



Coins in the Classroom: Roman Coin - Research

Students often fear the word “research”. Research can mean looking for insignificant facts about an obscure subject. But, what if the research subject was an ancient coin minted over a thousand years ago that students could hold in their hands?

In this activity, students will conduct an archaeological dig involving ancient coins to learn about money used in ancient Rome. The great part about this activity is that your students will not only be able to hold something most likely seen only before in museums, they will be able to keep the artifact as well. Most students will be fascinated when holding an ancient coin. When the activity is over and the students take their coin home, you will have given them the oldest thing that they will probably ever own in their lives!

PURPOSE

This activity is designed for middle and high school educators who are teaching World or Ancient History. Students will learn how Roman money was used.

GOALS

At the end of this activity, students will be able to:

Conduct an archaeological dig.

Attribute an ancient coin and describe how coins were used in Rome.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Roman coins* - Consult local dealers
2. Sand
3. Large square or rectangular plastic containers.

4. New pointless pencils.
5. Gallon jug of distilled water.
6. One 35mm plastic film container for each student.
7. String
8. Plastic spoons
9. Mild dish soap
10. Paper plates and paper towels
11. Cotton swabs
12. Tooth brushes
13. Paper cups
14. Map of Roman Empire

INTRODUCTION

In a teacher directed discussion, challenge students to describe the duties of an archaeologist. Have the class make a list of steps that must take place at a successful archaeological dig

PREPARATION

1. Place a layer of sand at the bottom of each large plastic container.
2. Lay out a grid by using the pencils as posts in the sand. Form the grid pattern by connecting the posts with string. Make sure that there is a square for each student.
3. Place at least one Roman coin in each of the grids. Carefully (so as not to disturb the coins) place more sand over the coins until the level of the sand sits just below the string.
4. On a sheet of paper, number each section of the grid and assign a student to each section.

You now have your archaeological dig!

STUDENT ACTIVITY

1. Have students carefully dig through their section to locate a coin using their plastic spoon.

2. Once they have obtained the coin, have the students complete the Coin Observation Worksheet.
3. Have students view a map of the Roman Empire. Explain how Roman coins were not only a medium of exchange but also served as newspapers by spreading the news of current events depicted on the design of the coin.
4. Students can now begin the attribution process. Pass out cleaning materials to students. Use the paper plates as the platform from where the dirt from the coin will be removed. Pour a small amount of distilled water in the cups. Have students remove the dirt using the following progression:
 - A. Water and cotton swab
 - B. Water and toothbrush
 - C. Soap and cotton swab
 - D. Soap and toothbrush

This procedure may take more than one class period. Have students label their 35mm canister and place their coins in them for safekeeping.

5. Using the Internet resources students will identify information on their coin and complete the Ancient Roman Coin Data Sheet.

Optional – For high school or advanced middle grade students

Challenge students to identify and research the ruler portrayed on their coin.

INTERNET RESOURCES

<http://www.forumancientcoins.com/dougsmith/uncleaned.html>

<http://www.forumancientcoins.com/dougsmith/feac71leo.html>

<http://www.tesorillo.com/aes/home.htm>

<http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/index.html>

<http://ancientcoinsforeducation.org>

<http://www.money.org/membership/dealer-directory.aspx>

<http://ancientcoinsforeducation.org>

*Roman coins can be located from several sources. Coins dealers will often sell lower grade Roman coins to educators for \$1-3 per coin. Ancient Coins for Education, Inc. (ACE) offers teachers a way to obtain ancient coins for student study and attribution with the help of online and computer resources.