunged into a distant age: bloody, colourful and dangerous. Roll on, volume three! --Barry Forshaw, Amazon.co.uk
Personal Review: Vagabond by Bernard Cornwell
If we were taught history the way Bernard Cornwell writes it, we'd all be historians. Vagabond, the middle of Cornwell's superb Grail Quest series, is as raucous, brutal and riveting as the best contemporary thrillers, yet manages to stay close to the historical record, slashing and burning life and meaning into the early days of what would later be called The Hundred Years War. I was mesmerized by the prequel, The Archers Tale, finding it the most illuminating and insightful primer of Medieval England found between pages. But after reading Vagabond, I'm convinced that only a time machine could deliver a more vivid description of love, war, politics, and religion in those turbulent, treacherous times.

Back from Archer is Thomas of Hookton, the English archer whose black-yew bow makes widows of enemies while he is half-heartedly seeking the Holy Grail, part of his family's history that Thomas would prefer didn't exist. Instead, he continues on a more personal quest, hunting down his murderous cousin Guy Vexille who torched Thomas' village and murdered his father while seeking the Grail for himself.

In Vagabond, it is 1347 and Cornwell resumes his tale in northern England. King Edward III, still in France holding down his conquests in Normandy and Brittany, has apparently left his northern flank exposed, inviting the Scots, with some prodding from their French allies, to stream into a vulnerable England. Cornwell's description of the very real Battle of Nevilles Cross between the Scots and an outmanned English army is a literary classic, from the strategy and tactics to the stink and gore of war fought helmet-to-helmet and shield-to-shield in violence and carnage simply unimaginable in today's gentler times. But aside from documenting the mechanics and horrors of war in the 14th century, Cornwell, as usual, spins his fiction in a fascinating backdrop of the culture and lore of the period. The power of the Church, as well as the hypocrisy, is never quite as disturbing as when told by Cornwell, burnished in this episode by the righteousness terror of the Inquisition. Indeed, the medieval punching bag Thomas finds little respite this time around, having his suffering delivered by the hand of a sadistic priest.

In short, if you love an action-packed page-turner, but prefer some education and even a bit of history infused with your time spent reading, I couldn't recommend a better author than Bernard Cornwell, and a better saga than The Grail Series. This one just may be the best of the bunch, but then, I'm looking forward to giving sequel The Heretic a chance to better it.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Vagabond by Bernard Cornwell 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!