



THE ROYAL MINT®  
MUSEUM

# COINS IN THE CLASSROOM



**ART & DESIGN**

[www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk/learning/](http://www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk/learning/)

# ART & DESIGN

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# Teachers' Notes

## Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is for pupils to explore the expression of identity through art using different starting points.

In the first instance pupils will look at how symbols are used to represent identity and assess how challenging it can be to represent the identity of all the people in the United Kingdom on our coinage. They will then evaluate previous attempts to overcome this challenge, including the broken shield design by Matt Dent, and try their hand at designing a UK coin of their own.

In the second instance pupils will look at the work of David Mach (an artist, sculptor and coin designer) and Picasso. They will explore the technique of collage and look particularly at the way Mach conveys a sense of identity and place. Pupils will then combine these two approaches in a task that asks them to represent their own identity or, the identity of their local area or school. Their final product will be a 3D collage in the shape of a coin.

This resource is divided into two parts and will take two one-hour teaching sessions, plus any additional lesson time you want to give pupils to complete their art project.

The lesson is aimed at pupils aged 7-11 but can be adapted for older pupils using the curriculum links outlined in this resource.



*Britannia, by David Mach*

## Lesson Objectives

Pupils will:

- Learn about designs on circulating coins and what they represent
- Be able to identify symbols in coin designs and suggest reasons why these have been used
- Understand that designs on UK coins are chosen because they represent the identity of the country
- Learn about the technique of collage and how this medium has been used by David Mach and Picasso
- Use this understanding to represent their own identity or the identity of their town/school/community in the form of a 3D coin collage

## Resources and Preparation

In order to deliver these lessons you will need:

- The accompanying Royal Mint Museum Art & Design whiteboard resource
- To ask pupils to bring in a coin each that they find interesting
- Sets of coins with the new reverse design on them (coins that have been in circulation since 2008 and have the parts of the heraldic shield on the reverse)
- Card from which to cut out the 3D coin-shaped net
- Magazines, newspapers, leaflets, fabric, string, postcards and other craft materials for collage
- Internet access
- Foreign coins (optional)
- Pictures of pupils for them to stick onto their collages where the Queen's portrait would normally be (optional)



*Coin designs submitted for competitions*

## Differentiation

Once you have read through the lesson plans you might like to consider the following:

### Coin Reverses

#### Lower Ability

Choose one or two coin reverses, such as the £1 reverses with the Welsh Dragon and the English Lions, which are some of the more obvious national symbols. Ask pupils to identify where else they would see these symbols (on football shirts or on flags) and talk about how people recognise them and know what they mean.

#### Higher Ability

Draw on pupils' knowledge of history. The design of Britannia contains many different elements. You could also look at the Tudor rose on the 20 pence piece, or talk about the origins of the portcullis design on the 1p (as the badge of the Palace of Westminster and the royal badge of Henry VII).



*Designs representing England and Wales*

## UK Coin Design Task

### Lower Ability

Structure the UK coin design task by gathering ideas for national symbols on the board and drawing examples. If your pupils struggle to draw, provide them with printed images they can cut and stick on to their worksheet.

### Coin Collage

#### Lower Ability

If you want an alternative to the task of pupils representing their own identity you can focus the task on the school. Use the Matt Dent design for inspiration and take the school badge as the centrepiece of the collage. Pupils could cut the badge up to make different designs. It is also possible to do this task in 2D rather than 3D if you want to keep the focus to one side of the 'coin'.

#### Higher Ability

Introduce pupils to the meaning of some coin inscriptions. Encourage pupils to come up with their own 'inscription' or slogan for the edge of their coin. Pupils could write these on in pen or cut out letters from magazines or newspapers.



