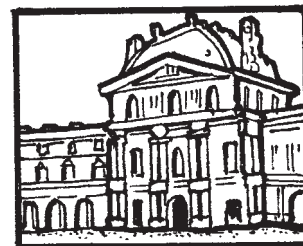


Missing Mona



Building Context: Content—One of the ways to become a better reader is to gain some understanding of the subject before beginning to read a passage. This provides a context or a base on which to build an understanding of what is to be read.



You are going to read a true story about the theft of a famous painting, the *Mona Lisa*. Think about what you already know about this painting and the people and places associated with it.

First, record anything you know about the following topics:

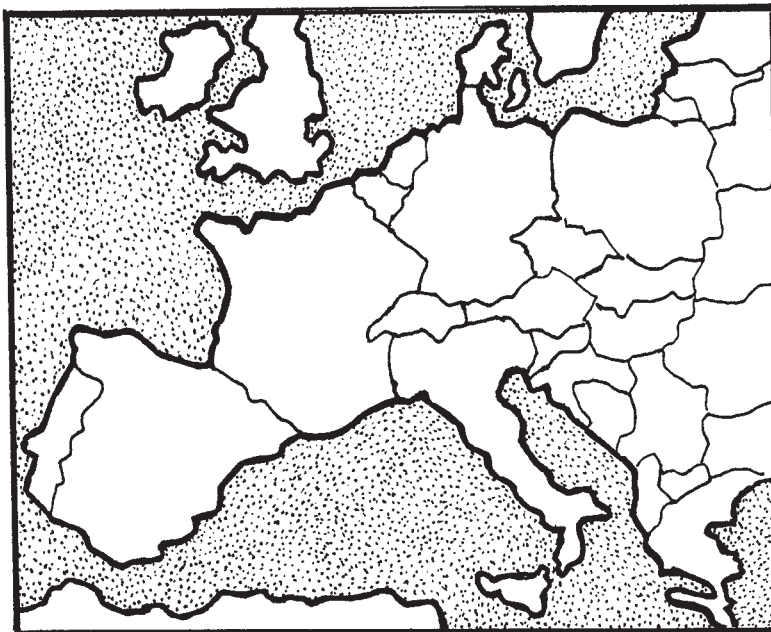
- Leonardo da Vinci
- The Renaissance
- Mona Lisa*
- The Louvre Museum
- Paris, France
- Italy

Now read the following passage to see if you can learn anything new.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), born in **Italy**, was a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and inventor whom many consider one of the greatest geniuses of the **Renaissance**. The Renaissance was a time in Europe from the 14th through the 16th centuries when there was an explosion of new developments in art, architecture, literature, and science. At this time of great progress, da Vinci stood out as a true master. One of his most famous works is the ***Mona Lisa***, a painting of a beautiful woman with a mysterious smile. In 1516, da Vinci moved to **France** and sold the *Mona Lisa* to King Francis I of France. The *Mona Lisa* hung in the palaces of French rulers until after the French Revolution when it was hung in the **Louvre**, the great museum in **Paris, France**.

Here is a map of Europe. Find Italy, da Vinci’s birthplace, and color it red. Then find France and color it green.

Now you know a little about the painting and the key people and places of the story.





Building Context: Vocabulary—Another way to build a good base for understanding what you are going to read is to make certain you know the meaning of all the words you will encounter.

Here are some words that will appear in the story about the theft of the famous *Mona Lisa*. Some of them you may already know. Others you may have to look up in a dictionary to check meaning and pronunciation. Once you are sure you know the words and their meanings, practice reading them on this chart until you know them all and can read the chart quickly.

mysterious	apartment	modest	frantic	astounding
immediately	doorknob	acre	intense	unthinkable
investigation	bulky	trace	uproar	interrogated
national	treasure	patriot	borders	masterpiece
minimum	thoroughly	hoax	gallery	commissioned
millionaire	reward	false	swarmed	fortune-teller

After some practice, work with a partner and time each other as you read the words as fast as you can. Can you read these words in less than a minute? Record your fastest time here: ____ seconds. Good job!

