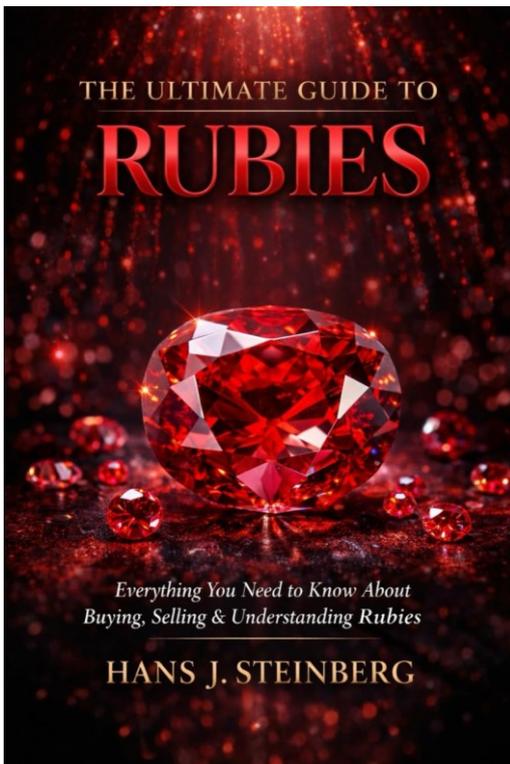


### AI Slop

By James Evans, EG

Eleven ‘Ultimate Guides’ were published in February, reportedly by Hans J. Steinberg. The guide to ruby is surely the pinnacle of the collection, promising to be *‘the complete authority on one of the world’s most powerful and valuable gemstones.’* And with the additional promise of making the reader a certified gemmologist,<sup>1</sup> how could I refuse? I swiftly ordered the book, marvelled at the geometry-defying cover-image, then began.



It should be acknowledged that the book contains neither images nor page numbers – though this latter point can be overlooked, given the same themes reappear throughout. Presumably, the AI responsible for the content could only generate one chapter at a time, and was determined to include its best facts in each.

That’s not to say the book isn’t at times enjoyable. One amusing chapter on mining describes the separation of rubies by flotation, *‘which involves adding chemicals to separate the rubies from other minerals. The rubies will attach to air bubbles and rise to the surface, where they can be skimmed off.’*<sup>2</sup>

The book does avoid some common pitfalls. For example, it’s often claimed that the famous ‘Black Prince’s Ruby’ (now considered a spinel) was historically misidentified – ignoring the gradual evolution of the term ‘ruby’ over time. Hans deftly avoids this trope, albeit by describing the jewel as a magnificent ruby and forgoing any mention of spinel at all.

Moving on from the ruby guide, and in my eagerness to earn the promised certificate, I purchased further guides on zircon and tourmaline. Both underwhelmed. To the extent that zircon was described as a gemstone, it was to marvel at its supposedly exceptional durability. *‘Imagine wearing a zircon ring while engaging in everyday activities like cooking, gardening, or playing with kids. With zircon’s toughness, you don’t have to worry about your gemstone cracking or breaking under pressure’.*<sup>3</sup> That being said, should the stone pick up minor scratches, you can always buff it out with a polishing compound!<sup>4</sup>

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*Tourmaline has been shown to have antimicrobial properties, making it a great additive for building materials, such as concrete and coatings.*

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The guide to tourmaline was perhaps my favourite of the three, for its sheer surrealism. For example, I had never before heard the story of “Cornelius de Bory”, who apparently coined the term “tourmaline” in 1703, albeit *‘to describe a different mineral altogether – a type of quartz crystal. It wasn’t until later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that the name “tourmaline” became associated with the gemstone we know today.’* Is this true? No. Perhaps the AI was having sub-conscious doubts about the Black Prince’s Ruby after all. But does it really matter, so long as I get my certificate?!

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For those willing to read all eleven guides.
- <sup>2</sup> The author may have been ‘thinking’ of the separation of industrial minerals.
- <sup>3</sup> The author may have been ‘thinking’ of cubic zirconia rather than zircon.
- <sup>4</sup> The author may have been ‘thinking’ of a car.