*2008 £1 coin design*

### Evaluation

#### Lower Ability

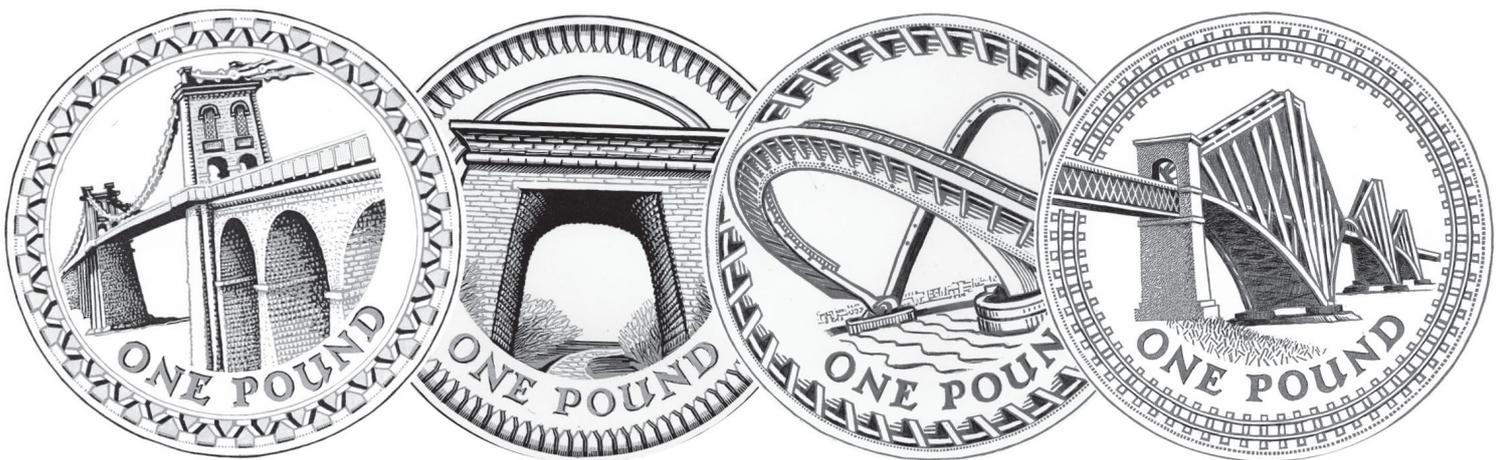
The worksheet included with this resource provides a framework that should help to support lower ability pupils. You may want to provide additional support by giving pupils key words or phrases to use as well.

#### Higher Ability

Extend the evaluation task by asking pupils to write an evaluation that includes some of the comments made during their peer assessment. Ask pupils to evaluate how well they think they have represented identity with their work and why. They should compare their work to examples of coin design and to the work of David Mach, and say how well they think they have managed to combine these two starting points.

# Curriculum Links

- Art & design
- Geography
- Social Studies



Original drawings of the Bridge Series by Edwina Ellis  
that appeared on the old £1 coins

# Lesson Plan: Part 1

## Section

## Timing/ Resources

### Starter

5-7 minutes

- Provide pupils with a set of coins with Matt Dent shield design on the reverse. Give one set per table.
- Tell pupils that you have given them a puzzle and they have to solve it. Give pupils a few minutes to work together and then see if any manage to put the coins together.
- Using the whiteboard resource put the puzzle up on the whiteboard and ask pupils to show you the solution.
- When the puzzle is complete ask them what they have revealed. Allow pupils to guess but do not tell them the answer yet (even if they get it right!).

Sets of coins  
Whiteboard resource

### Introduction

15 minutes

- Ask pupils to look at the coins they have brought in and pose the question ‘what is a coin?’
- Come up with a class definition of a coin and write it on the board.  
*N.B. Among other things it is important for pupils to understand that: a coin is an object with two sides, is small and easy to carry, UK coins have the Queen’s head on one side, most coins have inscriptions as well as designs, we use coins every day to buy things, and everybody uses coins.*
- Pupils turn to the person next to them and tell them about their coin: why they have brought this coin in to show the class and what is interesting about it. Choose one or two pupils to share with the class.
- On the worksheet provided ask pupils to draw their coin and make a rubbing.
- Use the whiteboard resource to show pupils images of some of the different reverse designs found on UK coins. Why do they think these designs have been chosen? What might they mean?
- Coin designs often contain symbols. These have been chosen because they say something about, or represent, the country.

Pupils’ coins  
Worksheets  
Pens/ pencils/ rulers  
Whiteboard resource

- Explore the different images, identifying the symbols and explaining what they mean.
- Ask pupils to look at their own coin again and label any symbols they can identify on their drawing. They should then use the space provided on the worksheet to write in sentences about why they chose their coin, what the symbols on their coins are, and what they mean.

