



# A GUIDE TO NUMISMATICS

## - WHAT IS NUMISMATICS? -

Ancient **numismatics** is the study of ancient coins. Coins are an incredible resource for studying ancient history! The images on coins can tell us about how a ruler chooses to represent themselves or their reign, or how a city creates its identity. The origins of a coin in comparison to where it was found can tell us about the economic power of a city and the reach of a trade route. Also, the number of coins of each value found in a group can indicate how the people were doing financially.

As you can expect, lots of ancient coins are found on archaeological digs. However, coins are very often found in 'unofficial' contexts, in **hoards**.



Hoard are coins that have been purposely gathered into a collection. Almost every society that used coins has hoards that have been found. They can be any size, starting from as little as 2 coins. Not all hoards are made for savings or even kept secret.

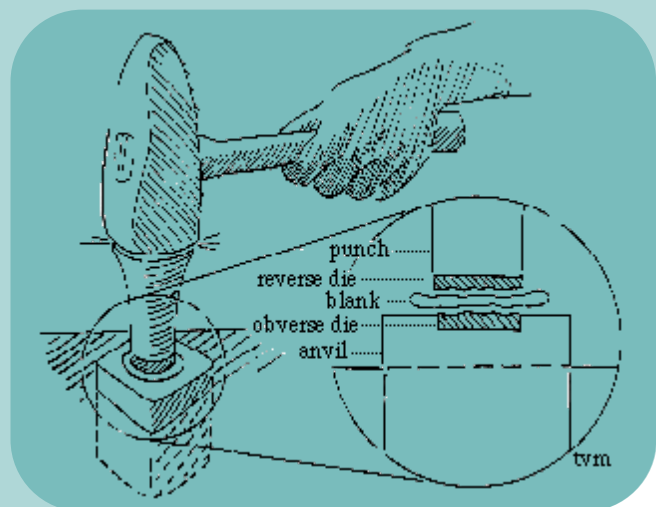


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## - HOW A COIN IS MADE -

Ancient coins are minted by **striking**. The first step is to prepare the metal. Most ancient coins are made of gold, silver, and bronze. Some coins are also made of copper and its alloys, as well as brass and electrum.

The metal is first heated up and purified to improve the quality and consistency of the coins. From this, the metal is then poured into moulds to create blank discs known as **flans** of a consistent size and weight. Then, the templates of the coins are made by skilled engravers. These templates are called **dies**. The dies are engraved with the design in intaglio so the coin has a raised relief. The final step is to place the flan between the **obverse** and **reverse** die and strike it with a hammer on top of an anvil. The force prints the design on the flan. Reverse dies tend to be less intricate because they wear out quicker than the obverse die.





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## - NUMISMATIC GLOSSARY -

**Numismatics**

The study of coins

**Provenance**

Where a coin comes from and where it has been since it was found

**Hoard**

A collection of coins, often found buried

**Obverse**

The front or 'heads' of a coin

**Reverse**

The back or 'tails' of a coin

**Relief**

The raised image on a coin

**Incuse**

A sunken design on a coin

**Field**

The blank space of a coin

**Type**

The design stamped on a coin, typically the reverse design

**Legend or  
Inscription**

The writing on the coin

**Exergue**

A space separated by a line at the bottom of the reverse image. Often includes a part of the inscription

**Die**

The stamp used to strike a coin

**Flan**

The blank coin an image is struck onto



# A GUIDE TO NUMISMATICS - QUESTION WORKSHEET -

Using pages 1-3 answer the following questions:

**1** Why might someone in the past have created a hoard of coins?

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**2** Label the elements of the coin below:





# A GUIDE TO NUMISMATICS - QUESTION WORKSHEET -

Using pages 1-3 answer the following questions:

**3** What things can a hoard of coins teach us about the city it was found in?

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**4** Number the images below 1-4 in the order of the minting process of an ancient coin



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