

## Rare stamp sells for \$9.5 million

June 30, 2014



A new world record has been set for the sale of a postage stamp. Not just any old stamp, but a one-of-a-kind. The 1856 British Guiana One-Cent Magenta was sold at an auction in New York for \$9.48 million. The

auction house, Sotheby's, said it was the fourth time the stamp has broken the record. Sotheby's vice chairman David Redden said the record would never be broken again, unless the same stamp came up for auction again. He told reporters: "That price will be hard to beat, and likely won't be exceeded unless the British Guiana itself comes up for sale again in the future." David Beech, a former curator of stamps at the British Library, compared the sale to buying the artwork the 'Mona Lisa'.

The stamp was bought by an anonymous buyer. It was previously owned by John E. du Pont\*, an heir to the du Pont chemical fortune. He is currently in prison for fatally shooting an Olympic champion wrestler. It was first discovered in 1873 by a 12-year-old stamp collector. He sold it a few years later for six shillings - about \$50 in today's money and a tidy sum back then. It has since had a dozen owners, including the French government. Mr Redden marvelled at how sought after the stamp has become. He said: "This is the most valuable item in the world by weight. It's just a tiny piece of paper." He added he was happy that the stamp had been bought by a collector who would cherish it, and not by an investor.

\* Correction - Mr Du Pont died in 2010 - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_E.\\_du\\_Pont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_E._du_Pont)

Sources: AMC News / USA Today / CNN

## Writing

Compare and contrast collecting stamps and coins. Which is better? Why?

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*world record / one-of-a-kind / auction / stamps / hard to beat / in the future / artwork / anonymous / heir / in prison / collector / tidy / sought after / tiny / cherish / investor*

## True / False

- One of a pair of rare stamps sold for a world record. T / F
- The rare stamp was sold on the auction site eBay. T / F
- It was the fourth time the stamp had broken the world record. T / F
- A British Library worker said the stamp was better than the Mona Lisa. T / F
- No one knows the name of the person who bought the stamp. T / F
- The previous owner of the stamp is in jail for killing someone. T / F
- The stamp has had more than 12 owners. T / F
- The stamp was bought by an investor, not a collector. T / F

## Synonym Match

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. set       | a. surpassed   |
| 2. sold      | b. emerged     |
| 3. came up   | c. appreciated |
| 4. exceeded  | d. nameless    |
| 5. buying    | e. established |
| 6. anonymous | f. wealth      |
| 7. fortune   | g. care for    |
| 8. marvelled | h. traded      |
| 9. tiny      | i. purchasing  |
| 10. cherish  | j. minute      |

## Discussion – Student A

- What can you learn from collecting stamps?
- What kind of people collect stamps?
- Should the stamp be on view to the public?
- What comparisons can you make between this stamp and the Mona Lisa?
- Which are more interesting, stamps or coins?
- Why is it better the buyer is a collector and not an investor?
- What things do you have that you cherish?
- What questions would you like to ask the stamp's buyer?

# Breaking News English - The Mini Lesson

## Phrase Match

1. Not just
  2. a one-of-
  3. auction
  4. That price will
  5. a former curator of stamps
  6. The stamp was bought by
  7. \$50 in today's money and
  8. marvelled at how sought
  9. the most valuable item in the world
  10. a collector who
- a. at the British Library
  - b. after the stamp has become
  - c. an anonymous buyer
  - d. any old stamp
  - e. would cherish it
  - f. by weight
  - g. be hard to beat
  - h. a-kind
  - i. house
  - j. a tidy sum back then

## Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of collecting stamps as a hobby?
- b) Do you like the stamps your country produces?
- c) What did you collect when you were a kid?
- d) What do you think is the fascination with stamps?
- e) What do you think of the stamp that set the world record?
- f) Should stamps be replaced by something digital?
- g) Do you think stamps are a good investment?
- h) Why do you think that stamp is so famous?

## Spelling

1. a otsepga stamp
2. sold at an otnuiac
3. won't be eddexeec
4. a former rtuorac of stamps
5. oaredpmc the sale to...
6. buying the rotarkw
7. bought by an oyosnmaun buyer
8. lipruyvseo owned by John E. du Pont
9. yllataf shooting an Olympic champion
10. how usgoht after the stamp has become
11. the most ulavalbe item in the world
12. a collector who would eshhcir it

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. b	4. a	5. i
6. d	7. f	8. c	9. j	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Stamps

You think stamps are the best things to collect. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with collecting their things. Also, tell the others which is the most useless of these (and why): antique cars, autographs or fine wines.

### Role B – Antique cars

You think antique cars are the best things to collect. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with collecting their things. Also, tell the others which is the most useless of these (and why): stamps, autographs or fine wines.

### Role C – Autographs

You think autographs are the best things to collect. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with collecting their things. Also, tell the others which is the most useless of these (and why): antique cars, stamps or fine wines.

### Role D – Fine wines

You think fine wines are the best things to collect. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with collecting their things. Also, tell the others which is the most useless of these (and why): antique cars, autographs or stamps.

## Speaking – Investments

Rank these with your partner. Put the best investments at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- stamps
- art
- stocks and shares
- gold
- Internet start-ups
- education
- property
- antique cars

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.