## Development

- Remind pupils of your class definition of a coin. Coins are used by everybody in the UK almost every day.
- Use the whiteboard resource to show pupils a map of the UK. In the UK there are around 62.3 million people. The UK itself is made up of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and people of many different cultures and religions. How can we make sure that everyone feels represented by their coins?
- Tell pupils that one way is to use symbols that represent the constituent parts of the UK, like on £1 coins. These will often be images and symbols that people recognise.
- Use the activity on worksheets and the whiteboard resource to sort the symbols on coins into the categories of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Have any pupils been to a foreign country and used coins there? Ask pupils to describe the coins and whether they found it easy or difficult to use them.
- Show pupils the City Series £1 coin designs for London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. What about this way of representing the UK? Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages then ask pupils to write a sentence or two evaluating the designs.
- The Queen's portrait on the front (obverse) side of UK coins represents the nation in a different way. How and why do pupils think this is?

## 25 minutes

Whiteboard resource  
Worksheets  
Foreign coins  
(if you want to pass around some examples)

- Set pupils the task of designing their own £1 reverse to represent the UK, based on what they have learnt. This is a true challenge as only a few of the old £1 coin designs showed the UK as a whole. As pupils will have seen most £1 coin designs formed a series that shows individual elements of the different nations, such as the English Lions, the Scottish Lion, the Welsh Dragon and the Celtic Cross.
- Once completed pupils should carefully label and explain their designs.

## Plenary

**10 minutes**

- Return to the Matt Dent shield design puzzle and tell pupils that this solves the challenge they have been looking at in a particular way. Do they know what the design is?
- Explain to pupils that the design is a shield (or badge) of the Royal Arms and that in the past this was used by monarchs to represent the UK as a whole. The Royal Arms incorporates elements of heraldry from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Wales on the other hand does not have an individual part of the Royal Arms as it was incorporated into England by Henry VIII in 1536.
- Discuss this way of solving the problem as a class and then give pupils a few minutes to write a response on their worksheets.
- Tell pupils that next lesson they will be looking at ways of representing their own identity, or the identity of their school or local area, through art. Tell them that they are going to make a 3D collage in the shape of a coin.
- Ask them to bring in any materials they would like to make a collage with. This could be pictures, magazines, flyers, material, bottle tops, and anything else they think represents them or their area.

Whiteboard resource

# Lesson Plan: Part 2

## Section

## Timing/ Resources

### Starter

**5 minutes**

- Recap briefly the previous Art & Design lesson using the Matt Dent shield to prompt pupils' thinking.
- Ask pupils to recall some of the ways that coin designers represent identity.
- Ask pupils what kind of symbols, images or materials they might use to represent their identity, or their local area, and write these suggestions up on the board.

Interactive  
Whiteboard

### Introduction

**10 minutes**

- Tell pupils that they are going to look at the work of some collage artists. They will look at Picasso, one of the first artists to use collage, and they will look at the work of David Mach. David Mach is a modern artist, sculptor and coin designer.
- Use the links on the white board resource to look at some images of Picasso collages. Highlight some key features, such as the way different materials are layered on top of each other to build up a picture that is very much like a painting.
- Use the images provided and [www.davidmach.com](http://www.davidmach.com) to look at the work of David Mach. David Mach uses collage in two different ways. Pupils could use either technique in their own work or combine the two.
- Ask pupils to comment on the different collages. Mach's work is very different from that of Picasso and focuses on people and places- there is a lot of movement in his collages. Picasso's work tends only to feature stationary objects, as if he were painting a still life.
- Many of Mach's collage works are circular, including his Four Seasons and Heaven and Hell series. Ask pupils how they think Mach manages to fit so much detail into this unusual shape. Point out that Mach uses all of the space available and builds background as well as foreground into his pictures.

Whiteboard resource

-Does Mach's work remind pupils of some of the elements of coin designs they have seen already? Show the image of the Britannia coin that was designed by David Mach and point out the similarities with the circular collages in terms of shape and space.

-Revisit the suggestions for symbols, images and materials pupils made during the starter and ask if there is anything else they could add from what they have just seen.

## **Development**

**30 minutes (min)**

-Set the pupils the task of making a collage that shows their identity in a 3D coin shape.

Net for 3D

-Explain to pupils that, just like the coins they looked at last lesson, their collage will have an obverse and a reverse: it will also have edges.

