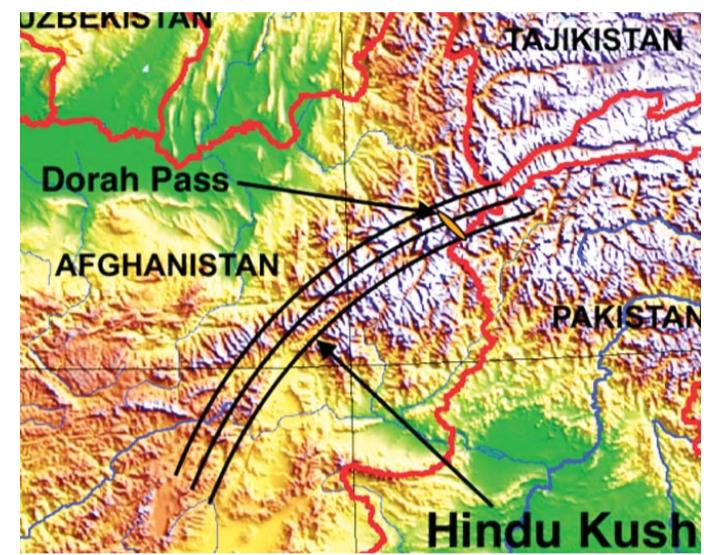


International Mother Language Day, observed every year on February 21, promotes linguistic and cultural diversity across the globe. The day honours the importance of preserving and nurturing mother tongues, recognizing them as vital tools for communication, identity, and heritage. It also commemorates the sacrifices made by those who fought for the right to speak their native language. By encouraging multilingual education and awareness, International Mother Language Day highlights the value of every language, fostering inclusivity, understanding, and cultural pride. It reminds communities and governments alike to protect and celebrate the world's rich tapestry of languages.

## #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 Afghanistan and northwestern 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 use.

Modern geographers and historians have proposed alternative, less harsh interpretations. The geographer Nigel Allan argued that the name may have carried metaphorical meanings such as 'mountains of India' or even 'sparkling snows of India,' emphasizing the visual and geographic character of the range rather than human suffering. Other scholars suggest that the term may originally have referred to a specific peak or region near the Kushan Pass and was later expanded to describe the entire mountain system.

During the colonial period, British administrators and cartographers adopted Babur's terminology and standardized 'Hindu Kush' on imperial maps. This colonial mapping practice fixed the name in modern geography, often without acknowledging the ongoing scholarly debate over its meaning.

In conclusion, the name 'Hindu Kush' reflects layers of historical memory, linguistic change, and political interpretation. Whether understood as a tragic reminder of human suffering, a neutral geographic marker, or a poetic description of India's northern mountains, the term continues to illustrate how place names can carry contested and evolving meanings across centuries.

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

## Unveiling Rare and Priceless Gems

## #GLITTER



## 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 a strong 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 its sister gem, nephrite, 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 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:** Weighing 59.60 carats, the Pink Star is one of the largest and most flawless pink diamonds ever discovered. 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.



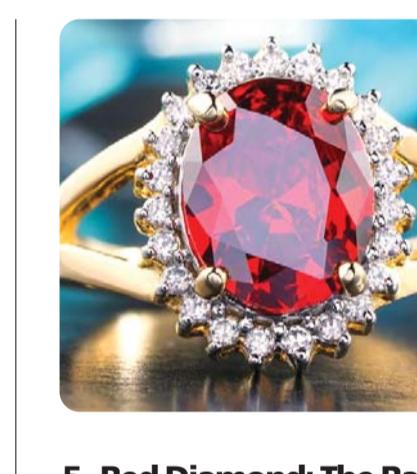
## 4. Ruby: The King of Gems

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 25.95-carat ruby named for its fiery, sunrise-like red hue, the Sunrise Ruby broke records in 2015 when it was 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, these diamonds fetch extraordinary prices at auctions. Red diamonds are so rare that they can outstrip other coloured diamonds in value.



