

Teacher Resource

What was life like for people at the Mint in Tudor times?

This activity supports:

KS2 and 3 History (England), KS2 History (Wales)

Learning objectives:

- Develop skills of historical enquiry and an understanding of some of the economic and social aspects of Tudor life.
- Examine a range of historical sources and practice making inferences about the lives of people at the Mint.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Tudor life at the Mint through a drama or writing activity.

You will need:

- PowerPoint projector or interactive whiteboard.
- Printing relevant PowerPoint slides to be used as historical sources.
- Printing pupil information sheet and worksheet (included in this resource).



Suggestions for use

The case study uses the Mint at the Tower of London to help give pupils insight into the lives of people during the Tudor period. It can be used to complement other lessons, units and schemes of work exploring the Tudors.

Use this activity to:

- Brainstorm and consider previous knowledge about the Tudors and locate the Tudor monarchs in the history of the Mint at the Tower of London.
- Encourage group work and analyse the historical sources provided to discover more about the lives of people working at the Mint.
- Ask pupils to record their research using the framework (provided with this resource) and report on their findings in a class discussion.
- Encourage pupils to reconsider the main question in light of what they have discovered in their investigation.
- Following a class discussion, ask groups to reflect on their evidence and sort, select and organise their ideas as preparation for a final writing or drama task. Ideas for challenges include:
 - **Job Advert:** Write a job advert for working at the Mint. Include: skills required, ability to work with particular tools, equipment, pay details, working conditions, etc.
 - **Mint Inspector:** You are a foreign ambassador; your king wants to set up a new mint and he has sent you to London to see what you can learn about running one. Write a report for the king telling him about the good things you have discovered about how a mint is run and some of the challenges.
 - **Mint diary:** Choose a person from the Mint and write a first person account of what their day was like.

- **Create a role play:** Use all the information you have discovered to tell the story 'A day in the life of the Mint'.
- **Job interview:** In pairs, improvise a job interview between a mint official (or the king) and a new applicant.
- **Hot seat:** A number of pupils take on roles of different people at the Mint (e.g., monarch, warden/official, potter, moneyer who strikes coins etc). Pupils use what they have learnt and their imaginations to answer questions from their classmates.

Background and notes

Teacher resources (included)

- How coins were made at the Tower of London
- How to read old coins
- **Pupil worksheet:** Money, wages and prices in Tudor England*

*1547 prices from: English prices and wages, 1209-1914.

What was life like for people at the Mint in Tudor times?

How coins were made at the Tower of London

For centuries, coins were made by manually hammering a coin blank between two dies.

Producing coins in bulk made it possible for the Mint to generate a profit (which went to the monarch). The difference between the face value of a coin and its production cost was called 'seigniorage'.

In the 1660s, under Charles II, the Mint adopted new methods already in use on the Continent. Hand-operated screw presses could make beautiful coins very quickly.

The machine-struck coins were thicker and more regular than the old hammered ones, which helped combat counterfeiters and clippers, alongside other innovations such as specialist edge marking.

Hammering



Edward I groat, 1279

- Bullion (in precious metal or coins) arrives at the Mint
- An assay sample of metal is taken to test purity of the bullion
- Metal is melted, alloyed and cast into ingots
- Ingots are rolled or flattened into sheets
- Blanks are cut
- Edges of the blanks are smoothed
- Coins are struck with a hammer
- Coins are blanched (cleaned using a mild acid wash)
- Coins are checked for fineness, size, striking quality
- Coins are tallied and given to client or buyer

- Bullion arrives at the Mint
- Metal is melted down
- An assay sample is taken
- Ingots are cast in sand moulds
- Metal is rolled flat using horse power
- Blanks are cut
- Edges of coin are decorated using new technology intended to foil counterfeiters. Mint employees swear an oath of secrecy not to reveal details of the invention
- Blanks are weighed and tested
- Coins are struck with screw press
- Blanks are blanched, cleaned and dried with sawdust
- Coins are counted, scrutinised and weighed

Milling

Charles II
Petition Crown,
1663



How to read old coins

Heads (or obverse) is the traditional place to find information about the monarch who issued a coin, including the portrait and titles.



Legend
The monarch's Latin name appears on all British coins (save for some early medieval coins). This was very important as it indicates under whose authority a coin was made. The inscription reads 'William III by the Grace of God'.

Portrait
All medieval kings had the same portrait. The image wasn't naturalistic, but a symbol of royal power. By the Renaissance, monarchs were represented by more naturalistic portraits.

Regnal number
The regnal number of monarchs only appears from Henry VIII onwards.

William III sixpence 1696

Tails (reverse) reveals details about where or when a coin was made and more information about the titles and beliefs of the monarch.

Symbols
Shields, regal animals (thus 'tails') or other symbols often featured. Lions were symbols of English royalty, ships signified military prowess, crowns represented kingship and crosses signified religious devotion.

Inscription
'King of Great Britain, France and Ireland', written in Latin. The monarch's title is a display of authority. The reverse of older coins (dating back to the Tudors) typically held a religious Latin motto such as 'I have made God my helper'.

Date or mintmark
Dates were not written on coins until the Tudor period. Previously coins used mintmarks, little symbols which identified who made a coin and when. The marks were important so that makers of faulty coins could be brought to account.



Question:

Source

What I have found out

What I'd like know...



Notes:

Small change
A penny could buy quite a lot in Tudor times so they also had half and quarter pennies.

£ Money, wages and prices in Tudor England

Farthing

= 1/4 penny



Halfpenny

= 1/2 penny



Penny (d)

= 1 penny



Shilling (s)

= 12 pennies



Sovereign (£)

= 240 pennies



Sign for pence

The symbol for a penny was a 'd'. It was short for the Latin word 'denarius', which was a Roman silver coin.

A pound's worth of gold

The 'sovereign' was worth one pound. It was made of gold and would have been a lot of money to the average person.

Old English money
The Tudors divided one pound differently to how we do today. One pound (£1) was made up of 240 pennies, instead of 100.

Wages (per year)

Household servant	£2-5
Farm worker	£4
Vicar	£20
Merchant	£100

Food prices (1547)

	Pound of beef	1 d
	Gallon of milk	1 3/4 d
	Dozen eggs	1 3/4 d
	Gallon of beer	2 1/2 d