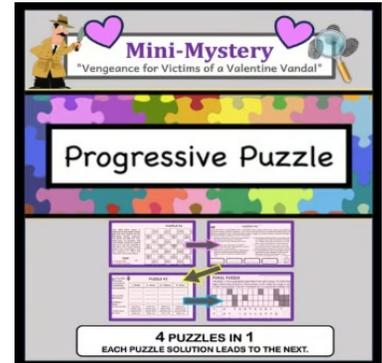


The True Story Behind
"Vengeance for Victims of a Valentine Vandal"
TEACHER PAGE

This extension activity is for use with the [Mini-Mystery Progressive Puzzle: Vengeance for Victims of a Valentine Vandal](#). In this puzzle set, students are challenged to "crack the case." Someone has painted hearts on storefront windows and in other public places. Four suspects have been "caught" by surveillance cameras. Students work through the puzzles to determine the identity of the "Valentine Vandal."

The puzzle plot is based on a true story. On February 14, 2014, several business owners in Lubbock, Texas arrived at work to find red hearts painted on the windows, on walls, and in various spots in the downtown area. **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? You might want to share this [video footage](#) of the vandals in action. Then, use the additional questions below to enhance understanding. If you discuss the final question, you may want to share this video, "[Graffiti, Art or Vandalism?](#)" Additional resources are also linked below.

❖ WHAT IF THE "VANDALS" THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST DECORATING?

Did the vandals just want to decorate for Valentine's Day and make people smile? It's possible. But they were painting on property that did not belong to them. If artists want to paint on a wall or window in their town or city, they must get permission from the owner. Public places like bus stops and schools belong to the community, and artists still need permission from city or town officials. It's important to understand that not knowing the law does not mean you are innocent of a crime. Citizens are expected to know the laws in their communities. So, think before you act!

❖ WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A VANDAL IS CAUGHT AND ARRESTED?

Vandalism can be a very serious crime. In recent years, protestors have defaced priceless works of art in museums by throwing food or paint on them. Some of these vandals have been sentenced to months in jail, charged thousands of dollars, and required to do community service to pay for their crimes. A charge of vandalism can be a [misdemeanor](#) or a [felony](#) depending on the value of the property that was damaged or defaced.

❖ WHAT IS ONLINE VANDALISM?

Some websites and online platforms allow people to add comments or even add to the content. Online vandalism is when people add or change something to be silly or cause a problem for the administrator and visitors to that site. People who [hack](#) into someone else's computer or website and change content or add content are committing a form of vandalism. If they take information, it is also theft.

❖ WHAT IS GRAFFITI and IS IT A CRIME?

In some cities, you might see [murals](#) and/or messages painted on the sides of buildings or on walls. Sometimes these are done by professional artists who have been hired by the community to add some beauty to the neighborhoods. Buffalo, New York has done this (see photos [here](#)). [Graffiti](#) usually refers to writing or drawings painted, scribbled, or scratched on a wall or surface in a public place without permission. So, it is considered vandalism, but in some cases community members approve of it.

The True Story Behind Vengeance for Victims of a Valentine Vandal

On February 14, 2014, several business owners in Lubbock, Texas, arrived at work to discover that the walls and windows of their offices, stores, and shops had been defaced. Red hearts had been spray painted on shop windows and walls, around a bus stop, and in other public areas.

At first, one antique shop owner thought the hearts were rather "happy" and a fun surprise on Valentine's Day. But when she tried to remove the paint, she found it nearly impossible. Other store owners also found that removing the hearts was labor intensive, particularly those painted on brick.

A review of security camera footage revealed two men, dressed in white, walking from building to building, randomly spraying hearts around the downtown area. Police put out the video and descriptions of the men, but the vandals were never apprehended.

Accidentally harming something that does not belong to you is *not* a crime. But if someone intentionally scratches, breaks, damages, or changes the appearance of property that is not theirs, that *is* a crime. Examples include breaking windows, knocking down street signs, and slashing car tires. Even in cases that appear less serious, there is always a cost to someone who wants to restore the property to its original condition.

Vocabulary

vengeance – punishing or harming someone who harmed you (i.e., payback)

vandal – one who purposely damages or destroys someone else's property

deface – damage or mess up the appearance

randomly – in a random way; without a specific order or plan

labor – work

intensive – a high level; extreme

footage – a section of film that's been recorded

apprehended - caught; arrested

Questions I Have
