**Greek Coinage**

**POWERPOINT NOTES**

1. The very first coins came from Western Asia Minor (Turkey) where there was contact between the Greek cities on the coast and the Kingdom of Lydia. Coins were first used in the last half of the 7th century BC – 2,700 years ago.

What is a coin?

* Metal
* Value related to weight
* Stamp of authority of the place where they are issued

What do you think people used before coins were invented?

* Bartering = swapping
* Precious metals
* Iron cooking spits
* Other tokens like cowry shells or cocoa beans

The use of coins spread to the west. First to the islands and then mainland Greece and Italy.

1. Making coins.

Greek coins are handmade from gold, silver or bronze. 2 stamps called dies are engraved with a design. One is on an anvil and the other on a punch. A hammer is used to stamp the coin.

How many coins do you think you could make with a single die before it wore out?

* Around 10,000.

The front of the coin is called the obverseand the back of the coin is called the reverse*.*

1. The images on the coins relate to the place they are from. They might show gods or goddesses. For example this coin from the city state of Elis (where the Olympic Games were held) has the symbols of a Greek god. Who do you think it is? (Eagle and winged thunderbolt = Zeus).
2. Other coins might show myths or heroes. For example this coin from Corinth shows the winged horse Pegasus who had stamped his hoof on the top of a hill at Corinth.
3. Other coins show plants and animals. This coin from the island of Aegina shows a turtle.

Whose portrait appears on our coinage? It is interesting that portraits of rulers don’t appear on Greek coins until later on.

1. Now we are going to look at a coin from Athens. What do you think it shows on the obverse? This is the goddess Athena. She is the goddess of war and wears a helmet. What can you see on the reverse? Here we have an owl and a sprig of olive. These were associated with Athena. Her gift to the city of Athens was an olive tree and olive oil was an important product for Athens. You can also see the first three letters in Greek of the name of Athena and of Athens. The coin is a tetradrachm. In the middle of the 5th century BC this would pay a sculptor working on a public building for 2 days. You could buy 37 litres of wine with it. The coin is silver which comes from the mines at Laureion about 50 km from Athens. Large numbers of slaves worked in the mines.
2. Look at the modern Greek Euro. Can you see any similarities?

**Now try the shopping game or make a Greek coin**