NEWS LESSON

The Thieves Who Left Their DNA Behind



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Why do some paintings become worth millions?
2. Would you rather own a famous picture or one you simply love?
3. What makes a real-life theft different from a film heist?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**prosecutor**	☐	A	facts or things that help show what happened
2	**evidence**	☐	B	official statements that someone did a crime
3	**canvas**	☐	C	things that keep a place safe
4	**charges**	☐	D	very big and hard to do, needing a lot of effort
5	**security**	☐	E	the cloth that an artist paints on
6	**ambitious**	☐	F	a lawyer who says in court that someone did a crime
7	**specialists**	☐	G	people who know a lot about one subject
8	**condition**	☐	H	how good or bad something is

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Thieves broke into Renoir's old home in France and took two paintings. The police found them hidden behind a wall. How?

1 At 5.48am on 8 September 2026, an alarm went off at a small museum on the French Riviera. Two people had broken into the former home of the famous painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir. They were trying to steal four paintings. Within minutes, police were on their way, and the thieves were running out of time. They escaped with only two of the four. The other two were left behind. The paintings they took were later valued by a prosecutor at around €4.2 million.

2 The museum is in Cagnes-sur-Mer, near Nice, where Renoir spent the final years of his life. According to French officials, the thieves cut through a fence and entered through a window. The alarm interrupted the robbery. They abandoned two paintings as they hurried away, but managed to take Portrait of Madame Colonna Romano and Young Woman at the Well. Both had been lent to the museum by the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

3 For several weeks, the missing paintings were nowhere to be found. Police examined evidence from the museum and investigated the people they believed might be involved. A cover left behind during the escape contained DNA that helped identify a suspect. Investigators also used information from a vehicle that was being tracked as part of another police investigation. These clues helped them follow the trail.

4 The story took another turn when police became worried that a second robbery might be planned. One suspect had visited another art museum, and investigators feared the group could strike again. They decided to make arrests. Six people were arrested, and four men faced preliminary charges. Being charged, however, does not mean someone has been found guilty.

5 Police eventually recovered the two missing Renoirs from a hiding place behind a wall beneath a staircase in a house. The paintings were not in perfect condition. One canvas had been torn and another frame was damaged. Specialists were asked to examine them before their return to the museum.

6 The case raised questions about protecting valuable art. Small museums often have fewer security resources than famous galleries, yet they may hold paintings worth millions. There is also the problem of selling stolen masterpieces: buyers know that such works are recognised around the world. The thieves had apparently planned an ambitious crime, but their escape left behind the very clues that helped police find the art.

Sources: Associated Press. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The alarm sounded at 5.48am on 8 September 2026. T F NG
2. The thieves escaped with all four paintings. T F NG
3. The museum has since installed new security cameras. T F NG
4. DNA found on an item left at the scene helped police identify a suspect. T F NG
5. Both paintings that the thieves took belonged to the museum. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

abandoned	arrested	interrupted	investigated	recovered	stolen	valued

1. A loud alarm _____ the robbery, so the thieves had to run.
2. The thieves _____ two paintings because the police were coming.
3. Police _____ the two missing paintings from a house.
4. Police _____ the museum and the area around it for clues.
5. Six people were _____ and taken to a police station.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Two people had _____ into the former home of the painter. (BREAK)
2. They _____ with two artworks but left the other two behind. (ESCAPE)
3. They were trying _____ four paintings. (STEAL)
4. Buyers know that such works _____ around the world. (RECOGNISE)
5. Specialists _____ to examine them before their return. (ASK)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Little words like at, for and about often come after a certain verb or adjective. Learn them together.

about	at	for	in	of	through	to

1. The thieves cut _____ a fence to reach the garden.
2. The two paintings were valued _____ around €4.2 million.
3. The small museum is famous _____ its link with Renoir.
4. Police were worried _____ a second robbery.
5. Many visitors are interested _____ the life of Renoir.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What does a museum owe visitors as well as the objects it protects?
2. Would a stolen painting be worth anything if you could never show it?
3. Should museums display a convincing copy when an original is missing?

9 Role-play: more money for museum security

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the museum manager

A small museum has just lost two paintings. You want money for a better alarm and a night guard. Explain why it matters and say what will happen if you get nothing.

Student B · the town councillor

The town has a small budget and many other needs. Ask how much the museum wants and why. You can say yes, no, or give some of the money.

Useful phrases

We'd like to ask for some extra money.

It's not just about the paintings, it's about the visitors.

How much would it cost?

I'm afraid we can't afford all of it.

Could we start with the alarm?

That's a fair point, I'll think about it.

Afterwards, tell the class: how much money did the museum get, and was it fair?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 A · 3 E · 4 B · 5 C · 6 D · 7 G · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 interrupted · 2 abandoned · 3 recovered · 4 investigated · 5 arrested

6 Verb forms

1 broken · 2 escaped · 3 to steal · 4 are recognised · 5 were asked

7 Language focus

1 through · 2 at · 3 for · 4 about · 5 in

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