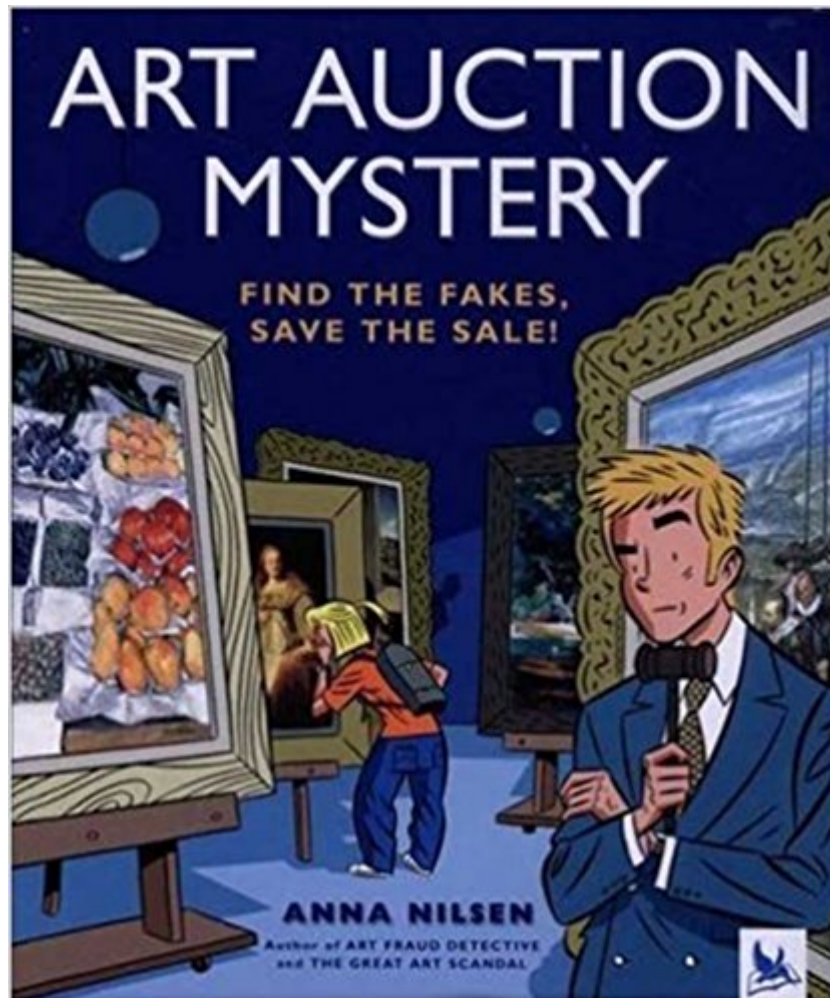




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# Art Auction Mystery



## Synopsis

Sixteen famous paintings from collections around the world have been stolen and replaced with clever forgeries. Now these fake paintings, along with sixteen others, are going up for auction. After an anonymous tip, the reader has to come to the rescue! By comparing the paintings to the originals, the reader has all the clues to figure out which paintings are real and which are fakes. Including work by the world's most famous artists, this book is part mystery, part puzzle, part art reference book, and all-over fun!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 4-8—Following up on *Art Fraud Detective* (Kingfisher, 2000), Nilsen offers another opportunity for detail-oriented students to pore over fine works of art and solve a mystery. The night before an auction, Henry, the auctioneer, is sent an anonymous e-mail suggesting that 16 of the 34 paintings are fakes. He enlists readers' help by providing information on four gangs of forgers, including their level of expertise and how much they get paid for their copies. Readers are then asked to identify the fakes and figure out how much money the crafty collector paid for them. Henry suggests creating a spreadsheet to fill in all the relevant data. This is a complex task made more interesting by the addition of the mathematics component. The meticulous solution is provided at the end. The high-quality glossy paper allows for excellent reproductions of paintings by Whistler, Warhol, Fra Angelico, Cézanne, and Renoir, among others. The auction catalog itself shows the paintings above short biographies of the artists and includes a description of their style. There is also a smaller image of the actual work of art that readers can use to determine the authenticity of the piece. This is a nice browsing title even if students don't solve the mystery. If your library has

