

Look and See

Pay Attention with a Penny – You'll be Surprised!

Overview: We see pennies every day but what do we notice? As students try to draw a penny from memory they realize how many details they overlook on a daily basis. Later, using a magnifier, students recognize how scientific tools increase the powers of observation.

Materials: Journal or paper, pencil, penny and magnifier for each student

Time: 5 – 10 minutes

Action:

- You have seen a penny all of your life, but what have you really noticed? Ask students to sketch from memory, both sides of the coin.
- Discuss drawings: What is displayed on the coin? Is a person pictured on the coin? Who? How many images of a person are on the coin? Are all pennies the same?
- Now, distribute pennies and magnifiers. Compare the student drawings with the actual coin. Did anyone make a perfect sketch? Can anyone discover new details using the magnifier -- Perhaps a second image of Lincoln sitting in the Memorial building? Does anyone have a shiny newer penny that does not have a Lincoln Memorial pictured on the “tails” side of the coin?

Vocabulary: Coin, cent, heads/tails, magnifier, scientific tool, Lincoln Memorial, magnifier/magnifying lens.

Management Strategies: Check pennies as you collect them for this activity. Older pennies have a tiny image of Lincoln sitting in the memorial. The bright shiny newer pennies may have a shield on the “tails” side of the coin.

