

USING SILK ROAD COINAGE

as a Historical Lens to Societal Identity

Creating Prepared Students in Social Studies (CO standards):

Analyze historical time periods and patterns of continuity and change, through multiple perspectives, within and among cultures and societies.

I Can Statements:

I can identify major groups that existed on the Silk Road and connect images on their coins with societal values and priorities

I can connect the way historical knowledge is constructed, using cultures of the Silk Road as examples

Grade Level: 8-12

Essential Question:

How can material objects, such as money, serve as historical lenses?

Materials and Resources:

Internet access for links embedded in lesson plan.

[money.org/money-museum/
virtual-exhibits-silk](https://money.org/money-museum/virtual-exhibits-silk)



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 U.S. coins and paper money

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?
- Predict what images might be on ancient Greek coins, ancient Roman coins, ancient Chinese coins, and ancient Middle Eastern coins (create a class list for each group)



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2. ACCESS NEW INFORMATION

Read the introduction to the [Silk Road Virtual Museum Exhibit](#) with your students.

Show the brief [video](#) (less than seven minutes) on a summary of the Silk Road.

Read the introduction and share the images on the page: [Coinage: A Reflection of Culture](#).

Divide students into five groups, assigning each group a group of the Silk Road (listed and linked below).

- [Traditional Chinese Money](#)
- [In the Footsteps of Alexander](#)
- [The Sassanians](#)
- [The Rise of Islamic Coinage](#)
- [Central Asia: Where Cultures Coalesce](#)

Assign each group to go through the coins of the society they have been assigned, focusing on the following questions:

- What images, words, symbols are present?
- How might the images, words, and symbols mentioned in the previous question represent societal priorities of the assigned group?
- Who do you think determined these images, words, and symbols for the society in question?
- How might the symbols have been different if average citizens chose what to put on coins? (This question may require further investigation of the society.)

Each group should share their findings with the class.

- Students should create a chart with all five groups, taking notes on the conclusions drawn by each group as to the important factors that shaped what was on money.

3. ASSESS LEARNING

Students should take their chart of information and briefly investigate each of the five cultures, with the goal of determining what assumptions were correct and what assumptions were incorrect or partially correct. (This activity may require more scaffolding or more demanding requirements, dependent on grade.)

Have students create a list of what they would put on money today (if it were up to them individually), explaining how the items they choose would represent our society today for future generations.



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