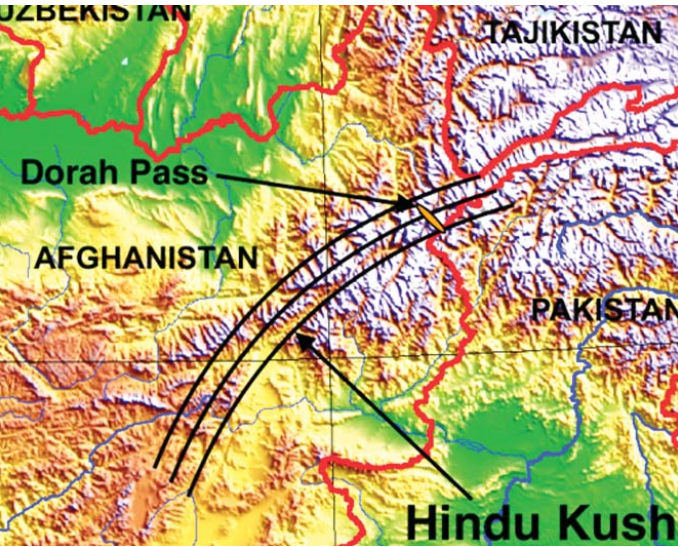


#CONTROVERSY

The Hindu Kush

Kush is related to killing, and the range earned its name because large numbers of Indian slaves, taken northward through the mountains, died from extreme cold



The Hindu Kush is a major mountain range of Central and South Asia, stretching across present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. Geographically, it has long served as a natural barrier between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, shaping trade routes, migrations, and military campaigns. However, beyond its physical presence, the name 'Hindu Kush' has generated sustained historical and linguistic controversy, with scholars debating its origin, meaning, and later political usage.

One of the earliest recorded references to the name appears in the writings of the 14th-century Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta. In his travel account, he describes crossing a mountain range called al-Hindu Kush and explains the name through a Persian interpretation. According to him, Kush is related to killing, and the range earned its name because large numbers of Indian slaves, taken northward through the mountains, died from extreme cold, snow, and harsh terrain. This explanation popularized the interpretation of Hindu Kush as meaning 'Hindu-killer' or 'slayer of Hindus'. Due to Ibn Battuta's influence, this understanding was widely repeated in later Persian, Arabic, and European writings.

However, not all scholars accept this violent interpretation as definitive or original. Linguistically, the Persian word *koh* simply means 'mountain,' and several historians argue that 'Hindu Koh,' meaning 'mountains of India,' is a more plausible origin. In this reading, 'Hindu' refers not to religion but to the people or lands beyond the Indus River, a common geographic usage in Persian sources.

The Mughal emperor Babur, in his memoirs known as the *Baburnama*, frequently



Unveiling Rare and Priceless Gems

#GLITTER



● Bulbul Joshi

Rare and precious stones include the 'big four' precious stones, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, as well as other exceptionally scarce gems like Painite, Musgravite, Taaffeite, and Red Beryl. While the 'big four' are traditionally considered precious, a gemstone's rarity can also be determined by its limited supply, exceptional quality, and unique features, like the colour-changing ability of Alexandrite or the neon blue of Paraiba tourmaline.

When it comes to precious stones, some have become legendary, not only because of their beauty and rarity but also due to their exorbitant price tags. These stones are more than just adornments, they symbolize wealth, status, and the allure of the extraordinary. From the mesmerizing depths of blue diamonds to the rich intensity of rubies, these gemstones have captured the fascination of collectors, investors, and jewelry lovers worldwide. Let's take a look at some of the most expensive precious stones ever known.



1. Blue Diamond: The Pinnacle of Rarity

Price per Carat: \$3.93 million (estimated)

The Blue Diamond is arguably one of the rarest and most valuable gemstones on Earth. Its stunning, rich blue colour is due to the presence of boron, an element that causes the diamond to absorb red, yellow, and green light, leaving behind an alluring blue hue. The most famous Blue Diamond in the world is the Hope Diamond, which has a long and colourful history tied to royalty and superstition.

Blue diamonds are incredibly scarce, with very few natural occurrences in the world. These gems are found in mines in South Africa, Australia, and a few other select locations, but their scarcity has driven up the price of this gemstone to astronomical levels. The Blue Diamond's breathtaking colour, combined with its rarity, makes it a symbol of ultimate luxury and opulence.

