

## Post-1066 unit - coins through time.

### 1. Starter:

Put together a collection of British coins we use today - as many values as you can. Ask the enquiry question *'What can we tell about the present day from a coin?'*



Get them to look carefully at a coin - either as a class on a whiteboard or in small groups. The children could draw or rub their coin, and label it, as a way to encourage them to look closely at the coin. You might, for example, use a range of 50p coins, all commemorating different events, or the 2012 Olympics coins, or whatever - these will help remind the children of history they have already studied. You might, on the other hand, use a range of coins, from 1p to £2.

#### *Useful questions might include:*

- when was this coin made?
- how old is it?
- is it new and shiny, or old and worn?
- who or what is commemorated on the coin?
- how much is it worth?
- what can I buy with this coin?

Finally, you might ask the children to place their coin on a timeline, from Stone Age to today. Where exactly should it go? Why is that?

You might also do some maths with the children at the same time. Finish up by asking two key questions:

- why do we have coins of different values?
- how useful is a coin as evidence? Is it primary evidence, or secondary evidence?

## 2. For each individual set of coins:

NB: You might carry out this activity as a whole class in seven groups - one group for each pack of coins, and then ask each group to feedback to the class as a whole. Or you might use individual packs - Roman coins, Anglo-Saxon coins, Viking coins - whilst you are studying that particular topic, and refer back to these activities when you use the whole pack as a 'Big Picture' activity.

The main thrust of the activity is to get the children to look carefully at the coins and use them as evidence for the period the coins come from.

The questions will reflect those from the 'starter' activity:

- what are the coins made from?
- what images do they have on them? Are all the images the same?
- are they all the same size/value/colour/from the same period?
- how well used are they?
- can we date them from the coins themselves?
- how do you think they were made?
- where do you think they were found?
- do you think they would be valuable today?

Some of these and other questions the children might devise for themselves - you will not be able to answer simply from investigating the coins. For example, 'how were they made?' Use these unanswered questions as a basis to research the period.

Ask the children what they think they could have bought, at the time, with each of the coins. Then carry out some research to find out what each of the coins would really have bought. Compare the results with the results for today, from the 'starter' activity.

Finally, don't forget to ask the children to place 'their' coins on the timeline they began earlier.



An Anglo-Saxon coin

### 3. Comparing two periods:

For example, you might compare the work in the 'starter' activity with the pre-decimal coins, or Anglo-Saxon coins with Viking coins, or perhaps the Roman coins with those from around the time of World War Two.

The children should, by this stage, be able to come up with plenty of questions themselves.



You might choose to focus on two of the history 'concepts':  
How *similar* are the coins, and how *different*?  
What has *changed*, and what has *stayed the same*?

Another area to explore might be the range of coins. Both Anglo-Saxons and Vikings only have silver pennies. Does that mean people didn't have much money at the time? What would be the difficulties in only having coins of one value? How might that make life easy? How might it make life more difficult?

Again, all these questions might lead to areas of further research. The children will, of course, already know a lot about Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Viking times from work done earlier in Key Stage 2.

#### 4. Looking at the collection of coins as a whole:

Ask the children to identify their favourite coin from the whole collection. What is so special for them about that coin? Why is it their favourite? You could get each child to make a display about their favourite coin and share their ideas with the rest of the class.

A big question to ask is '***How have coins changed from Roman times to today?***' This gives the children the opportunity to pull together all that they have discovered during this topic, but also bring in what they already know about history. Things like value - what could you buy with 6p, for example? Or design - are the things stamped onto coins still largely the same, or different? Or content - what are coins made of - copper, silver, gold?

Don't forget that there are some things you can't tell from coins - they might be reliable evidence in many ways, but they are only part of the evidence we have about the past. Kings liked to appear on coins as strong, powerful people - many of the images are propaganda rather than truth! Have fun!

Alf Wilkinson v1, February 2017.