

# Coins in the Classroom



## Current Events on Coins

Money can serve several purposes. During the days of the vast Roman Empire, coins were not only money, the designs on coins reflected religion, politics and victorious battles. In essence, they were equivalent to modern newspapers.

The U.S. Mint's 50 State Quarter Program was a huge success. The eagerly anticipated quarter generated new coin collectors each year, and also raised awareness of state geography and national history.

Designing a commemorative coin is an interesting process. Not only must considerations be made as to the appropriateness of a design, but the reality of whether or not the design can be translated into a coin for striking must also be considered. Some U.S. commemorative coins tell great stories while others describe an event that may seem rather obscure. If your students could create a commemorative coin, which event would they choose?

**PURPOSE** The purpose of this activity is to explain why a design is chosen for a coin.

**Goals** At the end of this activity, students will be able to:  
Describe why designs on current U.S. circulating coins were chosen.  
Explain the significance of the design on a modern commemorative U.S. coin.  
Design two commemorative coins based on a local and national current event.

**MATERIALS NEEDED**

1. Examples of current circulating coins of the United States.
2. Images and list of modern U.S. commemorative coins.
3. Small paper plates and blank paper.
4. An example of a classic or modern commemorative coin.



## DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Hand out examples of circulating coins and discuss with students why particular profiles appear on U.S. coins.  
Examples:  
Lincoln cent - Issued in 1909 to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Lincoln's birth.  
Roosevelt dime - Issued in 1946 to honor President Roosevelt after his death in 1945 and his work in founding the March of Dimes.  
Washington quarter - Issued in 1932 to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary Washington's birth.
2. Discuss with students how commemorative coins are designed to honor a special person or event in history. Pass around a commemorative coin and discuss the event or person that appears on the coin

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Have students select a commemorative coin from *A Guide Book Of United States Coins* or use the list found on:

[http://www.usmint.gov/about the mint/CoinLibrary/index.cfm#eisCent](http://www.usmint.gov/about_the_mint/CoinLibrary/index.cfm#eisCent)

Students will research the subject of their coin and provide the answers to the following questions:

- A) What is the person or event that this coin commemorates?
  - B) What is the significance (if any) of the date on the coin?
  - C) Is the design effective? Does the design want to make you know more about the person/event?
  - D) If you were able to change part of the coin, what would you change and why?
2. Challenge students to explain the difference between an event that is state/local as opposed to a national event. As a homework assignment, students will be required to find one state/local event and one national event that is of interest to them. Make sure that the student lists his/her source.
  3. Direct students to design a coin to commemorate their national event and design another coin depicting their local event. Students should use the paper plate to help them form a circle for their coin.



**PRINT  
RESOURCE**

1. *A Guide Book of United States Coins* by R. S. Yeoman, edited by Kenneth Bressett. Published annually, this is the standard book of coin collectors and contains a wealth of coinage and illustrations of commemorative coins.

**INTERNET  
RESOURCE**

Website: [http://www.usmint.gov/about\\_the\\_mint/CoinLibrary/index.cfm#eisCent](http://www.usmint.gov/about_the_mint/CoinLibrary/index.cfm#eisCent)

