



project.org

STUDENT HANDOUT

RED LEVEL
GO DEEPER

Small Works of Power

Grades 5–8 • Art

James Tissot (1836–1902), Brooklyn Museum

ADMIT ONE

NAME

DATE

CLASS

Every coin is a tiny work of art. Before anyone could read it, they could see it: a face, a symbol, a ring of letters. Two thousand years ago, rulers in Jerusalem and Rome chose those designs carefully, because a coin passed through every hand in the land.

PART 1

01

Power and belief in three designs

For each coin, note what the image and inscription show, and what message the design sends about who holds power and what they believe.



Tribute Penny (replica). Tiberius' face; the reverse reads PONTIF MAXIM, *High Priest*



Shekel of Tyre (replica). The pagan god Melqart; the only coin accepted for the Temple tax



Pilate's prutah, 29/30 AD. A simpulum and three bound ears of grain; no face

COIN

IMAGE AND INSCRIPTION

MESSAGE ABOUT POWER OR BELIEF

The Tribute Penny

The Shekel of Tyre

Pilate's prutah

PART 2

02

Which design speaks loudest?

For the Temple, the purity of the Shekel's silver overrode the offensiveness of its image. Pilate's symbols were chosen to provoke. Which design communicates power most forcefully — a ruler's face, a god's face, or a symbol? Use what you see on the coins.

03

PART 3
Critique a fake



GENUINE



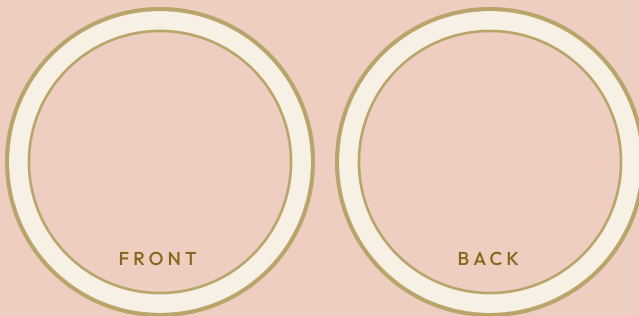
SAND-CAST FAKE

A genuine coin was struck between two dies. A sand-cast fake is made by pressing a real coin into fine sand and pouring molten metal into the mold. Name **three** visual clues that give this fake away — surface, portrait, edge or patina — and explain how the way it was made causes each one.

04

PART 4
Design a coin, with a rationale

Design a coin for a ruler, a cause or a community: portrait or symbol? Which words, and where? Then write your rationale: what message does each choice send, and whom might it offend or welcome?



MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

Play *Real or Replica?* at the exhibition or online: five pairs, five ways to fake a coin. Can you spot every one by its visual clues?

minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/in-their-hands