

Black History & Women's History in America: Using the Lens of Numismatic Representations

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 interpret primary sources to evaluate their reflection of American societal priorities and issues

I can identify how the presence and/or absence of social factors (*race, gender, etc.*) in primary sources provide insight into how a society constructs knowledge and prioritizes groups

Grade Level: 10-12

Essential Question:

How do historical sources hide and/or reveal shifting societal issues?

Materials and Resources:

Internet Access to visit embedded links:

bit.ly/history-month-lesson



Learning Plan

1. ACCESS PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Ask students in small groups, to make a list of the ten most significant Americans in U.S. History

Create a list together as a class (*tallying any repeats*)

Discuss the racial and gender make-up of the most popular choices using the following questions:

- What demographic(s) are most common on the class list? On your group's list?
- What factors do you think influenced the list(s)? Consider demographics of those making the list, your current location, and the most common representations seen on TV and in the media
- In what ways are Americans influenced by the presence and/or absence of symbolic representations?



Brought to you by the Education Department of the American Numismatic Association. Check out other lesson plans at

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

2. ACCESS NEW INFORMATION

Show students, or have them explore in small groups, the following two museum cases:

- [America's First Medals](#)
- [Slavery and Abolition](#)

After exploring the above cases, have students discuss the following questions:

- Using the medals you just explored as primary sources, how does the presence and/or absence of certain demographics provide insight into how America prioritizes certain demographic groups (race, gender, etc.)?
- How did demographic representations on medals change after the Civil Rights Movement?
- What examples from the cases you explored demonstrate a shifting focus on race?
- Is it surprising there isn't a case specifically focused on women on medals? Explain.

3. ASSESS LEARNING

Ask students to pick one of the following two paths (this activity can also be done in small groups):

- **Path 1-** Explore the progression of Liberty on U.S. coins and medals, including the [2017 Black Lady Liberty](#), and plans for future editions to include Asian and Hispanic Americans
 - Ask students to research the evolution of liberty on coins. They can start with [this page](#) from the U.S. Mint
 - If students get stuck, have them do a Google search for "progression of lady liberty on coins"
 - Using their research, have students write a reflection or mini-essay answering the essential question for the lesson: **How do historical sources hide and/or reveal shifting societal issues?**
- **Path 2-** Explore the changing demographics of coinage evident in the [American Women Quarters \(2022-2025\)](#) and the [2024 Harriet Tubman Commemorative Coin Program](#)
 - Ask students to research the American Women Quarters and Harriet Tubman Commemorative Coin Program. The links above are a great starting point
 - Using their research, have students write a reflection or mini-essay answering the essential question for the lesson: **How do historical sources hide and/or reveal shifting societal issues?**

