



## COINS

A coin is a piece of hard metal in the shape of a disc. Coins are the small units of money in a country.

The first coins were made of electrum. It was a combination of gold and silver. Today coins are mostly made from combinations of copper, zinc and nickel. The amount a coin is worth depends upon the value of the metals that were used to make it. Coins also have historic value. This depends on how rare they are or the story that they tell.

A coin contains two sides, the *obverse*, and the *reverse*. The side containing the portrait of a famous national person, or the national emblem is the obverse side. We call this side "Heads." The other side of the coin is called the reverse. We call this side "Tails." It gives us the coin's value.

Coins have many purposes. We make coins to remember special achievements. An example is the inaugural dollar. It is made every four years when a President of the United States takes the oath of office. These coins are not intended to be used as money. We call these coins "medallions." Coins have also been minted for purely investment purposes. These contain high amounts of gold or silver. We call these "bullion coins."

Coins help us understand history. They can show us how much trade occurred. They tell us about the natural resources in a country. They give us pictures of what people thought was important. They provide real life portraits of historical persons. They often show images of daily life at the time. They tell us about people when we have no other way to know about them. They provide us a special picture of the past.