

The Theft of the *Mona Lisa*



Reading

- 1 Listen and read the article. Had the thief been to the Louvre before he stole the *Mona Lisa*?

On Tuesday 22nd August 1911, Louis Bérourd, a painter, walked into the Louvre and went to the Salon Carré, the room where the *Mona Lisa* had been on display for five years. Bérourd was shocked when he realised that the painting wasn't there. About 60 police officers were sent over to the Louvre to search for it, but they only found the frame lying on the staircase.

Investigators questioned all the guards and workers. One guard thought he had seen a stranger in the museum when it was closed, but he couldn't match the stranger's face with photos at the police station.

Two years later, the painting still had not been found. Then Alfredo Geri, the owner of an art gallery in Florence, put an advert in an Italian newspaper which said that he was 'a buyer of art objects of every kind at good prices'. A man then made contact with Geri by letter and said that he had the stolen *Mona Lisa*. The letter was signed 'Leonardo Vincenzo'.

On 10th December 1913, a man who introduced himself as Leonardo Vincenzo went to Geri's office in Florence and asked for a lot of money for the painting. After the man left, Geri called the police. He had seen the Louvre seal on the back of the painting, so he was sure it was the real *Mona Lisa*. The police then arrested 'Leonardo Vincenzo' and found out that his real name was Vincenzo Peruggia.

Peruggia had worked at the Louvre in 1908. As many of the guards still knew him, he had walked into the museum without a problem. When he was by himself in the Salon Carré for a few minutes, he grabbed the *Mona Lisa* and walked out of the museum. Peruggia wanted the painting because he thought it should return to Italy. The *Mona Lisa* returned to France in December 1913.

Did you know?

Mona Lisa's real name was Lisa Gherardini Giocondo. She was about 25 years old when Leonardo da Vinci began painting her portrait in 1503.

Comprehension

- 2 Answer the questions.

- 1 How many years had the *Mona Lisa* been at the Louvre when it was stolen?
- 2 What did the police find when they went to the Louvre?
- 3 How did the thief contact Geri?
- 4 How did Geri know the painting was the real *Mona Lisa*?
- 5 Why was Peruggia known by the guards at the Louvre?