Collage materials

-Ask them to think about whether they want both sides of their collage to be the same or whether they want them to be different. What styles or techniques would they like to use?

Scissors and glue

-At your discretion pupils can either plan their work on paper first or begin selecting materials straightway.

-Pupils can make the 3D coin shape themselves out of card using the net provided, or if you are working with a younger group you might like to do this for them whilst they focus on planning, selecting materials or cutting out images for their collage. If you prefer you can make the 3D shapes in advance.

-Allow pupils as much time as you like to complete their collages. You may wish to extend this activity over two lessons to allow more time for pupils to plan their work and collect materials. You could then use the plenary below for peer assessment and self-evaluation.

## **Plenary**

**15 minutes**

-Once the collages have been completed select a few pupils to present their work to the class. They should explain what their ideas were and how they translated them into collage.

Pens and paper  
Worksheets

-Select one or two examples and highlight positive points to the class.

-Ask the class where they might look for areas of improvement.

-Display the collages around the room with pieces of paper next to them. Instruct pupils to move around the room and write on each sheet of paper two positive points about the collage and one way the collage could be improved. If you are short of time or space then pupils could be improved. If you are short of time or space then pupils could just evaluate the collages on their table.

-Pupils can then use this peer evaluation to conduct their own evaluation of their work. They should explain what the task was, what their ideas were, what materials they used and why, what symbols they used, how they made their collage and how they think their finished artwork turned out.



*This medal was designed for the Queen on her 80th birthday by Takeo from Kent. At the time Takeo was eight years old and his design won in the BBC's Learning Is Fun competition. Here you can see Takeo's original artwork and the medal made from it by the Royal Mint.*

# Fact File

## Reverse Design Facts

Coins with the definitive shield reverse designs entered circulation in 2008. The original decimal designs had been in circulation for almost 40 years and it was felt they needed to be refreshed.

The competition to design the coins was a public one and the Royal Mint received over 4,000 designs from 526 people - the largest ever response to a public competition of this type in Britain.

The £1 coin was not originally part of the design brief.

A first sift of the drawings was made by three members of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee and 4000 drawings were reduced to 418 designs. The 418 designs represented 52 series of coins.

This was then whittled down to 18 designs representing three series. The designs chosen had to be not just pictures but symbols of the nation. It was decided that the heraldry on some designs was 'too Hogwarts' or 'Narnia-like' or it was 'too gothic and overbearing'.

It was said by the Royal Mint Advisory Committee that the winner, Designer Z's series, 'breaks the mould in an exciting way' and 'is a truly modern series at last'!



*2008 Shield Design  
by Matt Dent*

### **Matt Dent**

Designer Z (as all coin design competitions are anonymous) turned out to be a young graphic designer called Matt Dent, who trained at Coleg Menai in Wales and at the University of Brighton. He said about his design that 'the piecing together of the elements of the Royal Arms to form one design had a satisfying symbolism- that of unity, four countries of Britain under a single monarch'.

# Fact File

## UK Coin Designs



Technology



Crown and symbols of the United Kingdom



Britannia



Tudor Rose



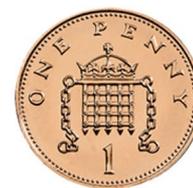
English Lion



Scottish Thistle



Prince of Wales Feathers



Portcullis

## A Penny For Your Thoughts

The United Kingdom 1p coin was one of three new coins that joined the 5p, 10p and 50p in general circulation on 15 February 1971 when the United Kingdom adopted a new decimal currency system.



The other two new coins were the 1/2p and 2p coins. To avoid confusion between the old and new coinage all three coins had the word 'NEW' incorporated into the reverse design, but this was later removed in 1982. The 1/2p was removed from circulation in 1984.

The first copper-plated steel 1p coins were struck in 1992. The reason for this change was the increase in the price of metals on the world markets. The coins have a mild steel core and are electroplated with copper - consequently they are magnetic.

All the new (1971) decimal reverse designs were the work of Christopher Ironside, apart from the Tudor Rose on the 20p introduced in 1982, which was designed by William Gardner. Christopher Ironside won a public competition where 83 entrants submitted 900 designs.

