

13. Gemstone Lore & Legend

Because they're so rare and beautiful, gemstones and precious metals have always fascinated people. We give them as gifts to mark special occasions, like a diamond ring for an engagement or a gold watch for retirement. And many cultures have invested gems with mystical, magical powers and legends. These units let you explore gemstone lore and legend, and to compare legend against what contemporary science says.

Activity 13.1: Anniversary stones.

A 25th anniversary is considered a silver anniversary and a 50th anniversary is golden. Construct a list of all the gemstones and precious metals used to mark anniversaries from 1 to 100.

Activity 13.2: Birthstones and the Zodiac.

Each month is marked by its own "modern" or "traditional" birthstone or a "zodiac" stone. List birthstones for all the months of the year and find out as much as you can about your own birthstone.

Activity 13.3: Fabled gemstones.

Some especially large and valuable gemstones have been lost, stolen, and/or vested with supernatural powers or curses. Pick a famous gemstone and explore its history and any legends associated with it.

Activity 13.4 Gems in religion.

Whether the religion is Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or others, you're sure to find gemstones and precious metals mentioned in its holy books, including the Bible, Koran, Torah, etc. Pick a religious text and see what gemstones are mentioned and their significance.

Activity 13.5: Mysticism and minerals.

Many gemstone minerals have important scientific, economic, medical, nutritional, and artistic uses and value. In addition to valuing them for such practical uses, some people and cultures have assigned mystical or magical properties to certain minerals and gemstones. Pick a mineral or gemstone and explore what legend and lore says about its mystical uses and properties. Then compare that to what contemporary science says about the mineral.

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- 13.1 Anniversary stones
- 13.2 Birthstones and the Zodiac
- 13.3 Fabled gemstones
- 13.4 Gems in religion
- 13.5 Mysticism and minerals

To earn your Gemstone Lore & Legend badge, you need to complete at least 3 of the 5 activities. Check off all the activities you've completed. When you have earned your badge, sign below and have your FRA leader sign and forward this sheet to the AFMS Juniors Program chair.

Date completed

My signature

Youth leader's signature

Name of my club

Leader's preferred mailing address for receiving badge:

Back-up page for Gemstone Lore & Legend badge.

A good general-purpose guidebook for your kids in exploring gemstone lore and legend is Emma Foa's *Pockets Gemstones* (DK Publishing: New York, NY, 2003). Part of the Dorling Kindersley Pockets Full of Knowledge series, this particular book has several advantages:

- At \$6.99, it's inexpensive and thus a good match for a child's budget.
- It's written to a wide, general-purpose audience, so it's clear and easy to read, with information appearing in brief overview paragraphs and captions. Each two-page spread is a self-contained unit on a particular topic or gemstone.
- It's heavily illustrated with beautiful color photos, each supported by surrounding text.
- In addition to talking about gemstones as ornaments of beauty, it goes into other uses of gems, their formation and crystal structure, gemstone mining, and their appearance in myth and medicine.
- It includes a section on famous and legendary gems.
- It has a nice reference section talking about gem care and jewelry making, as well as a section on how gems are cut and polished.
- It includes a glossary of terms and a table of the basic mineralogical properties of 53 gemstones.
- It concludes with a list of resources, including major museums with gemstone collections and organizations such as the Gemological Institute of America, followed by a comprehensive index.
- All this is contained in a small, compact book just 5-inches by 3-3/4-inches and 128 pages long that slips easily into a pocket.

For all these reasons, this handy little volume is highly recommended as a resource for all kids working on earning their Gemstone Lore & Legend badge.

Back-up page 13.1: Anniversary stones.

Kids can obtain lists of anniversary stones from jewelry shops, web sites, or books about gems and jewelry. The lists vary—sometimes considerably—and there are actually two different lists, “traditional” and “modern.” Following is what I’ve been able to find, but you’re likely to find some lists that differ:

Anniversary	Traditional	Modern
3rd		crystal or glass
5th		silverware
6th	iron	
7th	copper or brass	
8th	bronze	
10th	tin or aluminum	diamond jewelry
11th	steel	fashion jewelry & accessories
12th		pearls or colored gems
14th	ivory	gold jewelry
15th	crystal or glass	
16th		silver hollowware
19th		bronze
20th		platinum
21st		brass or nickel
22nd		copper
23 rd		silver plate
25th	silver	sterling silver
30th	pearl	diamond
33rd		amethyst
34th		opal
35th	coral or jade	jade
37th		alabaster
38th		beryl or tourmaline
40th	ruby or garnet	ruby
45th	sapphire	sapphire
50th	gold	gold
55th	emerald or turquoise	emerald
60th	diamond or gold	diamond
75th	diamond or gold	
80th		diamond or pearl
85th		diamond or sapphire
90 th		diamond or emerald
95th		diamond or ruby
100th		10-carat diamond

Back-up page 13.2: Birthstones and the Zodiac.