Notable Examples:

- **The Hope Diamond:** Weighing 45.52 carats, this deep-blue gem is housed in the Smithsonian Institution.
- **The Oppenheimer Blue:** Sold for \$57.5 million in 2016, this 14.62-carat diamond holds the record for the most expensive blue diamond ever sold at auction.



2. Jadeite: The Gem of the Orient

Price per Carat: Up to \$10 million (depending on quality)

Jadeite, a variety of jade, is one of the most sought-after gemstones in East Asia, particularly in China, where it has been prized for thousands of years. Unlike nephrite jade, which is more commonly found, jadeite is the rarer and more expensive variety. Its vibrant green colour, combined with a smooth, lustrous texture, makes it incredibly beautiful and valuable.

The highest-quality jadeite, known as Imperial Jade, is the most prized and can command prices that rival diamonds. The gem's historical and cultural significance further adds to its allure. A jadeite bangle, for example, can fetch several million dollars at auction, depending on its colour, transparency, and overall quality.

Notable Examples:

- **The Hutton-Mdivani Necklace:** This necklace, featuring a 27.39-carat jadeite bead, was sold for \$27.4 million in 2014.
- **Imperial Jade:** Imperial Jade, characterized by a translucent emerald green colour, is considered the finest jadeite and can reach prices as high as \$10 million per piece.



3. Pink Diamond: The Allure of the Rosy Hue

Price per Carat: \$1.1 million (estimated)

The Pink Diamond is one of the rarest and most expensive gemstones, renowned for its subtle, enchanting hue. Unlike blue or red diamonds, pink diamonds owe their colour to a rare distortion in the crystal lattice, a phenomenon that remains a subject of intrigue among gemologists. The rarity of pink diamonds, combined with their ethereal beauty, has made them highly coveted by collectors.

Notable Examples:

- **The Pink Star Diamond:** Weighing 59.60 carats, the Pink Star is one of the largest and most flawless pink diamonds ever discovered. It was sold for \$71.2 million in 2017, making it the most expensive pink diamond ever sold at auction.
- **The Graff Pink Diamond:** Weighing 24.78 carats, this diamond was purchased by billionaire Laurence Graff for \$46 million in 2010, a record at the time.



4. Ruby: The King of Gems

Price per Carat: \$1.18 million (estimated)

Rubies, especially those of the highest quality, are some of the most valued gemstones in the world. The red of the ruby, often referred to as 'pigeon blood red,' is prized for its depth and intensity. Rubies come in a range of red hues, but the most sought-after are those with a vivid, deep red colour that appears to glow from within.

Notable Examples:

- **The Sunrise Ruby:** A 25.59-carat ruby named for its fiery, sunrise-like red hue, the Sunrise Ruby broke records in 2015 when it sold for \$30.3 million, setting a new benchmark for rubies.



5. Red Diamond: The Rarest of the Rare

Price per Carat: \$1 million to \$2 million (estimated)

Among the rarest and most expensive gemstones, red diamonds are truly a phenomenon. They are so scarce that fewer than 30 known red diamonds have ever been discovered, and most of them are found in the Argyle mine in Australia. Red diamonds are unique not only for their colour but also for their exceptional cut and clarity.

Due to their scarcity and unique red hue, ranging from brownish-red to pure red, these diamonds fetch extraordinary prices at auctions. Red diamonds are so rare that they can outstrip other coloured diamonds in value.

These precious stones are not just remarkable for their dazzling beauty but also for the extraordinary prices they command. Whether through their colour, rarity, or historical significance, each gem holds its place as a symbol of the pinnacle of luxury and wealth. With their value ever increasing and their supply limited, these gemstones remain some of the most sought-after treasures in the world, constantly captivating collectors, investors, and jewelers alike.



6. Kashmir Sapphire: The Legendary Blue Velvet Gem from Himalayan Peaks

Soft, velvety, saturated blue hues characterize Kashmir sapphires. These gems contain very fine inclusions of rutile that create their distinctive soft appearance.

What makes Kashmir sapphires extremely rare

The mines that once produced them high in the Himalayas ran dry in the 1930s.

As a result of their extreme scarcity, the price of these stones rises ever higher with each passing year.

While few will ever have the privilege of owning one of these gems, museums have many pieces on display that are well worth visiting.

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#ILLUSTRATING A CLASSIC

E.H. Shepard and 'The Wind in the Willows'

Shepard's illustrations are characterized by delicate linework, expressive animals, and a keen eye for detail

In 1930, the celebrated illustrator E.H. Shepard brought to life Kenneth Grahame's beloved novel *The Wind in the Willows* with illustrations that have become as iconic as the story itself. Grahame's tale is a whimsical exploration of friendship, adventure, and the English countryside. Shepard's artwork added a visual charm that has endured for generations.

