

*The True Story Behind*  
"A Forest Forager Finds a Fabulous Fortune"

**TEACHER PAGE**

This extension activity is for use with the [Mini-Mystery Progressive Puzzle: A Forest Forager Finds a Fabulous Fortune](#). The four-puzzle set is a mystery about a hidden chest of valuables worth \$2 million. Clues about the location of the treasure can be found in a poem. Students work through the puzzles to determine the location and the name of the one who finds it.

The puzzle plot is based on a true story. A millionaire art dealer really did hide a treasure chest filled with gold nuggets, rare coins, and other valuables in the Rocky Mountains and embedded clues in a poem. **Students can read the true story in the handout provided (next page)**. A word bank is included to help students with challenging vocabulary.



**EXTENSIONS for CRITICAL THINKING**

Once students have read the story behind the puzzle set, give them several minutes to jot down questions they have. What would they like to know that wasn't mentioned in the story? Questioning is an important critical thinking skill and can be developed. If time allows, you might like to share this [kid-friendly explanation of lawsuits](#).

Discuss questions and possible answers. Then, use these additional questions to enhance understanding.

❖ WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "SUE" SOMEONE?

When there is a disagreement between two "parties" (companies, people, etc.), the one(s) who feel they've been "wronged" in some way may file a lawsuit. A lawsuit is the official notification that one party is "suing" another party. This means that they want to have their case heard in court so that a judge or jury can settle the disagreement. The entire process is called LITIGATION, the official court proceeding by which disagreements are handled in court.

❖ WHAT HAPPENS IN COURT?

Both parties may hire lawyers (or attorneys) to help them make their case (argument). The PLAINTIFF is the one who files the lawsuit and makes the complaint official. In this case Bruno Raphoz, the Frenchman, was the plaintiff. DEFENDANTS present arguments to defend their point of view in the case.

❖ WHY WAS BRUNO RAPHOZ'S CASE DISMISSED?

The case was dismissed, meaning it was never heard in court, because a judge determined that court proceedings were not followed or that there was not enough evidence to support the claim that the plaintiff, Raphoz, was making.

❖ ARE THERE OTHER EXAMPLES OF ADULT TREASURE HUNTS?

Yes! Another famous treasure hunt was started when a puzzle book called [The Secret](#) was published in 1982. Written by Byron Preiss, the book contains 12 poems and 12 detailed paintings that hint at city locations around the United States. In each of the 12 cities, Preiss buried hard plastic (plexiglass) boxes containing ceramic casques. Inside each casque is a key. Find the key and you can exchange it for a jewel. [The MIT Mystery Hunt](#) is a puzzlehunt competition held annually on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. If your students would like to try one out, I've created a puzzlehunt based on the MIT Mystery Hunt. You can find it [here](#) and learn more [here](#).

[RIDDLE POEMS](#)

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# *The True Story Behind* A Forest Forager Finds A Fabulous Fortune

On December 19, 2010, a millionaire art dealer and author named Forrest Fenn hid a treasure chest in the Rocky Mountains. He left clues as to its location in his book *The Thrill of the Chase*. Throughout the book, readers could find hints and, in the chapter entitled "Gold and More," there was a poem containing exactly nine clues that Fenn claimed would guide a treasure-seeker to the chest.

Many fortune seekers endeavored to unlock the clues in the poem, and Fenn shared updates on a blog. A little over a decade passed before a 32-year-old medical student named Jack Stuef was able to decipher the clues and find the treasure. The gold nuggets, rare coins, jewelry, and gemstones in the chest were said to be valued at over two million dollars.

Soon after Stuef discovered the chest, he sent a photograph to Fenn, who confirmed that he had found the treasure. Stuef did not want his identity known at that time.

The following year, another treasure seeker, Frenchman Bruno Raphoz, filed a \$10 million lawsuit against Fenn's estate. According to Raphoz, he'd informed Fenn that he'd figured out the location. Raphoz said he had disclosed his solution to Fenn and was planning to retrieve the treasure chest. However, his plans to travel to the U.S. were delayed by the 2020 pandemic. In the lawsuit, Raphoz claimed that Fenn had deliberately moved the chest before he had a chance to get to it. Unfortunately for Raphoz, the suit was dismissed, and a later complaint was also dismissed.

## Vocabulary

**forager** – one who gathers and searches for things in the wild

**endeavored** – tried hard

**decade** – a period of ten years

**confirmed** – verified; established as true

**lawsuit** – a formal complaint or claim brought before a court

**estate** – everything a person owns

**disclosed** – made known

**deliberately** – with intention; on purpose

## Questions I Have

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