# Fact File

## Britannia

Britannia was first portrayed on coins by the Romans and has been used to symbolise Britain ever since. On the first 50p coin Britannia sits beside a lion, holding a trident in her hand to show our proud maritime history and island status. In her other hand is an olive branch which symbolises peace. You can find more information on the history of Britannia by visiting [www.royalmint.com](http://www.royalmint.com) and following: Discover - Britannia.



### Commemorative 50 Pence

The Royal Mint has been making commemorative 50 pence pieces since 1973. The designs are released into circulation and are also made in Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) quality. BU coins go through a slightly different process to make sure that they are not scratched. Coins in circulation are mass produced and made of mostly recycled metal. A list of all commemorative 50 pence coin designs can be found here on the Royal Mint Museum's website. To find out more about commemorative coins please take a look at our lesson 'Designing Commemorative Coins'.

### Coin Design at the Royal Mint

The Royal Mint Advisory Committee on the Design of Coins, Medals, Seals and Decorations (RMAC for short) was established formally by George V in 1922 to help decide on new coin designs and raise the standard of numismatic (coin) art. The Committee is independent of the Royal Mint and is made up of sculptors, numismatic, heraldic and lettering specialists, and other artists. His Royal Highness Prince Philip was President of the Committee from 1952 until 1999.

When a new British coin is required, artists and designers are asked by the RMAC to submit designs for a competition. Only sometimes are these competitions made open to the public like the 2008 Reverse and London 2012 50p Sorts Collection competitions. The Royal Mint has an in-house team of coin designers and engravers who are also encouraged to submit designs. Coin designs are submitted to the RMAC anonymously and then a decision is made as to which one the RMAC will recommend. Once a design has been chosen approval must be gained from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and finally the Queen. Only then can the coin go into production.

# Fact File

## Royal Heraldry

Although the Royal Arms has told many stories over the centuries, what it now records is political union between kingdoms. Whether this is the best way to represent the modern United Kingdom is debated and doubted by some. Wales is absent because it was incorporated into England by Henry VIII in 1536, rather than being made a kingdom in its own right as Ireland was five years later. Wales is now represented heraldically on the full Coat of Arms of the Prince of Wales. The old Welsh badge of the red dragon on a grassy mound was used by Henry VII to mark his descent from Cadwaladr. Today the dragon is much better known as the flag of Wales. The dragon features with the Prince of Wales' other badge of three ostrich feathers.



The full Royal Arms is made up of not just a shield but supporters (the lion and unicorn who support the shield), a crest (a crowned lion on top of the helmet), and (Shamed by he who thinks ill of it) on the garter belt. There are in fact two versions of the Royal Coat of Arms, one used by England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and a slightly different one used by Scotland.

The Royal Arms belongs to the Crown. However, rather than representing the monarch, the modern, the modern shield has come to represent the political make-up of the United Kingdom and now fulfills the role of national symbol. That our national symbol should belong to the Queen is part and parcel of living in a monarchy.

*(Source: K. Clancy (ed) 'Designing Change' Royal Mint 2008)*

# Fact File

## Coin Design Links

You might like to use the following to extend your work on coins and art through elements of literacy. Below are some verses that refer to the design of coins. As a class you could analyse the poem and then encourage pupils to write their own - either about coin design in general or about their piece of work on identity.

*Verses from Punch 26th February 1893*

*Art will now adorn our purses  
Hitherto an artless place;  
More than pictures, songs or verses,  
This should elevate the race.*

*Will the cabman now be willing,  
After driving half a mile,  
To accept a high-art shilling,  
Not with oaths, but with a smile?*

*Will the porter at the station  
While his thanks pause on his lip,  
Gaze in silent admiration  
At the beauty of his tip?*

*'Music hath', so Congreve stated,  
'Charms to soothe the savage breast';  
Numismatic art is fated  
Maybe to be likewise blest.*

