

The Missing Smile

One of the most amazing crimes in history happened about one hundred years ago. On 20th August 1911, the Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre museum in Paris. First, the guards thought there was no problem. Maybe officials wanted to take photos of the painting? Then they understood what had happened. It was gone!

The mystery was the big story in every newspaper. A French poet called Guillaume Apollinaire was accused of stealing the portrait. Apollinaire said that Pablo Picasso did it... But the police didn't know who really stole the painting. The French government closed the country's borders, but the thief was gone.

The Mona Lisa was lost for two years. Then one day, there was news from Italy. A man tried to sell the Mona Lisa to the Uffizi gallery in Florence. His name was Vincenzo Peruggia. He worked at the Louvre museum when the painting was stolen. He waited inside the museum until everybody went home. Then he walked out of the Louvre with the Mona Lisa under his coat!

Why did Vincenzo steal the world's most famous painting? The police discovered that he had a friend who made copies of the Mona Lisa. If the famous painting was lost, more people would want the copies. And if more copies were sold, the price would go up. Of course, Vincenzo gave another reason: he said that he did it for his country. He said that Italian art should be in Italian museums. Many people agreed with him. He was sent to prison - but only for six months.

And what happened to the Mona Lisa? The painting was shown all over Italy for two years. In 1913, it went back to the Louvre in Paris. It is still there today.



The Mona Lisa



Guillaume Apollinaire



Pablo Picasso

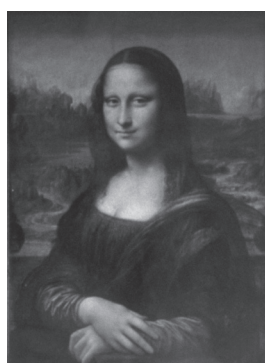


Vincenzo Peruggia

The Mona Lisa

(also called *La Gioconda*, or *La Joconde*)

- most famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci
- painted in Florence between 1504 and 1515
- taken to France in 1516
- kept at the Louvre museum in Paris
- vandalised three times since 1911





Reading

1a Read the text and match the words to the definitions.

border ~~stealing~~ prison
gallery mystery portrait

- 1 taking something from a person or place
s t e a l i n g
- 2 something strange or impossible to understand

- 3 a painting of a person

- 4 the line between two countries

- 5 a place to buy and see art

- 6 a building where criminals live

1b Look at the text again and answer the questions.

- 1 When was the Mona Lisa painted?
It was painted between...
a 1504 and 1515. **b** 1504 and 1516.
- 2 Where is the Mona Lisa kept?
It is kept...
a in Paris. **b** in Florence.
- 3 What happened to the Mona Lisa in August 1911?
It was...
a destroyed. **b** stolen.
- 4 How long was it missing for?
It was missing for...
a 2 days. **b** 2 years.
- 5 Where was it found again?
It was found again...
a in Paris. **b** in Florence.
- 6 Who stole the Mona Lisa?
It was stolen by...
a Vincenzo Peruggia. **b** Pablo Picasso.
- 7 Why was Peruggia considered a hero by some people?
He wanted...
a to make money. **b** to bring Italian art home.

1c Choose the correct words to complete the email.

Hi Ben,

We read the ¹story / magazine / news of the Mona Lisa in our Art class. I had no ²thought / idea / question that it was stolen a hundred years ³ago / away / since. It's a fantastic story, really. It took two years to ⁴make / find / solve the mystery. An Italian man stole it. He said that it ⁵could / will / should stay in Italy. But I think he wanted to make ⁶news / money / art! And did you know that the Mona Lisa was ⁷sold / vandalised / lost several times, too? I think it's ⁸terrible / mysterious / embarrassing to damage art. Don't you?

Marco

Writing: Over to you...

2a Answer the questions for you.

- 1 Do you like Art? Why / why not?

- 2 Do you like painting or drawing?

- 3 Do you know any artists?

- 4 Have you ever been to an art gallery?
Where?

2b Write a short text (40 – 60 words) about a famous piece of art. Use the internet to do some research.

who made it _____; when _____; where _____; what type of art is it (painting, drawing etc) _____; where is it now _____; why you like it _____.