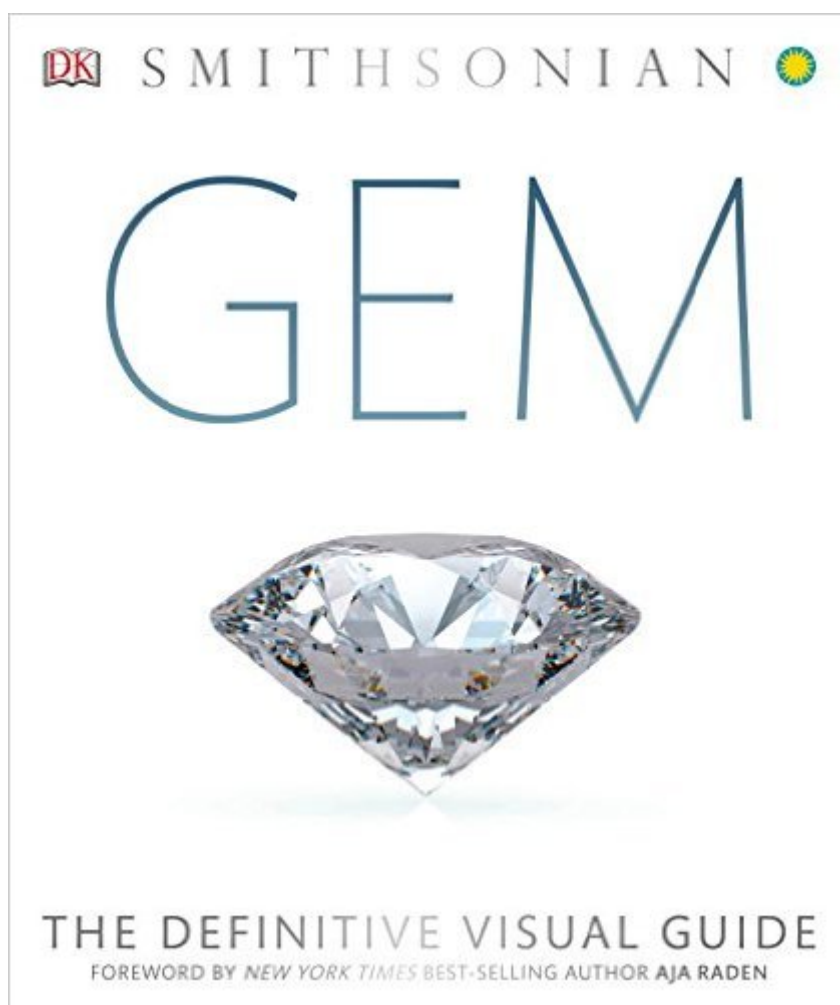


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# Gem



## Synopsis

A dazzling visual guide to precious and semiprecious stones, organic gems, and precious metals, *Gem* showcases beautiful, specially commissioned images as well as science, natural history, mythology, and true stories of adventure and discovery. From diamonds to sapphires to obsidian, this compendium profiles all the key gemstones and other precious materials, and its stunning images show the jewels in their different cuts, colors, and uses. See the exquisite jewelry pieces of royalty around the world, high-society women, and Native American traditions. Visit the Russian Amber Room, study the details of a Fabergé egg, and find out what characteristics are needed for a record-breaking gem. The stories, myths, and legends that surround the most celebrated gems and jewel-laden artifacts from around the world are revealed, from their journeys in the company of royalty, film stars, and thieves to the curse of the Hope Diamond. Follow the history of the world's most famous jewelry houses and their designers, including Cartier, Harry Winston, Tiffany & Co., and more. For additional information about the world's natural treasures, an 80-page reference section at the back of the book highlights a variety of other rocks and minerals, and a color-guide directory groups gems according to their main color. Created in association with the Smithsonian Institution and featuring a foreword by New York Times bestselling author Aja Raden, *Gem* combines lavish photographs with expert knowledge, making it perfect for gift-giving.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**What is a Gem?** A gem is generally defined as any mineral that is highly prized for its beauty, durability, and rarity, is used for personal adornment, and has been enhanced in some manner by altering its shape—usually by cutting and polishing. [View larger](#)

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Michelangelo's David

The sculpture represents the biblical David, Israelite slayer of the Philistine giant Goliath. David is carved from solid marble and stands at over 16ft (5m), weighing more than 5.5 tons (5 tonnes). He holds a sling in one hand and a stone in the other.

Russian Amber Room

The Amber Room remained a prized possession of the Russian state until World War II, when looting German forces dismantled it. The stolen panels were packed into 27 crates and carried off to Königsberg Castle on the Baltic coast. The trail ends there.

Sacred Stones

In both the Old and New Testaments, jewels are used as a metaphor to express how beautiful heaven will be. As a consequence, early medieval churches often used gems in their regalia, to decorate altars, and on the special vessels and vestments used in church services and processions.

Ammonite

In medieval Europe, the fossils were called snakestones or serpentstones and were believed to be petrified snakes, the work of saints such as St. Patrick or St. Hilda of Whitby.

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Brazilianite

Brazilianite was only discovered and named for the South American country of its discovery in 1945, making it a relatively 'new' gemstone. Most brazilianite is chartreuse yellow to pale yellow in color, and it is relatively hard for a phosphate mineral; it is also brittle.

Treasure Chambers of Augustus II

The Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault) in the Residenzschloss in Dresden, Germany, is home to the largest collection of treasures in Europe. Founded in 1730 by Augustus II (1670-1733) to hold the royal jewel collection, it contains over 3,000 unique treasures.

Turquoise

Turquoise from Nishapur, Iran (formerly Persia,) is considered by many to be the finest quality and has been mined for centuries. This turquoise, usually referred to as 'Persian', tends to be harder and of a more even color than North American turquoise, and it is always sky blue, never green.

Gems for Anniversaries

Stones have been assigned to planets, days of the week, and, most enduringly in modern times, to anniversaries.

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