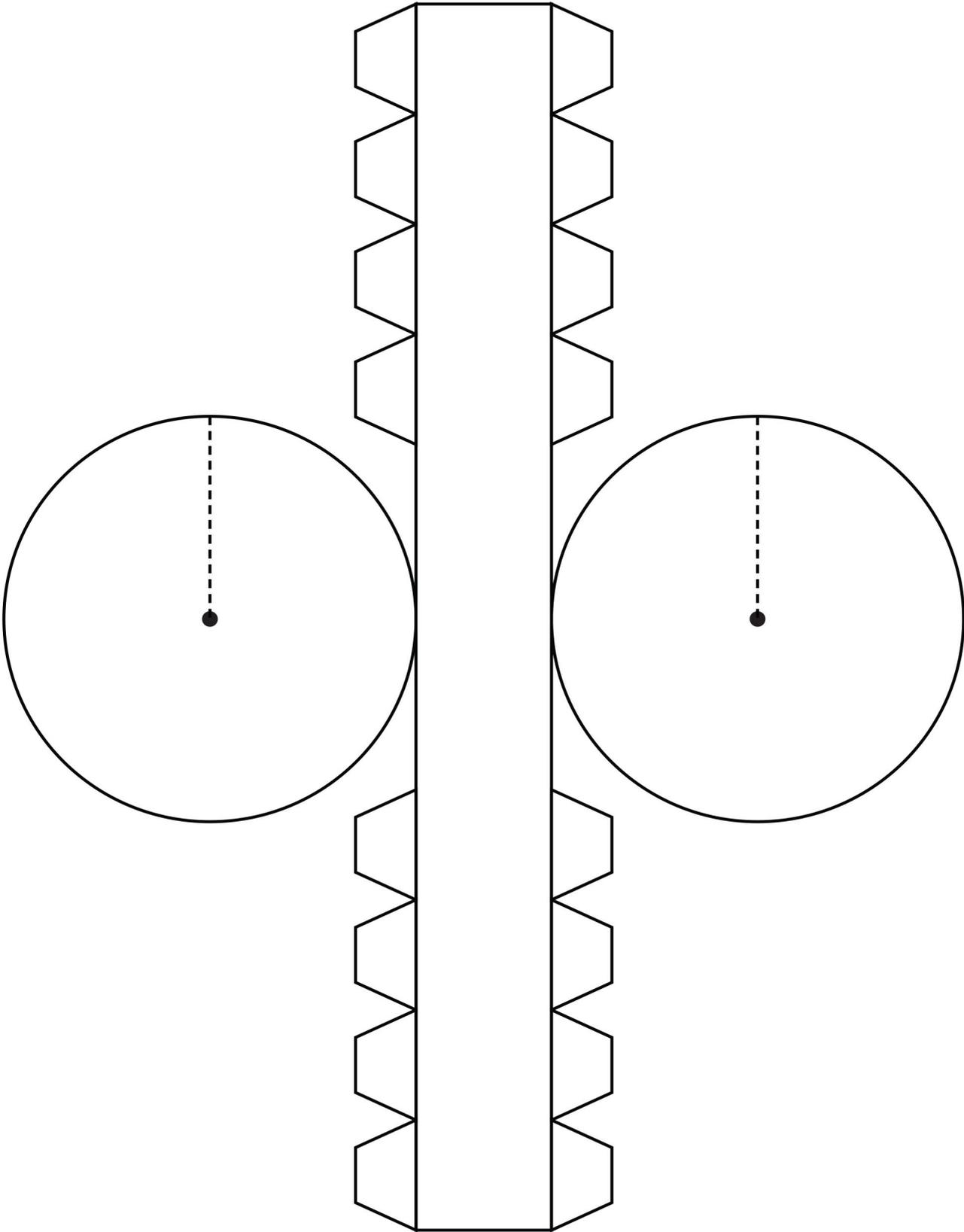
*Source: K. Clancy (ed) 'Designing Change' Royal Mint 2008  
(Chapter by Sir Christopher Frayling)*

**Further information can be found at**

[www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk](http://www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk)

[www.royalmint.com](http://www.royalmint.com)

# Coin Net



# Worksheet

Name .....

Date .....



## What is a coin?

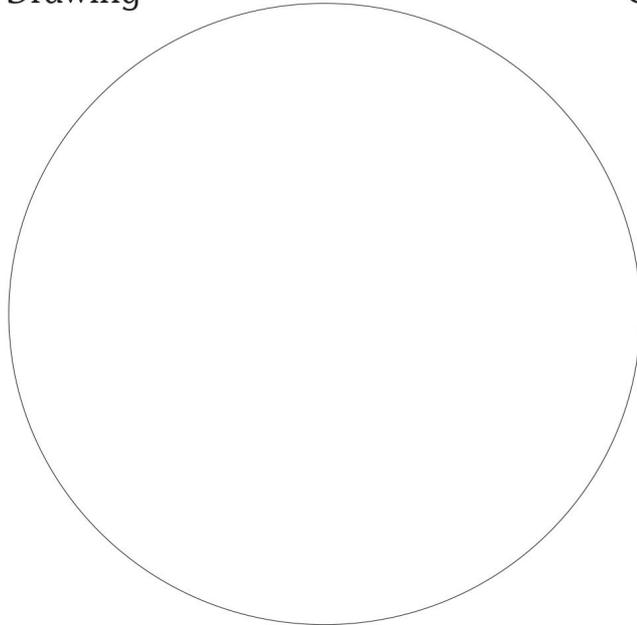
.....  
.....  
.....

