

The True Story Behind
"Ransomed Ruby in the Ratatouille"
TEACHER PAGE

This extension activity is for use with the [Mini-Mystery Progressive Puzzle: Ransomed Ruby in the Ratatouille](#). The four-puzzle set is a "crack-the-case" mystery in which a diner at a cafe finds a valuable gem in his stew. The police are called in to investigate and clues are revealed as students solve the puzzles. The case is solved when puzzle solutions are used to identify the culprit.

The puzzle plot is based on more than one story. One is about a notorious and eccentric jewel thief who is said to have once hidden a string of stolen diamonds in his dinner soup. The other is The American Museum of Natural History Heist, which took place in 1964 and was dramatized in a 1975 film. **Students can read about these cases in the handout provided (next page).** A word bank is included to help students with challenging vocabulary.



QUESTIONS STUDENTS MAY ASK

❖ WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO JOSEPH GRIZZARD?

Joseph Grizzard served time in prison for crimes related to his part in another heist known as The Great Pearl Robbery in which a valuable pearl necklace was stolen. He was never directly involved in the stealing of jewels, but served as a "fence," which means he would buy the stolen goods from the thieves, then turn around and sell them at a much higher price. The buyers were usually unaware that they were purchasing stolen jewels. Grizzard died in 1923 from health issues and left behind a comfortable sum, but many believe he had hidden some of his fortune.

❖ WHO PAID THE RANSOM IN THE MUSEUM HEIST?

A wealthy businessman from Florida, John D. MacArthur, paid the \$25,000 ransom to secure the return of the DeLong Star Ruby. After months of negotiations through several channels, an unknown holder of the gem left it at an agreed-upon spot: in a phone booth at a large gas station / rest stop on a highway near Palm Beach, Florida. It had been eleven months since the robbery.

❖ HOW MUCH WERE THE STOLEN GEMS WORTH?

The estimated worth of the gems taken from the American Museum of Natural History was \$410,000, which today would be valued at over \$3 million.

❖ WHAT IS THE LAW CONCERNING JEWEL THEFT?

The value of stolen jewels generally determines the seriousness of the crime and the charges. In the United States, it varies from state to state, but petty theft is charged when the stolen items are valued at \$1000 or less. The stories told here qualified as grand theft. The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) has special departments and task teams to work on cases of stolen art and jewels.

[These facts about gemstones](#) are interesting. Only FOUR types are considered precious. All others are semi-precious.

The True Story Behind Ransomed Ruby in the Ratatouille

A wealthy and well-educated London man named Joseph Grizzard had a nice family and owned a beautiful home. He has also been called a criminal mastermind.

According to one story, Grizzard and his wife were hosting a small dinner party in 1909 when there was a knock at the door. It was an inspector from Scotland Yard who, after apologizing for interrupting the dinner party, politely informed Grizzard that he had a search warrant.

Grizzard let the inspector and his team into the house to conduct their search. They were looking for stolen diamonds, and as they searched, Grizzard seemed relaxed, leaning back in his chair and smoking a cigar.

The police searched all through the house but found nothing and eventually left.

After their departure, Grizzard went back to eating his soup. To the astonishment of the dinner guests, when his bowl was empty, he fished out a string of glittering diamonds.

This story inspired one piece in the puzzle: the idea of hiding jewels in soup or stew. But another true story inspired the idea of a ransom being demanded for the return of stolen jewels.

In October of 1964, twenty-four precious gems were stolen from The American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Among the stolen stones were the Star of India sapphire, the Eagle Diamond, and the DeLong Star Ruby. Ten of the gems were eventually recovered, and one – the ruby- was returned after a ransom payment of \$25,000 was paid. The other gems are still missing. The story of this heist was dramatized in a movie released in 1975.

Vocabulary

ransom – some kind of payment demanded for the return of someone or something that was taken or stolen

ratatouille – a vegetable stew first made in France

mastermind – someone with great intelligence who can plan complex schemes

inspector – in London, an inspector is a police detective
Scotland Yard –the headquarters of the London Police

search warrant – an official document issued by a judge or other authority that permits police to do a specific search

heist – robbery

dramatized – acted out; present as a performance

QUESTIONS I HAVE