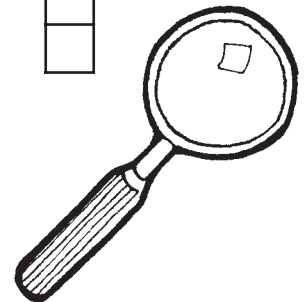
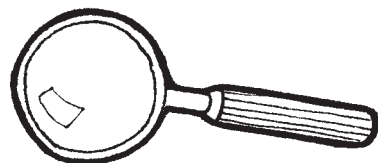
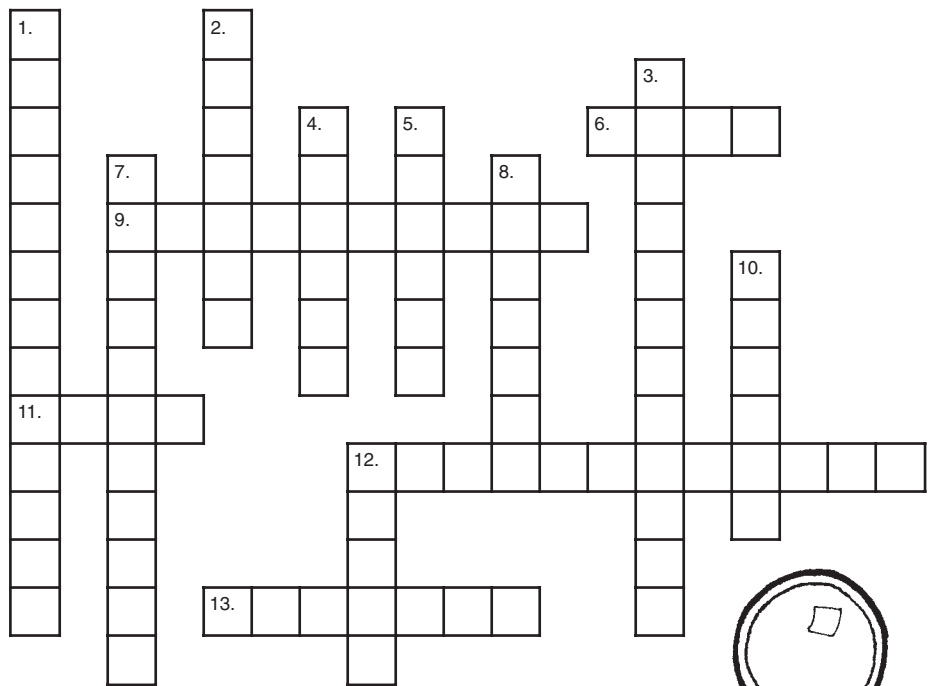
Complete the puzzle to check that you understand some of the words you will encounter.

Across

- 6. a trick
- 9. surprising
- 11. 43,560 square feet
- 12. asked questions
- 13. a room where art is displayed

Down

- 1. a careful search or examination
- 2. wild with worry
- 3. gave an order
- 4. famous museum in Paris
- 5. quiet and humble
- 7. a great work of art
- 8. very strong, very serious
- 10. a loud, confused disturbance
- 12. da Vinci's birthplace





Building Speed—Once a good base of content and vocabulary is established, it is time to start reading. Good readers know that they will have to read a story several times to fully comprehend it. The first reading should be done quickly to gather a general understanding of the material being presented.

One way to read quickly is to train the eyes to look at more than one word at a time. Reading each word individually is like watching a movie in slow motion. Eventually the brain gets bored, and the mind wanders. Reading chunks of words will help you read faster and stay focused on what is being read.



For this practice, “Missing Mona” has been broken down into “chunks,” first to help you read faster and then to help you think about what you have read. As you read, try to read each word group and then go on to the next group, pausing after the double lines. Avoid rereading the same words because that will slow you down.

Missing Mona

The *Mona Lisa*, / painted in the early 1500s / by the great Renaissance artist / Leonardo da Vinci, / is probably the most famous painting / in the world. // Over the centuries, / millions have admired / this painting of a beautiful woman / with a mysterious smile. //

The title seems to suggest that this painting is going to be lost or stolen. Why do you think anyone would care about this particular painting?

On August 21, 1911, / the unthinkable happened: / the *Mona Lisa* was stolen / from the Louvre Museum / in Paris, France. // Even more astounding, / the thief / had simply walked into the gallery / on a Monday morning, / lifted the painting off the wall, / and walked out with it! // Museum employees / thought the official museum photographer / had taken the painting. // They did not even realize / it had been stolen / until Tuesday morning. //

Why is the theft described as “unthinkable”? What do you think happened when the museum employees realized the painting had been stolen?