budding sleuths who are ready for a more complex challenge and who like art, this is the book for them. — Linda M. Kenton, San Rafael Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 5-8. Nilsen combines art appreciation, decoding skills, computation, and a sense of adventure into a single, coherent package. Following an explanation of the art forgery game that is afoot and suggestions on how to look for the forgers' telltale signs, which are rendered in comics style, readers are called on to consider a catalog of 34 famous paintings, 16 of which are fakes about to go on the auction block. By finding the fakes, noting how many mistakes each has, and doing some math, the reader is on the way to cracking the case of who forged what and who coordinated the operation. The paintings include Mary Cassatt's *The Tea* and Rembrandt's *Artemisia*. Each artwork is reproduced twice, once without changes and a second time with possible mistakes. Give this to kids who enjoy art, love games, and don't think that a book always has to be read from front to back. Francisca Goldsmith Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This book is very similar in theme and format to Anna Nilsen's other book "Art Fraud Detective", so if you liked that one, you can continue the feast here. As in "Detective", we are asked to compare original, catalogue pictures of famous paintings to current paintings on display to determine which display paintings are forgeries and who the forgers are. In this case, however, as the title suggests, the setting is an art auction rather than an art museum. As in "Detective", the forgers operate in gangs which use symbols to identify themselves, and each forger makes more or fewer mistakes on his or her paintings. In this case, the number of mistakes is related to the amount the forger gets paid, and we have to use these amounts to then figure out who commissioned these forgeries to nab our suspect. Compared to "Detective", this book is much easier to detect the forgeries vs. the non-forgeries. The gang symbols "hidden" in each forgery practically leap off the page. If you haven't found a gang symbol within a pretty brief period, you can probably safely assume the painting is one of the eighteen real paintings. But, like "Detective", finding the exact number of mistakes is a more dicey proposition. In this book we know that each forger is either "expert" (1-3 mistakes per painting), "very good" (4-6 mistakes) or "good" (7-9 mistakes). It's usually pretty easy to find enough mistakes to get to the lower end of the range, but finding another mistake or two to determine the exact number is a challenging venture. This process is further complicated by the fact that the current photos are larger and more brightly colored than the catalogue pictures, which can at times make it difficult to determine whether a difference is an intentional mistake, or just the result

of these differences. But the intentional mistakes are generally pretty clear, so if you're in doubt, it's probably not one. Overall, this mystery is easier to solve than "Detective". It's very easy to figure out which forger painted each forgery; the big challenge is to figure out how much each was paid. In this regard, I have a criticism with how the end is laid out. There is a page entitled "A Helping Hand" which gives some hints, but then also provides a fully completed chart of each gang, which forger forged each painting and the amount each forger and each gang were paid. The next page then goes on to challenge you to find the suspect who paid for the forgeries, but if you so much as glanced at the chart, the answer is obvious, so the last step is rather a waste. In any case, aside from solving the mystery, this book provides hours of fun simply immersing yourself in the great works of Western art from Medieval and Renaissance times to modern times. Each page of the catalogue gives us a brief description of the artist, his or her times, the themes and intentions of each artist and a few details about the painting itself. This is about as close as you can get to spending an afternoon in the museum without leaving your home or spending a fortune for admission. In fact, these books may be better in some ways because nowhere else will you find all these works in one collection. Highly recommended for hours of art loving fun. 4.5 stars

What a unique and interesting book. Great concept for the kids to learn about art in a different way.

I have always loved doing activities that we can ALL grow with and this definitely constitutes one of them. Its a great book with lots of twists for those who have a passion for art appreciation.

We have this book and the Art Fraud Detective. They are great to have kids compare information. My kids like finding the differences, but have not finished either story yet...

Great and interactive! Used with a group of students who really enjoyed getting to know the paintings and find out who did it.

Haven't thoroughly read this but plan to use the idea for a lesson plan. Great for an art history lesson.

This books is one of several that show wonderful works of art to kids in a friendly style. I provides an overview or the art and artist. The kids have really enjoyed using these books and trying to solve the mystery.

This seems to be written towards a 9-12 year old age range of interest with a reading level about the same range. There is not a lot of reading in this book but someone who is a poor reader might need help. This book starts with the premise that there is an art forger ring and you have to find out who forged what picture, what they were paid for the picture based on how many mistakes they made and in the end; put all that together to figure out who the mastermind is behind the crimes. It takes some time to solve the mystery but it is doable. For those who give up or just don't want to bother; there is an answer key in the back. This is an easy way to expose your child to art, develop critical thinking skills, and increase observation skills. If your child enjoyed the 'Where's Waldo' type books, he or she might enjoy this book. Enjoy

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