You can obtain lists of birthstones from jewelry stores or from books on gems and jewelry. The lists often vary (by one count, there are nearly 50 different lists!) but the following table shows commonly accepted birthstones, along with some backups:

Month	Modern or Traditional Birthstones	Mystical Birthstones
January	garnet (or tanzanite or rose quartz)	emerald
February	amethyst (or tourmaline or onyx)	bloodstone
March	aquamarine (or bloodstone)	jade
April	diamond (or nephrite jade or quartz)	opal
May	emerald (or agate or chrysoprase)	sapphire
June	pearl (or alexandrite or moonstone)	moonstone
July	ruby (or onyx or carnelian)	ruby
August	peridot (or sardonyx)	diamond
September	sapphire (or malachite or lapis)	agate
October	opal (or tourmaline)	jasper
November	topaz (or citrine or rubellite)	pearl
December	turquoise (or blue topaz, zircon, lapis lazuli, tanzanite, or coral)	onyx

When it comes to Zodiac Stones, lists vary tremendously. In fact, for each sign of the Zodiac, some ascribe a whole range of stones: a birthstone, a zodiac stone, a talisman stone, a mystical stone, a planet stone—even a lucky charm stone! This only adds to the confusion when it comes to ascertaining just what is supposed to be one’s birth stone. While I’ve seen lists of all sorts, the following is what I’ve settled on. Be aware, though, that kids in your club may very well come up with different lists.

Zodiac or Birth Stones			
amethyst (also, garnet) Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)	emerald (also, sapphire) Taurus (April 20-May 20)	ruby (also, onyx) Leo (July 23-Aug. 22)	topaz (also, beryl) Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)
sapphire (also, amethyst) Pisces (Feb. 20-March 20)	moonstone (also, agate) Gemini (May 21-June 20)	peridot (also, carnelian) Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)	turquoise (also, pearl) Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)
diamond (also, bloodstone) Aries (March 21-Apr. 19)	pearl (also, emerald) Cancer (June 21-July 22)	opal (also, peridot) Libra (Sept. 23-Oct 23)	garnet (also, ruby) Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 15)

Back-up page 13.3: Fabled gemstones.

Many especially large and valuable gemstones have been lost, stolen, and/or vested with supernatural powers or curses. One of the most famous is the Hope Diamond, currently residing under heavy protection in the Smithsonian. According to legend, it was stolen from the eye of a Hindu idol, and various owners have suffered ignoble fates ever since: being torn apart by wolves, beheadings, suicide, even death by starvation! Thus, it's become legendary for bringing misfortune to those who would possess it.

Below, I've listed a number of prominent gemstones with interesting histories, stories, or legends behind them. Some of these fabled gemstones are famous merely for being the biggest or best of their kind (for instance, the largest yellow diamond, the most flawless emerald, etc.). Others are famous for their long histories and owners who have included sultans and slaves, kings and queens, industry titans and movie stars. Still others are infamous for legendary curses and daring thefts. Assign a different stone to each of your kids to research. Then at your next meeting or gathering, have them sit in a circle to report back to the group what they've discovered, or have them prepare articles for the club newsletter. Pick from the list, or have kids find famous stones on their own.

- The Hope Diamond
- The Blue Diamond of the Crown
- The Koh-i-Noor (Mountain of Light)
- The Shah Diamond
- The Regent Diamond
- The Braganza Diamond
- The Cullinam I & II Diamonds (aka, "The Great Star of Africa" and "The Lesser Star of Africa")
- The Tiffany Diamond
- The Sancy Diamond
- The Duke of Devonshire Emerald (aka, "The Duke's Diamond")
- The Chalk Emerald
- The Mogul Emerald
- The Hooker Emerald
- The Mackay Emerald
- The Andamooka Opal (aka, "The Queen's Opal")
- The Aurora Australis Opal
- The Black Prince Opal (aka, "The Harlequin Prince")
- The Empress of Australia Opal
- Fire Queen Opal ("Dunstan's Stone")
- The Pride of Australia Opal (aka, "The Red Emperor")
- The Flame Queen Opal
- The Olympic Australis Opal
- The Pearl of Lao Tzu (aka, "The Pearl of Allah")
- The DeLong Star Ruby
- The Hixon Ruby Crystal
- The Midnight Star Ruby
- The Neelanjali Ruby
- The Rajaratna Ruby
- The Rosser Reeves Ruby
- The Black Prince's Ruby
- The Timur Ruby
- The Samarian Spinel
- The Logan Sapphire
- The Queen Marie of Romania Sapphire
- The Ruspoli Sapphire
- The Star of Asia Sapphire
- The Star of Bombay
- The Star of India
- The Stuart Sapphire
- The American Golden Topaz

Note: Kids who give a presentation or write an article can use this activity toward earning their Communication badge simultaneously (Activities 7.1 and 7.2).

Back-up page 13.4: Gems in religion.

