



project.org

STUDENT HANDOUT

YELLOW LEVEL
GRADE LEVEL

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

OI

Two ways to show a ruler

Herod the Great ruled Judaea as a client king of Rome. Tiberius was the Roman emperor. Compare their coins.



CASE 6 • GENUINE

Herod the Great's prutah

Bronze, 40–4 BC. It carries no human image, because Jewish law forbade it. Symbols take the place of a face.



CASE 7 • REPLICA

The Tribute Penny

Silver denarius, 14–37 AD. A museum-quality replica. One side carries the face of the emperor Tiberius; the other the inscription PONTIF MAXIM — *High Priest*.

HEROD THE GREAT

THE TRIBUTE PENNY

What is in the center?

Is there a human face?

What does the design say about the ruler?

PART 2

O2

Why no face?

Jewish law forbade human images on coins, following the commandment against carved images (Exodus 20:4). Herod was king of a Jewish land, so his designers spoke with symbols. How is a coin with no face a message in itself? What does it tell you about the people who would carry it?

PART 3

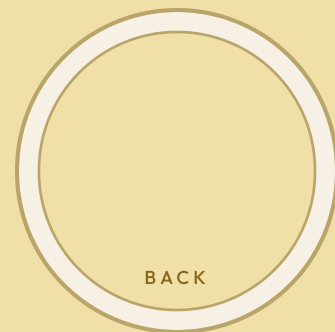
03 A symbol can shout

Pontius Pilate's coins carried no face either. Instead he chose a simpulum, a ladle used in pagan worship, and three bound ears of grain — symbols the exhibition calls *deliberately provocative*. Why can a symbol make people as angry as a face?

PART 4

04 Design a coin with no face

Design like Herod's mint: **no human face allowed**. Choose an idea you want to stand for — courage, peace, home, faith, welcome. Use symbols and an inscription to say it.



PART 5

05 Explain your symbols

What idea does your coin carry? Name each symbol and what it stands for. Why does your inscription fit the design?

MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

In Case 7, find the Shekel of Tyre. It carries the face of the god Melqart, yet it was the only coin accepted for the Temple tax. Was the Temple valuing the image or the silver?

minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/in-their-hands