

Casting Coins with Elementary Students

(art + history, art + social studies, art + math)

As young students learn the value and structure of our monetary system, they can make their own coins for trade or to save. This lesson plan allows students to design and “mint” coins bearing their own symbols. It’s a simple embossing and casting process using Printfoam and modeling clay that dries rock-hard. Coins can be single or double-sided and the degree of detail can be adjusted according to age level. Add a hanging hole and ribbon, and cast medals instead of coins. Finished embossings can be inked and printed on paper as well.

Grade Levels K-4

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives


- Students will observe the artistic expression evident in coins of the past and today
- Students will evaluate the symbolism used in designing coins and select images that express their own ideas
- Students will emboss and cast a simple design, observing how negative space creates positive relief in the process of casting

Historical/Cultural Relativity


- Observe examples of coins from ancient and




Finish coins or medallions with metallic acrylic paint



Step 2: Emboss the design with a ball point pen



Step 1: Draw a design with pencil on paper



Step 4: Press clay into printfoam to cast a coin. Trim away excess.

Materials

Inovart® Printfoam for Block Printing (40403-1003).

Package of twelve 9" x 12" sheets, cut into 3" x 3" pieces (12 per sheet), need two pieces per student

Pilot® Ball Point Pen, medium, with permanent ink (20717-2009), box of 12, need one per student

Crayola® Air Dry Clay (33272-1125), share one 2-1/2-lb bucket across classroom

Sargent® Metallic Acrylics (00730-0089), share one 6-color set across classroom

Blick Scholastic Golden Taklon Flat Wash Brush, 1/4" (05859-4014), need one per student

Snippy Scissors (57040-2005), need one per student

3M® Highland™ Transparent Tape (23017-0050), share two rolls across classroom

School Pencil Compass (55491-1055), need one per student

Blick White Sulphite Drawing Paper (10209-1003), package of 100 sheets, need 1/2 sheet per student

Blick Economy Graphite Pencils (20302-2009), box of 12, need one per student

Historical/Cultural Relativity, continued

modern-day cultures. Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine coins are the most widely collected. Asian coins are great examples of coins as a means of artistic expression. Discuss the symbols of American patriotism found on contemporary currency.

Process for Grades 2-4:

1. Start by designing coin layout on drawing paper. Use compass to create a circle 2-1/2" in diameter in the center of the 3" x 3" paper square. It's important to get the circle centered as closely as possible. You may wish to pre-cut or photocopy circles. Have students concentrate on simple lines and shape within their coin designs. IMPORTANT: All lettering, including numbers, must be done in reverse. Repeat for other side of coin if desired.
2. Tape the paper design onto the Printfoam square to keep it in place. Have students re-trace their lines using a ball point pen. The outside circle must be traced as well. If paper tears and pen marks the foam, it will still work. Once the design has been embossed into the foam, you may want to have students deepen their lines by pressing with the ball point pen directly into the foam (the deeper the embossing, the more defined the casting will be). Use a pen with permanent ink and allow it to dry completely before using the clay.
3. Each student will need a ball of clay approximately 1-1/4" in diameter. Have them roll the clay ball in their hands, then flatten it against the tabletop or between their palms. Lay the clay against one Printfoam embossing and press so that the clay covers the outer circle of the coin design. Place the second foam design over the top and line up the edges. Use tape to secure both foam pieces together and apply pressure by hand or with a rolling pin or heavy book. Peel foam away from the clay and carefully trim away excess with scissors.
4. Allow to dry thoroughly, turning coin over a few times during drying. Clay will be bright white when dry. Paint coins with bright metallic colors.

Process for grades K-1:

1. Pre-cut circles to trace onto the Printfoam, or pre-draw for each student. Have students draw directly onto the foam with a ball point pen, concentrating on simple lines and shapes. Avoid using letters or numbers. Repeat for other side of coin if desired.
2. Repeat steps 3 and 4, at lower left.

Hnts

- Printfoam will begin to flatten after 2-3 castings.
- Students may work in pairs to create both sides of the coin.
- Dry time will vary with humidity. Coins will dry faster if placed in a sunny location.
- Create a medal by adding a hanging hole and ribbon. For easy attachment and a finished look, attach a [Jewelry Bail](#) (60692-4030) through the hanging hole, see example on page 1.

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National Standards:

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **K-4** Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories.

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

- **K-4** Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas.

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

- **K-4** Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning.

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

- **K-4** Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures.