

Using Medals to Understand the Past and the Present

Creating Prepared Students in Social Studies (CO standards):

Understand the nature of historical knowledge as a process of inquiry that examines and analyzes how history is viewed, constructed, and interpreted

I Can Statements:

I can connect images on medals with societal values and priorities

I can identify the similarities and differences between medals and coins

I can connect the way historical knowledge is constructed with the present day

Grade Level: 2-5

Essential Question:

What can we learn about history using objects (such as medals)?

Materials and Resources:

Internet Access to visit embedded links:
bit.ly/medals-lesson



Learning Plan

1. ACCESS PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Ask students (*individually or in small groups*) to make a list of what images, words, or people are on coins

Have some students share items on their lists (*tally the most common responses*)

Have a brief discussion asking the following questions:

- Why do you think these images, words, and people are on our money?
- What makes these images, words, and/or people important to our country?
- What is the difference between a coin and a medal? (*Here you can discuss medals that kids are familiar with like the Olympics or military medals*)



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[MONEY.ORG/TEACHER-TOOLS](https://money.org/teacher-tools)

2. ACCESS NEW INFORMATION

Read the introduction to the Medal in America Virtual Museum Exhibit, [linked here](#), with your students (first two paragraphs)

Show the brief video (less than 4 minutes) on how medals are made, [linked here](#)

Show students examples of medals using the following display cases (feel free to explore other cases as well, based on student interest):

- [U.S. Mint Presidential Medals](#)
- [U.S. Mint Medals](#)
- [Medals of the Franklin Mint](#)
- [American Military Decorations and Medals](#)

Ask students (in small groups or as a whole class) to make a list of things that are similar and different between U.S. coins and the medals they just saw

- Consider things like shape, size, content, and purpose



3. ASSESS LEARNING

Individually or in groups task students with creating their own medal

- The medal they choose should be based on something that is important in society today
- It is recommended that you remind them of the medals they just saw and how they represent important things to Americans. They should try to make their medal something they believe is important to Americans today

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