

Year 6 – A national currency is born

Introduction

The changeover to decimal currency was a significant Australian event during the 1900s. The decision to move away from the British-based sterling system to a more global decimal currency was one that helped to shape Australia's growing identity as an independent nation. In these activities, students will consider this important event and also review how the media was used to inform and persuade the public about the change.

These activities could be undertaken within a larger History unit focusing on the inquiry question: 'How have key figures, events and values shaped Australian society, its system of government and citizenship?'

Links to the Australian Curriculum (v8.2)

Humanities and Social Sciences

Inquiry and skills

Questioning

- Develop appropriate questions to guide an inquiry about people, events, developments, places, systems and challenges ([ACHASSI122](#))

Researching

- Locate and collect relevant information and data from primary and secondary sources ([ACHASSI123](#))
- Sequence information about people's lives, events, developments and phenomena using a variety of methods including timelines ([ACHASSI125](#))

Analysing

- Examine primary and secondary sources to determine their origin and purpose ([ACHASSI126](#))
- Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present ([ACHASSI127](#))

Evaluating and reflecting

- Evaluate evidence to draw conclusions ([ACHASSI129](#))

Communicating

- Present ideas, findings, viewpoints and conclusions in a range of texts and modes that incorporate source materials, digital and non-digital representations and discipline-specific terms and conventions ([ACHASSI133](#))

Learning outcomes

After participating in these activities, students will be able to:

- discuss how varying factors and events can contribute to the shaping of a nation's identity
- explain why the Royal Australian Mint was opened

Resources

Activity 1: Demonstrating an identity

- **'We are Australian'** activity sheet
- Interactive whiteboard
- **'Journey to an Australian currency'** fact sheet
- **'Changeover – the leap to a national currency'** sheet
- art supplies to be used to design a coin

Activity 2: Developing independence – the opening of the Royal Australian Mint

- **'Opening of the Royal Australian Mint'** fact sheet
- Computers with internet access

Activity 3: Persuading the people

- Interactive whiteboard
- **'Currency commercials'** sheet
- Access to YouTube
- Computers with internet access

Activities

Activity 1: Demonstrating an identity

Compared to many nations around the world, Australia has a very short (post-settlement) history. However, there have been many events that helped to shape the nation we are today, and there are a number of values, traits, locations, fauna and pastimes that we believe define us.

Display a copy of the **'We are Australian'** activity sheet on an interactive whiteboard. Ask students to think about what makes them 'Australian'. This should include students who may have been born overseas. Ask them how they feel connected to this country. You may wish to provide students with individual copies of this sheet first and allow them to brainstorm in pairs or small groups before sharing ideas as a class. Record common ideas on a class copy of the sheet.

Investigating Australian Coins

Now read through the information on the **'Journey to an Australian currency'** fact sheet. Discuss the key events that led up to Australia having its own unique currency. Discuss the designs of the coins and consider if students feel they continue to represent our nation today. There are pictures of the pre-decimal currency and the first decimal coins on the **'Changeover – the leap to a national currency'** sheet.

In small groups, have students visit other classes in the school and survey students about what they think makes them Australian, or make Australia a unique nation. Collate the results into a graph to discover the most common answers.

Using this information, students are to design some new coins. The coins should reflect how the 'people' feel about Australia, but can also have personal touches. Students should design an obverse and reverse side and decide if they will follow the conventions of our current coins (Monarch on obverse side, the date and the word 'Australia' on the coin).

When the coin designs are finished, conduct a 'gallery walk' so students can comment on each other's designs.

Activity 2: Developing independence – the opening of the Royal Australian Mint

This activity is a research-based task that can be conducted in pairs or small groups.

Students will begin by reading the **'Opening of the Royal Australian Mint'** fact sheet and then research to find out more about this event and the Mint in general. They could use a 'what, when, where and why' approach to collect their information.

Once they have collected factual information about the Mint, ask students to consider how the opening of this important building helped Australia to develop a strong, independent identity. How are identities developed? They can also consider this from a personal perspective. Why was it important that the new Mint was independent of the British Mint? What other events have helped Australia develop into the nation we are today?

Activity 3: Persuading the people

The changeover to decimal currency was a major event in our nation's history and it took a lot of planning to ensure it would be a success. Part of that planning was an education and advertising campaign to inform the public about the changes.

As a class, discuss how language can be used to inform and persuade.

Show the examples of the print advertisements on the **'Currency commercials'** sheet and watch these commercials:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6JawKH2yaQ
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZTeWLA1LAs

Investigating Australian Coins

There are other commercial examples on the National Film and Sound Archive YouTube channel. Discuss these as a class. Here are some discussion questions:

- What are your initial thoughts about these ads?
- What do the ads show us about life in Australia at that time? (Consider portrayed family relationships, how people look, the clothing, the gender roles, the occupations, the language used etc.)
- Which ads inform and which persuade? How can you tell the difference?

Ask students to imagine that a nationally significant event, like the currency changeover' was about to take place. How would advertising differ today? How could social media and the internet be used?

In small groups, students to design a plan for an advertising campaign for an important national event (they can make one up, or use the example of currency changeover).