The Meeting of Illustrator and Author

The story behind Shepard's involvement with *The Wind in the Willows* is almost as charming as the book itself. Shepard visited Kenneth Grahame personally to discuss the project. Accounts suggest that Grahame was impressed by Shepard's previous illustrations for A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and trusted him to bring his characters to life. The meeting was friendly and collaborative; Grahame shared his vision for the riverbank, the animals, and the tone of the story, giving Shepard creative freedom while emphasizing the gentle humour and naturalistic charm that defined the book.



The Style and Appeal of Shepard's Illustrations

Shepard's illustrations are characterized by delicate linework, expressive animals, and a keen eye for detail. His pen-and-ink drawings combined with soft watercolors created a timeless storybook quality that complemented Grahame's prose. From the lush riverbank to the whimsical interiors of Toad Hall, every scene was rendered with care, inviting readers into the world of adventure and friendship.

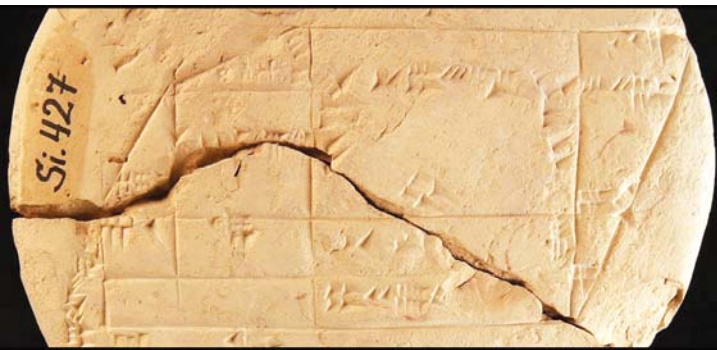
Cultural Impact

The collaboration between Shepard and Grahame elevated *The Wind in the Willows* beyond a simple children's tale. The illustrations helped cement the story's status as a classic, inspiring adaptations in theater, television, and film.

Legacy Nearly a century later, E.H. Shepard's illustrations remain inseparable from Grahame's text. His work demonstrates the power of visual storytelling to enhance literature, ensuring that *The Wind in the Willows* continues to delight readers of all ages.

#ANCIENT TRIGONOMETRY

Precision from 3,700 Years Ago

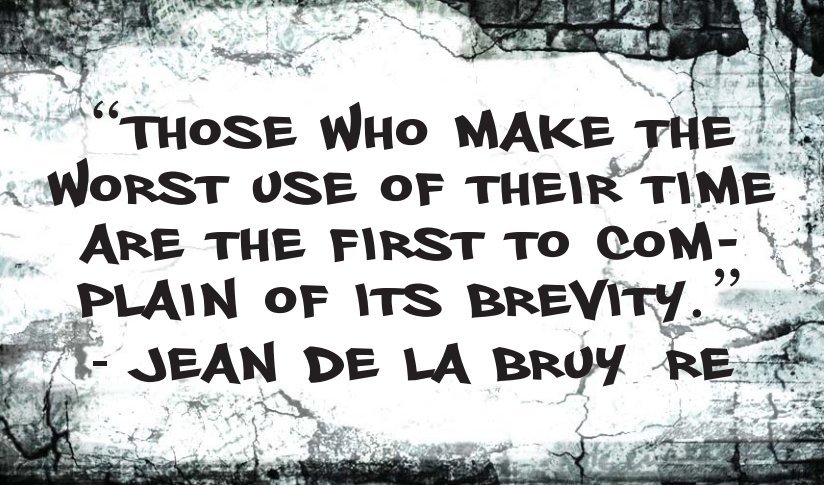


Long before modern trigonometry was formalized, ancient civilizations used mathematics in remarkably precise ways, and clay tablets from Egypt and Mesopotamia provide concrete evidence. Some 3,700-year-old clay tablets reveal calculations

that were geometrically and trigonometrically accurate, used to measure angles, slopes, and distances. Egyptian scribes applied these methods to align pyramids, temples, and monuments with astronomical events, while Babylonian mathematicians used base-60 systems to calculate celestial positions.

The clay tablets, inscribed with numbers and angular measurements, demonstrate that triangular relationships and early trigonometric concepts were already in practice, bridging observation, engineering, and mathematical theory centuries before Greek mathematicians formalized trigonometry.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman