

## U.S. Coins Lesson Plan

*Audience:* 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

*Time:* 15 to 30 minutes.

*Objectives:* The student shall be able to:

1. Learn historical highlights of U.S. Coins
2. Count money with coins

*Teaching Materials and Resources:*

- Enlarged pictures of the front and back of the penny, nickle, dime and quarter. (Best is you glue together with a piece of poster board in between to give body and laminate.)
- List of amounts of money.
- (Optional) Magnifying glasses and coins

*Teaching Procedure:*

Hold up the appropriate “coins” you have made as you discuss the history. Give each child one or two coins. Then call out or hold up a sign with an amount of money and have them get into groups that form that amount with the “coins” they are holding.

*Lesson:*

### **Why are the values of United States coins shown in words and not numbers?**

We do not have any information available about why the United States has followed the general custom of displaying coin values in words instead of numbers. The United States Mint used numerical descriptions of the value on our coins from time to time since the establishment of our coinage system in 1792. However, this has been the exception and not the rule.

### **Why is the Flip Side 'Flipped'?**

All U.S. coinage is produced with what is commonly called a “coin turn.” That means that the **reverse** side (tails) of the coins is upside down to the **obverse** side (heads). While the U.S. treasury has researched the history of this practice, they have been unable to determine the exact reason for this custom. The Mint still produces U.S. coinage in this manner for traditional reasons and not due to any legal requirement.

### **What is a penny made of?**

In 1962, the cent's tin content, which was quite small, was removed. That made the metal composition of the cent 95 percent copper and 5 percent zinc.

The alloy remained 95 percent copper and 5 percent zinc until 1982, when the composition was changed to 97.5 percent zinc and 2.5 percent copper (copper-plated zinc). Cents of both compositions appeared in that year.

### **The Presidents on Our Coins**

*(Note: The artist's initials are along the bottom of the picture of each president. You may want to take magnifying glasses for them to look for the initials as they are very hard to see on everything except the nickle with the naked eye.)*

Designed by Victor Brenner, the Lincoln cent was issued in 1909 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Felix Schlag's portrait of Thomas Jefferson, which began to appear on the obverse side of the nickel in 1938, was chosen in a design competition among some 390 artists.

The death of Franklin Roosevelt prompted many requests to the Treasury Department to honor the late president by placing his portrait on a coin. Less than one year after his death, the dime bearing John R. Sinnock's portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt was released to the public on FDR's birthday, January 30, 1946.

The portrait of George Washington by John Flanagan, which appears on quarters minted from 1932 to today, was selected to commemorate the 200th anniversary of our first president's birth.

### **Lincoln's Best Side?**

The likeness of President Lincoln on the penny is an adaption of a plaque executed by Victor David Brenner, an outstanding portraitist and sculptor. President Theodore Roosevelt was so impressed with Mr. Brenner's design of a Lincoln plaque that he recommended to the Secretary of the Treasury that the design be placed on a coin to be issued in the Lincoln Centennial Year, 1909.

The direction that Lincoln faces on the cent was not mandated -- this was simply the choice of the designer.

### **In God We Trust**

From Treasury Department records it appears that the first suggestion that God be recognized on U.S. coinage can be traced to a letter addressed to the Secretary of Treasury from a minister in 1861. An Act of Congress, approved on April 11, 1864, authorized the coinage of two-cent coins upon which the motto first appeared.

The motto was omitted from the new gold coins issued in 1907, causing a storm of public criticism. As a result, legislation passed in May 1908 made "In God We Trust" mandatory on all U.S. coinage. Several years ago, the appearance of "In God We Trust" on our money was challenged in the federal courts. The challenge was rejected by the lower federal courts, and the Supreme Court of the United States declined to review the case.

## **Why do some coins have grooves on the edges? And why are they there?**

The dollar, half-dollar, quarter, and ten-cent coin denominations were originally produced from precious metals (gold and silver). Reeded edges were eventually incorporated into the design of these denominations to deter counterfeiting and the fraudulent use of the coins, such as filing down the edges in an attempt to recover the precious metals.

The one-cent and five-cent pieces are considered "minor" coins of the United States and have never contained precious metals.

Currently, none of the coins produced for circulation contain precious metals. However, the continued use of reeded edges on current circulating coinage of larger denominations is useful to the visually impaired. For example, the ten-cent and one-cent coins are similar in size; the reeding of the ten-cent coin (118) makes it easily identifiable by touch. (119 Quarter)

## **Distribute Coins.**

Start by having them get into a group to form 41 cents as this should use one of each coin but any combination is acceptable.

Continue calling out amounts and letting them form groups of the correct amount.

Source: <http://www.ustreas.gov/education> There are several fact sheets and items of interest at this site from which the information was compiled.

(Optional information.)

The United States Bullion Depository Fort Knox, Kentucky

Amount of present gold holdings: 147.3 million ounces.

The only gold removed has been very small quantities used to test the purity of gold during regularly scheduled audits. Except for these samples, no gold has been transferred to or from the Depository for many years.

The gold is held as an asset of the United States at book value of \$42.22 per ounce.

The Depository opened in 1937; the first gold was moved to the depository in January that year.

Highest gold holdings this century: 649.6 million ounces (December 31, 1941).

Size of a standard gold bar: 7 inches x 3 and 5/8 inches x 1 and 3/4 inches.

Weight of a standard gold bar: approximately 400 ounces or 27.5 pounds.

Construction of the depository:

Building materials used included 16,000 cubic feet of granite, 4,200 cubic yards of

concrete, 750 tons of reinforcing steel, and 670 tons of structural steel. The cost of construction was \$560,000 and the building was completed in December 1936.

In the past, the Depository has stored the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the Articles of Confederation, Lincoln's Gettysburg address, three volumes of the Gutenberg Bible, and Lincoln's second inaugural address.