

BIRTHSTONE PRIMER

Birthstones have long been associated with beliefs about birth and its relationship to the planets. The modern-day birthstone system is rooted in the Biblical era. It may have originated with the twelve-gem breastplate of Aaron, the Hebrew High Priest. According to *Exodus* 28 and 39, the plate was square with twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel. Each tribe was assigned a sign of the zodiac. Over time, the Julian calendar was adopted and the gems from the zodiac list were transposed to the corresponding calendar months.

Such historical data on birthstones, their powers and connection to the zodiac, was researched and published by George Frederick Kunz for his book, *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*, printed in 1912. Kunz, one of the world's foremost gemologists of his day, was also the resident gem expert for the New York City jeweler, Tiffany & Co.

Using a wide range of sources to reveal gemstones' magical, medicinal and religious uses, Kunz's book included additional birthstone lists -- some associated with the twelve guardian angels, others with the twelve apostles. He also wrote about gems associated with the day of one's birth.

Kunz, a scholar and marketer of gems, most likely created birthstone lists as a how-to guide to educate consumers about what gems to buy and when. In fact, Kunz wrote poems about gemstones to help inform prospective gem buyers. For example:

*The February-born may find / Sincerity and peace of mind,
Freedom from passion and from care, / If she an amethyst will wear.*

Today's birthstone guides often assign more than one gem per month. As a result, there is a bewildering array of birthstone choices. What if none of the birthstones suit you? Then throw away the lists and choose a gemstone that represents something special to you

THE MODERN BIRTHSTONE LIST

January	Garnet
February	Amethyst
March	Aquamarine or bloodstone
April	Diamond
May	Emerald
June	Pearl, moonstone or alexandrite
July	Ruby
August	Peridot or sardonyx
September	Sapphire
October	Opal or tourmaline
November	Yellow topaz or citrine
December	Tanzanite, turquoise, zircon, lapis lazuli or blue topaz