

THE MOST EXPENSIVE PAINTINGS EVER SOLD

How much money do the most famous paintings cost? Who buys them? Where are they sold? And who decides the price? These are the questions that many people ask. If van Gogh's *Sunflowers* wouldn't sell for **\$125** while he was alive, why did it sell in 1987 for almost **\$40 million**?

Christie's and Sotheby's are two auction houses that handle most of the high-priced art sales in the world today. Both auction houses began in London in the 1700s. Now they have many locations around the world, and it is at these auction houses that buyers make bids on expensive art pieces that are offered up for sale.

Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi* (*Savior of the World*) was sold at Christie's in New York on November 15, 2017. That day it became the most expensive painting sold to date when it brought a price of **\$430.5 million**. There have since been questions about whether this painting was really done by Leonardo. How do you think that might affect its price in the future?

Included among the ten most expensive paintings ever sold are works by **Monet**,

Rembrandt, Gauguin, Cézanne, Picasso, and Jackson Pollock. While it might be expected that the *Mona Lisa* would be on that list, why isn't it? The reason we don't see it listed among the most expensive paintings ever sold is because it is housed in the permanent collection at the Louvre in Paris, and it simply isn't for sale.



Cézanne, *Apples and Peaches*, 1905

Estimates of its worth have been made, however. According to an article by Alex Wexelman in 2018 entitled, "When Jackie Kennedy Brought the *Mona Lisa* to America Paris Rioted," the *Mona Lisa* would be worth at least **\$850 million** in today's dollars.¹ This estimate was based on the value of the \$100 million placed on it when the painting was brought to New York in 1962 and displayed for a short period of time at the **Metropolitan**