## My Coin

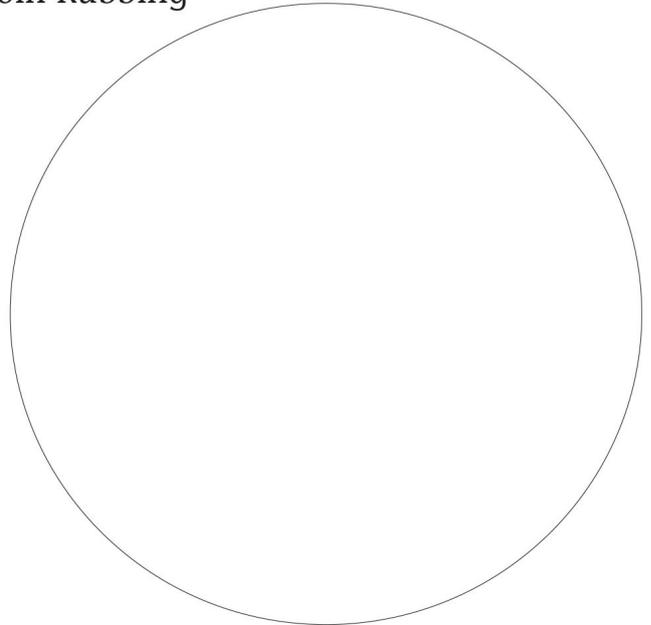
My Coin is a .....

It was made in .....

Drawing



Coin Rubbing



I chose my coin because...

.....  
.....

The symbols on my coin are...

.....  
.....

# Worksheet

Name .....

Date.....

The design represents...

.....  
.....

## How do we make sure that everyone in the UK is represented by the designs on our coinage?

There are 62.3 million people living in the UK

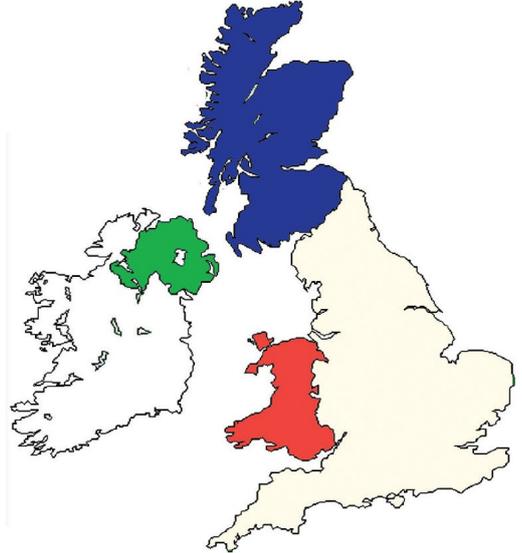
England: 52.3 million people

Scotland: 5.2 million people

Wales: 3 million people

Northern Ireland: 1.8 million people

They come from many different cultures and religions and each person has a different identity



How do you think we can represent them all on our coins?

.....  
.....  
.....

Why is the Queen's portrait on the front (obverse) of all of our coins in the UK?

.....  
.....  
.....

### One way of solving the problem

Coin designers will often use images or symbols on their coins that are familiar to lots of people. They hope that people will recognise the images and feel that the coins represent them.

One thing to remember is that coins are very small and so the artists have a real challenge- how do they represent a big nation with a tiny design?

# Worksheet

Name .....

Date .....

Have a go at sorting some of the symbols below into England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, depending on which one you think they represent.



England

Scotland

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

Wales

Northern Ireland

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

# Worksheet

Name .....

Date.....