## 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.

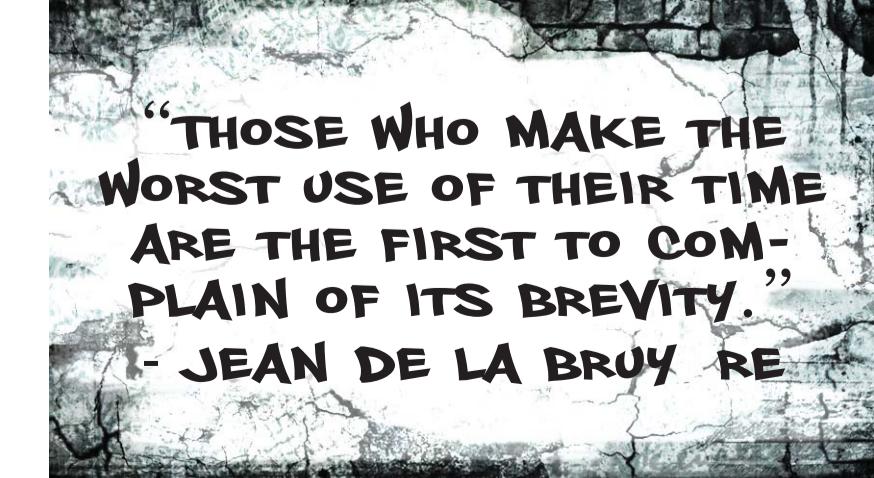
## What makes Kashmir sapphires extremely rare?

The mines that once produced them 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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## THE WALL

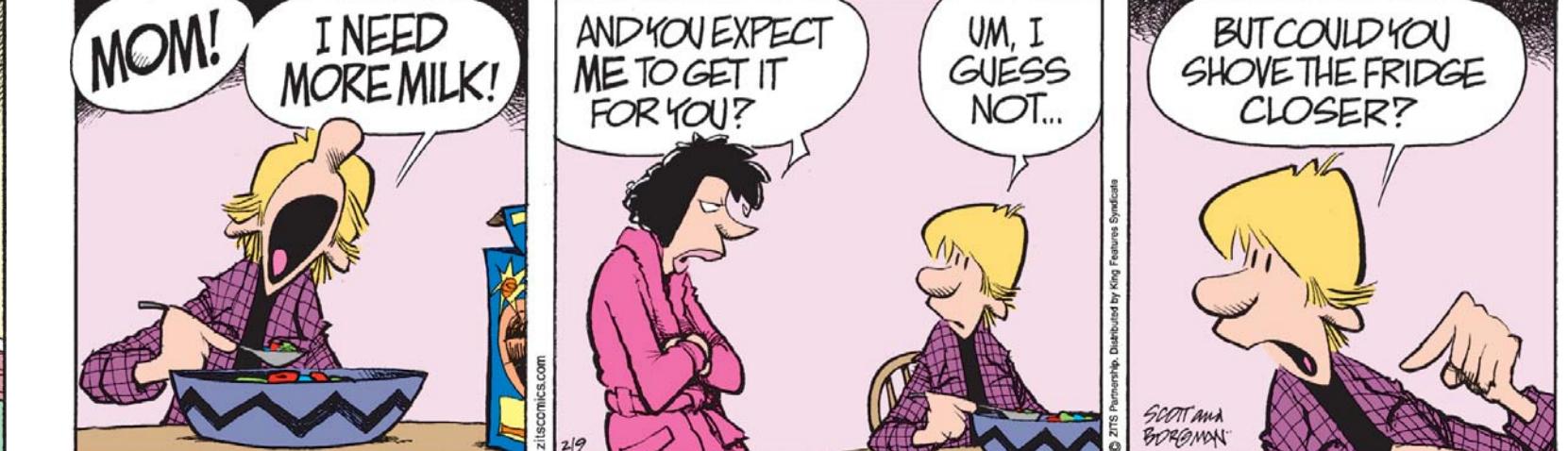


## BABY BLUES



Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

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## #ILLUSTRATING A CLASSIC

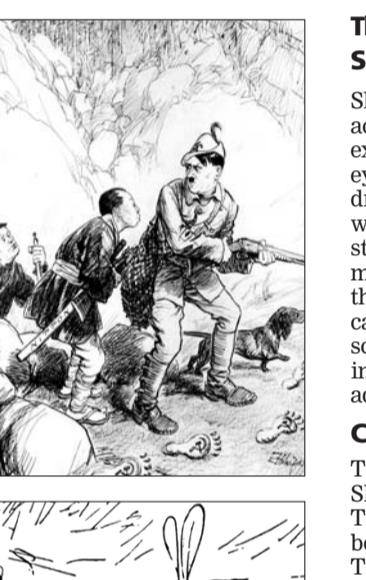
## E.H. Shepard and 'The Wind in the Willows'

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 illustrations is 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, friendship, and naturalism.

**Cultural Impact**

The collaboration between Shepard and Grahame elevated *The Wind in the Willows* from a classic children's tale to a timeless story that continues to delight readers of all ages.

**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 mathematical 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 trigonometric relationships and early trigonometric concepts were already in practice, bridging observation, engineering, and mathematical theory centuries before Greek mathematicians formalized trigonometry.