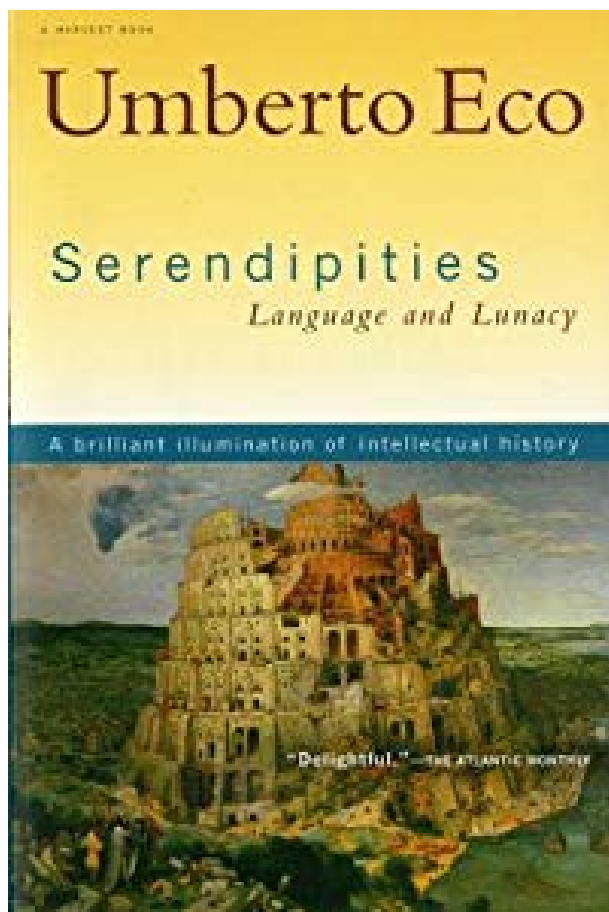


Serendipities: Language and Lunacy



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Serendipities is a careful unraveling of the fabulous and the false, a brilliant exposition of how unanticipated truths often spring from false ideas. From Leibniz's belief that the I Ching illustrated the principles of calculus to Marco Polo's mistaking a rhinoceros for a unicorn, Umberto Eco offers a dazzling tour of intellectual history, illuminating the ways in which we project the familiar onto the strange to make sense of the world. Uncovering layers of mistakes that have shaped human history, Eco offers with wit and clarity such instances as Columbus's voyage to the New World, the fictions that grew around the Rosicrucians and Knights Templar, and the linguistic endeavors to recreate the language of Babel, to show how serendipities can evolve out of mistakes. With erudition, anecdotes, and scholarly rigor, this new collection of essays is sure to entertain and enlighten any reader with a passion for the curious history of languages and ideas.