



Greek Coin

Looking at almost any modern coin today it is rare to find one that contains anything other than an important public symbol on one side and a bust of a ruler on the other. Incredibly, this traditional coin design began several thousand years ago in ancient Greece.

In around 600 BC, each Greek city-state *minted* (made or struck) its own kinds of coins. They seem to have got the idea from the Lydians in West Asia. A lot of the Greek coins were made by taking a small lump of silver, putting it on an iron mould and then striking it with a hammer that had another kind of mould in it. That way they could mould a picture into both sides of the coin at the same time.

The pictures on the coins were different for each city-state. Athenians put a picture of *Athena's owl* on their silver coins with Athena's head on the other side. Look at the picture overleaf. Can you see that the coin says ATHE (**Athe'na**) on it in ancient Greek letters? Overleaf you will also find a silver coin from Corinth which had a picture of the flying horse *Pegasus* on the back. Can you see him?

This particular coin is from the ancient Greek city of Gambria in Mysia and was *minted* (made or struck) in the 4th-3rd century BC. The front of the coin has the head of the God Apollo on it wearing a laurel leaf garland around his head. On the reverse is a bull which is butting to the left.

P.T.O

Before the Greeks used minted coins they made use of small iron rods for currency called ‘obols’. Since around six obols could fit into the hand of an adult, six obols became equivalent of one *drachma* coin which was the name given to the new money. In ancient Greek, the word *drachma* means “the graspable” so making it a logical choice of name.

The Athenians produced huge numbers of coins during the Classical era, around 450 BC, in order to finance their enormous building projects on the Athenian acropolis. They also needed finances to pay for the Peloponnesian War.

After the Greeks were conquered by the Romans, they stopped minting their own coins and used Roman coins instead.

