

Treasures in Your Pocket Lesson Plan

Target Audience: Ages 7-17.

Time Required: At least 1-2 hours. (Less than 1 hour is insufficient, while anything over 3 hours and younger children may lose interest.)

Materials Needed (varies based on number of attendees, though books can be shared):

- *A Guide Book of United States Coins* (a.k.a. the Red Book) by R.S. Yeoman; Ken Bressett, Senior Editor. (Use the most current version available.)
- *Cherrypickers' Guide to Rare Varieties of United States Coins (6th Edition, Volumes I and II)* by Bill Fivaz and J.T. Stanton.
- *Strike It Rich with Pocket Change (4th Edition)* by Ken Potter and Brian Allen.
- *The Error Coin Encyclopedia (4th Edition)* by Arnold Margolis and Fred Weinberg.
- Workspace – a table or desk and chair(s) with sufficient room for coins to be spread out.
- Lighting – incandescent preferred for grading purposes.
- Magnification – a triplet loupe of 5x-10x.
- Various U.S. coins. Boxes of rolled coins may be available for purchase from banks; contact local banks for more info. It is suggested to have some examples of error and/or die variety coins, as well as examples of older/obsolete coins; wheat cent, buffalo nickel, pre-1965 silver Roosevelt dime and/or Washington quarter, etc. to show children.
- (Optional) – a computer to search for information.

Objectives:

- Introduce young collectors to the basics of searching for various United States coins.
- Learn how to differentiate common coins worth only face value and those that are considered collectible, including the concepts of face value, intrinsic value, collectible coins and valuation.
- Learn how to use numismatic reference materials to aid in treasure hunting.
- Become familiar with tools and skills necessary for numismatic growth.

Instructions:

- Before and during the lesson, keep in mind:
 - Successful implementation of this program depends upon your abilities as a teacher and a numismatist. You must be comfortable speaking about the modern U.S. Mint coin production process. Lead by example without being critical or judgmental.
 - Be familiar with the TIYP manual before instruction time. There are several pictures included in the manual, so use TIYP as a reference tool during the program.
 - Be patient. Stop and check for comprehension after each concept. Review any concepts/ideas as needed, based on age group and time constraints. Find effective ways to make coins relatable.
 - Keep track of time and take care not to let side conversations about particular coins steal focus from the overall subject.

- Pre-lesson preparation: Ask how many children in the group are numismatists. Find out how much they know about coins and how to collect them. Where did they get their coins? What do they like about them? Why are certain people/places/things on coins?
- Ask them about other hobbies and interests; skills learned in one hobby may transfer to others. If you have any other icebreaker activities this may make the children feel more comfortable.
- Build the excitement by showing the coins they will be looking through. (A pile of change can be effective. The more coins, the more exciting!) Let them know that the point of this lesson is to learn how to find treasures in what looks like ordinary coins!
- Get the children's attention by telling them they've probably spent coins that were worth more than their denomination. Explain face value, collectible value and intrinsic value. Ask why a dime/quarter from 1964 is worth more than one from 1965 (90% silver vs. copper-nickel clad).
- Ask if they have anything at home they consider valuable or collectible. Is it important or valuable to just the child, or to others as well. Why?
- Introduce the concepts of supply versus demand. Just because an item is rare or unique, it does not necessarily have a higher value, and even when there is an abundant supply, an item might still be extremely valuable. (Use examples you feel comfortable with.)
- Review the basic tools needed and used by successful numismatists: workspace, books, lighting, and magnification. Let them know that other collectors can be among the best resources.
- Discuss how to handle and store collectible coins properly.
- Describe the modern coin minting process. Direct them to the U.S. Mint's webpage on the topic, "How Coins Are Made" under the "Learn" heading.
- Use positive reinforcement. Keep their confident spirits up!
- Review places to obtain coins: containers at home, friends and relatives, and acquiring coins from a bank. Review information regarding local coin shops, clubs, and club shows and large shows. (If you are presenting this program at a coin show, discuss etiquette involving dealers.)
- Explain that they should first be looking for anything "different" or eye-catching. Show pictures/examples of the error coins included in the manual, then let them start looking.
- Explain how the age of a coin doesn't necessarily make it more valuable. (Use Ancient Roman copper coins as an example.)
- Review the P-D-S classification of error coins (**P**lanchet, **D**ie(s), or **S**trike). Explain how the value of error coins is generally based on the oddity of the error. Ask how they think minor and major mint errors pass quality control, and why they think the Mint doesn't want these mistakes to escape.
- Explain the basic concepts behind die varieties, and that these present the best chances of finding actual "treasure" in a pile of change. Let them know that a seemingly "normal" coin can be valuable based on slight differences between coin dies. (This step is suggested for children 10 and over.)
- If using computers, allow children to explore the numismatic websites listed in the TIYP manual. You may want to provide physical copies of this list.
- Wrap-up: Enlist aid from the children to clean up materials to emphasize personal accountability (helping to re-roll change reinforces mathematic counting concepts). Congratulate them for their hard work. Let them know that while it may not always be profitable, the real treasures are the time spent learning and exploring a new hobby and making new friends! Let them know they now have the knowledge needed to be successful coin treasure hunters and life-long numismatists.