

GREEK COINS Children's art activity

IN EVERY GREEK CITY the marketplace, called the **agora**, was the center of daily life. Here people would work, trade goods and meet friends, and conduct business deals. In the beginnings of Greek trade people exchanged goods and services by bartering. The invention of coins made commerce much simpler. As a symbol of independence each Greek **city-state** made its own coins. The name of the city was stamped on the coins along with a symbol of something connected to the city. Greek coins were beautiful works of small-scale **relief sculpture** decorated with images of gods and goddesses, heroes and animal symbols. A relief is a form of sculpture in which part or all of the composition projects from a flat surface. Some ancient coins are masterpieces of beauty and craftsmanship. In Athens coins were nicknamed **owls** because they showed the head of Athena on one side, and her symbol, the owl, on the other. Coins were made by striking a small ball of metal placed into an anvil with a bronze or iron punch that had a reverse of the image cast into it. Values of coins included the stater, the drachma, tetradrachm (four times the value of a drachma) and the obol. The stater equaled two drachmas, and the drachma equaled six obols. Without a credit card you would have needed a bag full of coins to go shopping in ancient Greece! One of the many inheritances from ancient Greece in use today is the decoration of coin money. Alexander the Great, the famous Macedonian warrior-king, used the art of coinage for propaganda and a means of self-promotion. He had images of himself cast into coins to symbolize his power. Rulers and political leaders have emulated this practice ever since. On a tour of the Carlos Classical Galleries find this tetradrachma of Ptolemy I Soter, Greco-Macedonian king of Egypt. It has an image of the emperor on one side and an image of the eagle, symbol of the god Zeus, on the other.

Materials

Greek coin stamps
silver sculpy
plastic knives
plastic bags to take coins home in
baking instructions

Procedure

Please read all of the steps before beginning.
Step 1. Cut sculpy blocks into four pieces. (Each child may receive 1/4 a block of sculpy).
Step 2. Divide small sculpy block into fourths again.
Step 3. Roll sculpy between fingers or on the table into marble sized balls.
Step 4. Choose a coin stamp and die set.
Step 5. Place sculpy ball on the coin die and center.
Step 6. Place stamp onto the sculpy and press down.
Step 7. Pull coin from the stamp or die, take home
bake at 275 degrees for 10 to twenty minutes. .



Tetradrachm of Ptolemy I Soter, From Alexandria. Hellenistic, ca 300-283 B.C. silver. The Carlos Collection of Ancient Greek Art



Tetradrachm of Ptolemy I Soter, reverse, The eagle of Zeus, symbol of the Ptolemaic dynasty

MC
CM

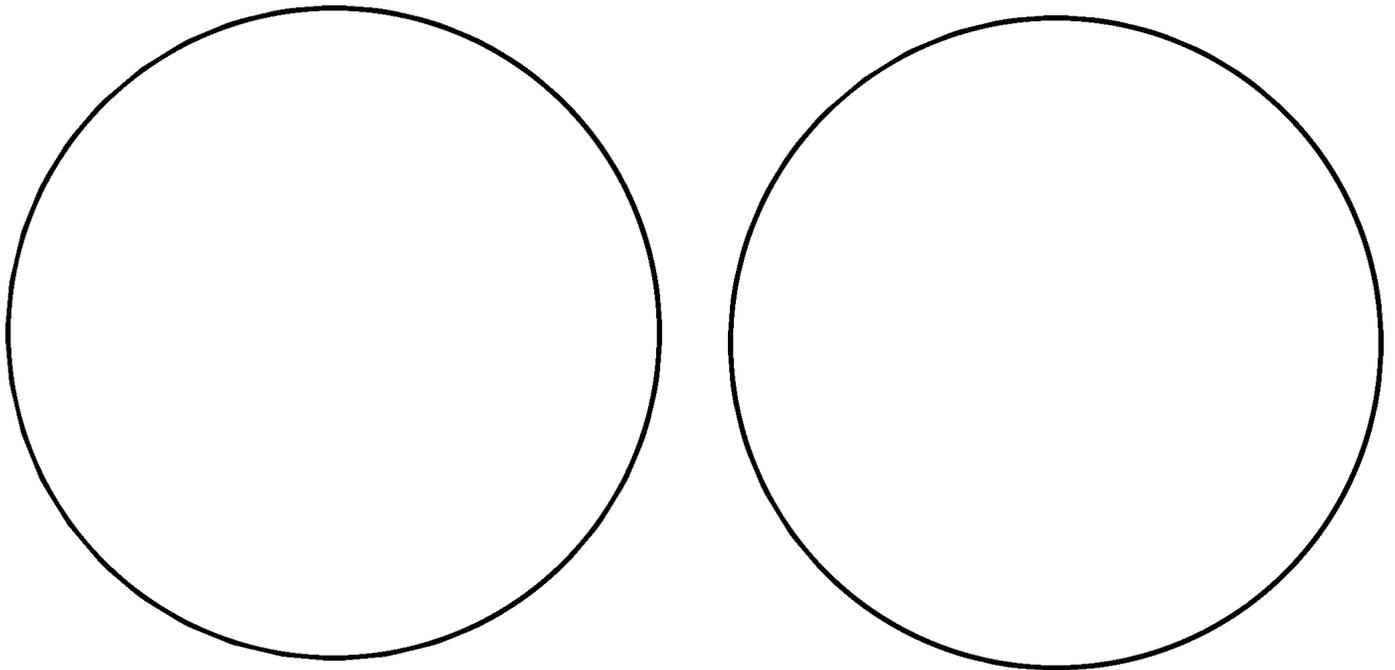
Design a coin!

Step 1. Choose a family member, a friend, or yourself and draw a portrait in profile (from the side) in one of these circles.

Step 2. Then choose an animal or plant that symbolizes the person on the coin and draw it in the other circle.

Step 3. Write the person's name "Greek style" on the coin using letters like this...

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U -
V W X Y Z



Step 4. Decide the monetary value of your coin. How many of your coins would it take to make a *gazzillion* dollars?!!