



COINS



Why do people collect coins? Why do people collect money rather than spend it?

Coin collecting may be one of the first types of personal collections that we think of. Saving coins rather than spending them may raise questions of the reasons behind why this would be a popular hobby, however, there are many motivations behind actually saving coins can be a worthwhile pastime. From historical value, beauty, to making money, coin collecting is a pastime that has been taken up by many people from all walks of life. Some people are casual collectors, accumulating foreign coins from holidays and trips or coins discovered by chance.

Have you saved any coins you have found on the floor, or kept any currency back from your holidays?

From Ancient Rome to Syria, the Getty boasts an impressive collection of over eight thousand coins. Most of the coins within the collection come from personal collections that have been donated rather than being directly acquired by the museum.



COIN OF ATHENS

475-465 B.C. unknown artist/maker

Digital image courtesy of Getty's Open Content Program



Athenian "Owls," as they were called, were minted in Athens for over four hundred years, beginning in the 510s B.C.

The largest silver coin of its day, the coin popularised the concept of the obverse of a coin as the "head", and the reverse as the animal's "tail." **Why might this be a popular coin to add to one's coin collection?**

While the graphic style evolved over time, the motif remained similar, with Athena, the goddess of wisdom and combat, on the obverse and an owl, her patron animal, on the reverse. This design consistency bolstered their international message and came to represent Athens' economic might in the world's first ubiquitous trade currency. **Why might repeated motifs and styles be used across a nation's coin? If you were to design your own coin, what would you have on either side? Would you keep the common circle shape?**

Sold to the J. Paul
Getty Museum 2015

2015.5





*Tremissis
of Constant II
641-668
Unknown artist/maker
Donated to the J.Paul Getty Museum 1980*

Do you think that the fact that coins lack a named artist make them less valuable to collect?

Before the third century B.C people used jagged pieces of bronze with no measurement in weight or shape, as their own form of currency!



*Coin
6th century B.C. or later
Unknown artist/maker
Donated to the J.Paul Getty Museum 1978*

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