

# Making Money In America

By Garth Grass



1 The Constitution of the United States gives the government the power to make coin money. The first coins minted, or made, were copper cents. In 1793 the National Mint made 11,178 copper cents. Before the United States started making its own coins, they were made in other countries.

2 It takes six steps to make coins. First, a big sheet of metal is put through a machine that punches holes in the metal. The holes or discs that are punched out are called blanks. In the next step, the blanks are heated to make the metal softer. This makes it easier to press the symbols and words into them. Then the blanks are washed and dried. In the third step, the blanks are upset. Poor blanks! No, what this really means is that they are put through an upsetting mill. This is what puts a rim on the edge of the coins. Fourth, the blanks are stamped. This is when the pictures and words are put on them. Then some of the coins are inspected. People at the Mint take out some of the coins. They look at them closely to make sure they are all right. Finally, the coins are counted by a machine and put in large bags. These bags are sent to special federal banks. These banks then send the coins to your bank.

3 There are four Mints in the United States. Only two of these, Denver and Philadelphia, make the coins you use every day. Each year these Mints make billions of coins. They make more pennies than any other

kind of coin. A coin lasts about thirty years. When a coin wears out, the metal is melted and used again.

4 Every coin has two sides. The side with the face is called the obverse. You probably call this heads. The back side is called the reverse. You probably call this tails. Our coins are solid discs. At one time, however, the government thought about making coins with holes in the middle.

5 Some coins have ridges on the edge. These are called reeds. Pennies and nickels do not have reeds, but all other coins do. The reeds make it harder for people to make fake coins. They also help people feel the difference between coins.



## COMPREHENSION

**A** Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1** This story is mostly about
  - a** pennies made in the United States.
  - b** coins made by the United States Mints.
  - c** what is on a coin.
- 2** If there are four Mints in the United States and only two make the coins that you use every day, that means the other two Mints
  - a** make special coins.
  - b** don't make anything.
  - c** are out of business.
- 3** All coins are alike because they
  - a** have an obverse and reverse side.
  - b** are made of copper.
  - c** were first made in 1793.

**4** Pennies and nickels are different from other coins because they

- a** are not made of metal.
- b** are not made at the Mint.
- c** do not have reeds.

**5** Without reeds on the edge of a dime, it would

- a** feel the same as a penny.
- b** feel the same as a quarter.
- c** not be worth ten cents.

## LEARN ABOUT WORDS

**B** Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1** made a coin (1)
- 2** smooth discs that will be made into coins (2)
- 3** pictures of things (2)
- 4** machine that puts rims on coins (2)
- 5** looked at very closely (2)
- 6** the side of a coin with the face; heads (4)
- 7** the back side of a coin; tails (4)
- 8** lines on the outside edge of coins (5)



## LEARN ABOUT WORDS (continued)

- C** Homographs are two (or more) words that are spelled the same but have different meanings and origins. A word's meaning will depend on how it is used.

My dad is a football *fan*.

He keeps cool with an electric *fan*.

Look at each word in **bold type**.  
Note the paragraph number. Look

back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

**9 bank (2)**

- a** a place to keep money
- b** the ground along a creek or river

**10 kind (3)**

- a** friendly, helpful
- b** same class or type

## THINK ABOUT IT

- D** Most words add an *s* to mean more than one.

coin → coins

But sometimes words change their spelling to mean more than one.

one wolf → two **wolves**

one man → two **men**

Read each sentence. Which of the two words in ( ) fits in the sentence? Write the word.

- 1** Only two (woman, women) have ever been shown on U.S. coins.
- 2** (Child, Children) learn to count coins in school.
- 3** The one (man, men) used a magnifying glass to look at the coin closely.
- 4** Coins are made in a special kind of (factory, factories).
- 5** There are more (penny, pennies) made than any other coin.

- E** Read each sentence below. If the sentence is only about how coins were made in the past, write *past*. If it is only about how coins are made now, write *present*. If it is about both, write *both*.

- 6** Coin-making machines were powered by horses.
- 7** The U.S. Mint made pennies.
- 8** Coins are counted by machines.
- 9** Coins are made one at a time.
- 10** Coins are made by the United States government.