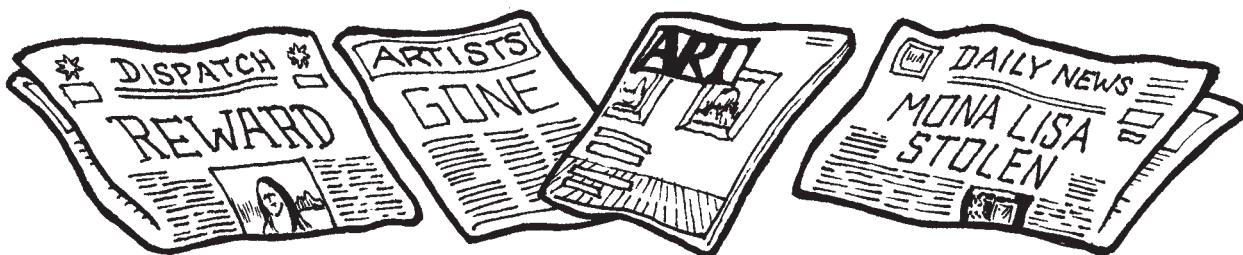
A frantic investigation began. // Police inspectors / swarmed to the Louvre / and searched every foot / of the 49-acre building. // All they discovered / was the heavy frame / from the *Mona Lisa*, / lying on a staircase / where the thief discarded it. // The police interrogated / all current and former / museum employees, / from administrators / to security guards and cleaners. // But the intense investigation / turned up no trace / of the thief and the missing painting. //

All of France / was in an uproar / when the people learned the *Mona Lisa*, / a national treasure, / was missing. // The borders were sealed, / and every ship and train / leaving the country / was thoroughly searched. // During the weeks following the theft, / French magazines and newspapers / offered large cash rewards / for information leading to the return / of the painting. // Even fortune-tellers / were consulted, / and some of them claimed / the *Mona Lisa* had been destroyed / —burned or thrown into the ocean. // Rumors about the missing masterpiece / were everywhere. // Some thought the theft / was a hoax / by the museum itself. // Some said an American millionaire / had commissioned the crime, / so he could add the painting / to his private gallery. //

Words like *frantic*, *intense*, and *uproar* describe the reaction to the theft of the *Mona Lisa*. Why were the police upset? Why were the people of France upset?

What do you think happened to the painting?

How do you think the *Mona Lisa* was found?



Name _____



Twenty-seven months / after the *Mona Lisa* was stolen, / an art gallery in Italy / received a letter from someone / offering to sell the painting / for \$100,000. // When gallery officials / met the seller / at an Italian hotel, / he removed the false bottom / from his travel trunk, / and there was the *Mona Lisa*. // Police immediately / arrested the thief, / an Italian man / named Vincenzo Perugia. // Perugia claimed / he wanted the work / by the great Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci / returned to Italy. //

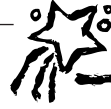
Leonardo da Vinci was Italian, but he lived in France and sold the *Mona Lisa* to the king of France. Do you agree with Vincenzo Perugia that the *Mona Lisa* belonged to Italy? Why or why not?

The theft of the famous painting / had been surprisingly easy. // Perugia had spent Sunday evening / hiding in a small room / within the museum. // On Monday morning, / while the museum was still closed, / he walked into the gallery, / unhooked the painting from the wall, / and walked out. // He cut the small painting / from its bulky frame, / which he left / on the staircase, / and tucked it / beneath his jacket. // When Perugia found the door locked / as he tried to leave the building, / he simply unscrewed the doorknob, / put it in in his pocket, / and walked out of the Louvre / and back to his apartment. // It was in this modest apartment, / a short distance away, / that the world's greatest painting / stayed for more than two years. //

Why do you think it was so easy to steal this painting? What do you think happened to Vincenzo Perugia?

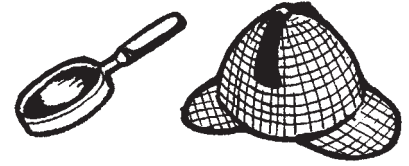
Today, the *Mona Lisa* / hangs in the Louvre / under much tighter security / for all to enjoy and admire. // What happened / to the thief? // During the time / leading up to his trial / in 1914, / Perugia became / a popular figure / in Italy, / where he was seen / as a patriot / for trying to return the painting / to the home country / of the artist. // Although he was found guilty/ of stealing the world's most famous painting, / he received a minimum sentence / and was released almost immediately. //

What kind of security do you think is now used to guard the *Mona Lisa*?