## Another way of solving the problem

The £1 coin has always been used to represent the four elements of the UK. Some of the £1 coins produced for 2010 and 2011 will have designs on them that represent England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in a different way.



### Advantages

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### Disadvantages

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I think that the 2010 and 2011 pound coin designs are a good/bad way of representing the United Kingdom because...

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.....

# Worksheet

Name .....

Date.....

## **My £1 UK coin design**

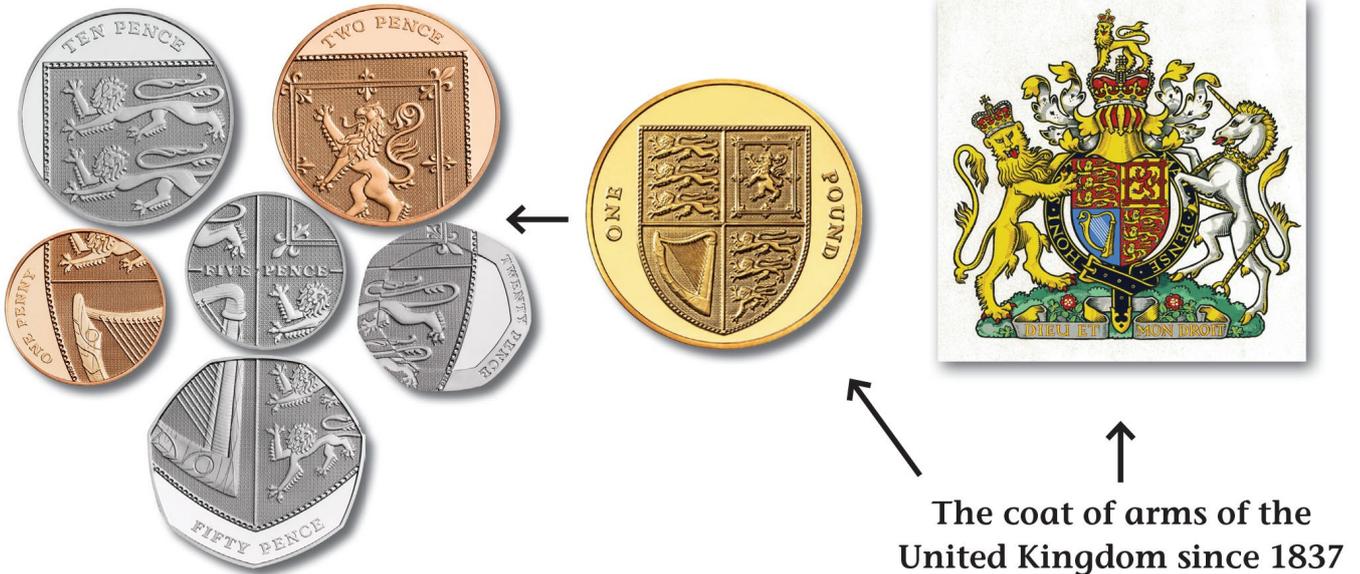
# Worksheet

Name .....

Date.....

## The Heraldic Shield coin design by Matt Dent

The new reverses on UK coins, introduced in 2008, solve the problem of representing the UK in another way...



The coat of arms of the United Kingdom since 1837

This design has been on UK coins since 2008 and features the Royal Arms (the shield used by the Royal Family). Since the 13th Century Arms have been used by monarchs of the British Isles to show the coming together of kingdoms. The two Acts of Union that created the modern United Kingdom brought the shields of England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland together to form one. Wales is not represented in the coat of arms because it is a principality rather than a country in its own right.

What do you think about this way of representing the identity of the nation? Do you think it is a good idea? Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Now that we have looked at how coin designers try to represent the nation on their coins in the next lesson you will start to think about how you can represent your own identity.

# Worksheet

Name .....

Date .....

## **Task:**

To make a 3D collage in the shape of a coin that represents my identity

## **Evaluation:**

Today my task was to...

.....  
.....

To learn about coins we looked at...

.....  
.....

To learn about collage we looked at the work of...

.....  
.....

and .....

My ideas were...

.....  
.....  
.....

The materials I chose to use were...

.....  
.....

I chose them because.....

.....  
.....

I made my collage by...

.....  
.....

I think that my collage is (say two things that are good and say one thing you could improve)...

.....  
.....  
.....

# Notes

Name .....

Date.....