Gems and precious metals are mentioned in many holy books and have places in various religious and cultural traditions. Have your kids pick a religion or native culture and research mention of gems in religious texts or traditions. One helpful reference work you may be able to find in the library is R.V.S. Wright and Robert L. Chadbourne's *Gems & Minerals of the Bible: The Lore & Mystery of the Minerals & Jewels of Scripture, from Adamant to Zircon* (Keats Publishing, 1988). Here are a few examples to start things off:

Judeo-Christian:

- In Exodus 28:17-21, the gold filigree breastplate of the high priest is described as adorned with four rows of three stones each: sard, topaz, and carbuncle; emerald, sapphire, and diamond; jacinth (jacinth, or hyacinth), agate, and amethyst; and beryl, onyx, and jasper. Each of the stones represents one of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- The Twelve Apostles have corresponding gemstones: Andrew – sapphire, Matthias – chrysolite, Bartholomew – peridot, Peter – jasper, James – chalcedony, Philip – carnelian or sardonyx, James bar Alphaeus – topaz, Simon – zircon, John – emerald, Thaddeus – chrysoprase, Matthew – amethyst, and Thomas – beryl.
- In Revelation 21:18-21, we see a vision of the New Jerusalem in which the foundations of the walls of the heavenly city are adorned in twelve layers of precious stones. From bottom to top, these are jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sard, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst.
- The prophet Ezekiel wrote: “Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.”

Buddhism:

- Buddhist monks in India are said to have used amethyst to help in meditation.
- For Tibetans, chalcedony symbolizes the purity of the Lotus flower.
- Garnet is considered a holy stone bringing enlightenment and wisdom.

Islam:

- In Arab countries, moonstone is often given as a gift and blessing for a large family.

Native American:

- Jade was revered by many cultures in Central and South America. For Mayans, jade preserved love, and nephrite jade was believed to stave off wounds.
- For some Native American tribes, jasper is a magical rain stone.
- Some North American Indians believe jet to be a protective stone that can bring comfort after the death of a relative.
- According to legend, when Apache warriors leapt from a mountain to their death rather than being captured by enemies, tears of their families hit the ground and, as signs of enduring sorrow, they're now found as Apache tears obsidian.
- Turquoise has long been considered a holy stone by American Indians; for some, it provides protection against harm.

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Back-up page 13.5: Mysticism and minerals.

From time immemorial, human eyes have been captivated by the color and sparkle of gemstones, and we've come to invest some with mystical, magical powers. To put my cards on the table, I don't put much stock in mysticism. Still, it's fascinating stuff, especially when viewed from a cultural or historical angle, which is the perspective I encourage taking in exploring this activity with kids. To get you started, here's just a brief sampling of some classic gems and a couple beliefs associated with each:

- **Amethyst:** Amethyst is supposed to ward off evil thoughts and drunkenness and, so doing, induce a sober mind. The Chinese ground it to cure bouts of bad dreams.
- **Aquamarine:** Called "the sailor's gem," aquamarine was believed to have originated in a mermaid's jewelry box and provides safe passage on stormy seas. It was also thought to make soldiers invincible and to bring pure love.
- **Diamond:** Diamond has long been valued and has been viewed as a symbol of wisdom and enlightenment, self-confidence and power. While Greeks believed it protected against poisons, Hindus believed a flawed stone could invite misfortune.
- **Emerald:** Emeralds were believed to restore failing eyesight. Related to this, they were also believed to provide clairvoyance, or an ability to see into the future.
- **Garnet:** Garnets were thought to protect against depression and to deter liver disease and problems with blood circulation, perhaps because of their blood-red color.
- **Opal:** Opal was considered an unlucky stone in Europe and was even believed to have caused The Plague. By contrast, it's a stone of eternal hope in Asia.
- **Ruby:** Rubies were once thought to counteract poison and the plague and, rubbed on the skin, were supposed to restore youth and vitality.
- **Sapphire:** Sapphire has been considered a powerful protective stone. Some thought rays reflected from it could kill poisonous creatures. Persians believed the Earth itself rested on a giant sapphire that reflected the blue of heaven into our sky.
- **Topaz:** Once thought to be a cure for bad moods and madness, topaz has also been thought to bestow wisdom and to help ascertain the truth.

To guide your kids to more info about a greater variety of gems, you can find any number of books in New Age sections of a bookstore or library, like Peschek-Böhmer and Schreiber's *Healing Crystals & Gemstones: From Amethyst to Zircon*. Check also Foa's *Pockets Gemstones*. This handy, inexpensive pocketbook has two pages each devoted to 27 different gems. For each, it includes a small box entitled "Myth & Magic" with two or three beliefs about that particular gemstone through the ages. See also Knuth's *Gems in Myth, Legend, & Lore* or Kunz's *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*.

Let your kids pick gems of special interest to them, and have them explore associated myths and legends and supposed mystical powers each stone possesses. But don't end there. Have them compare what modern science has to say about their gemstones. Or let them test a gem's power for themselves. For instance, it's said an emerald will melt the eyes of any snake that gazes upon it. Have an emerald? Have a young boy with a snake in your group? I see potential for an experiment!

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