Reading for Meaning—Now read the entire story about the theft of the *Mona Lisa*.

The *Mona Lisa*, painted in the early 1500s by the great Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci, is probably the most famous painting in the world. Over the centuries, millions have admired this painting of a beautiful woman with a mysterious smile.



On August 21, 1911, the unthinkable happened: the *Mona Lisa* was stolen from the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. Even more astounding, the thief had simply walked into the gallery on a Monday morning, lifted the painting off the wall, and walked out with it! Museum employees thought the official museum photographer had taken the painting. They did not even realize it had been stolen until Tuesday morning.

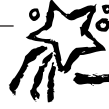
A frantic investigation began. Police inspectors swarmed to the Louvre and searched every foot of the 49-acre building. All they discovered was the heavy frame from the *Mona Lisa*, lying on a staircase where the thief discarded it. The police interrogated all current and former museum employees, from administrators to security guards and cleaners. But the intense investigation turned up no trace of the thief and the missing painting.

All of France was in an uproar when the people learned the *Mona Lisa*, a national treasure, was missing. The borders were sealed, and every ship and train leaving the country was thoroughly searched. During the weeks following the theft, French magazines and newspapers offered large cash rewards for information leading to the return of the painting. Even fortune-tellers were consulted, and some of them claimed the *Mona Lisa* had been destroyed—burned or thrown into the ocean. Rumors about the missing masterpiece were everywhere. Some thought the theft was a hoax by the museum itself. Some said an American millionaire had commissioned the crime, so he could add the painting to his private gallery.

Twenty-seven months after the *Mona Lisa* was stolen, an art gallery in Italy received a letter from someone offering to sell the painting for \$100,000. When gallery officials met the seller at an Italian hotel, he removed the false bottom from his travel trunk, and there was the *Mona Lisa*. Police immediately arrested the thief, an Italian man named Vincenzo Perugia. Perugia claimed he wanted the work by the great Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci returned to Italy.

The theft of the famous painting had been surprisingly easy. Perugia had spent Sunday evening hiding in a small room within the museum. On Monday morning, while the museum was still closed, he walked into the gallery, unhooked the painting from the wall, and walked out. He cut the small painting from its bulky frame, which he left on the staircase, and tucked it beneath his jacket. When Perugia found the door locked as he tried to leave the building, he simply unscrewed the doorknob, put it in his pocket, and walked out of the Louvre and back to his apartment. It was in this modest apartment, a short distance away, that the world's greatest painting stayed for more than two years.

Today, the *Mona Lisa* hangs in the Louvre under much tighter security for all to enjoy and admire. What happened to the thief? During the time leading up to his trial in 1914, Perugia became a popular figure in Italy, where he was seen as a patriot for trying to return the painting to the home country of the artist. Although he was found guilty of stealing the world's most famous painting, he received a minimum sentence and was released almost immediately.

**Extending What You Know**

Imagine the chief inspector of the French police is holding a news conference to report the theft of the *Mona Lisa*, and you are a reporter. Make a list of the questions you would ask.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now exchange your list with a classmate and play the role of chief inspector. Answer your classmate's questions.

Imagine you are the prosecutor at the trial of Vincenzo Perugia. Make a list of the arguments you would present to prove him guilty and to send him to prison for a long time. Or, pretend you are Perugia's lawyer. How would you convince the jury to give him a lenient sentence?

I am the prosecutor. the defense lawyer. (Circle one.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Find a partner who has chosen the side opposite of your own. Present your arguments to a group of classmates. Whose arguments are most convincing?

**Reading With Meaning**

Imagine you are a newscaster reporting the theft of the *Mona Lisa*. First, practice reading the following statement just as you would present it to the French people. Try to sound both angry that the crime was committed and confident that the painting will be found. Then read the statement aloud to your classmates.

Citizens of France, a monstrous crime has been committed at the Louvre Museum. Our *Mona Lisa* has been stolen. No clues have been found to tell us the identity of the thief or what has happened to our great masterpiece. A cunning criminal has outwitted all the security at the museum and the great minds of our detectives. However, France will not rest until the *Mona Lisa* has been found. Trains and ships will be searched, people will be questioned, every lead will be tracked down. Every major newspaper and magazine has offered a reward for information leading to the painting's safe return. Our beautiful lady will be returned to her place of honor in the Louvre.

