

Introducing the Penny

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

Word Count: 565

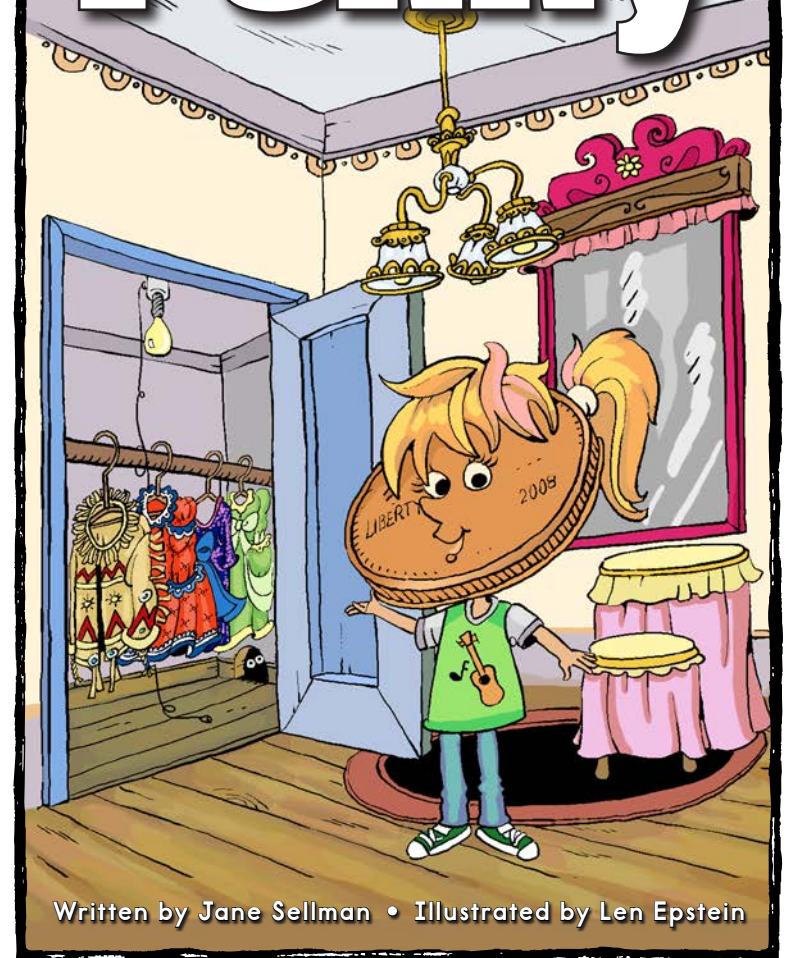


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Introducing the Penny



Written by Jane Sellman • Illustrated by Len Epstein

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Correlation

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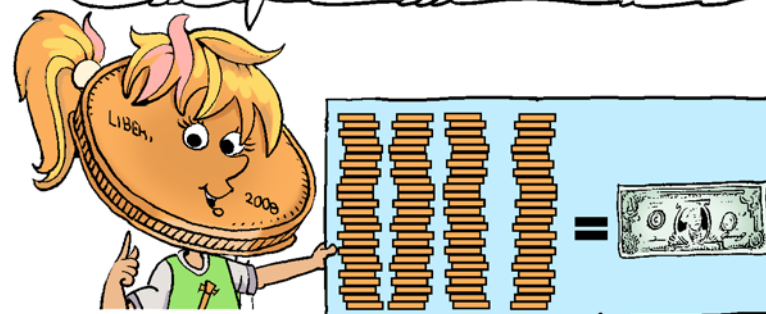
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Hi, let me introduce myself! I'm a United States coin. My friends call me "Penny." My name comes from a German word, *pfennig* (FEN-nig), which means "coin."



Ten groups of ten pennies or four groups of twenty-five pennies—each makes \$1.



You might have other coins that look like me in your pocket. We are each worth one **cent**. That's $1/100$ of a dollar. That means it takes exactly one hundred of me and my friends to equal one dollar.

I was born when the United States first became a country. In 1792, the U.S. government created the U.S. **Mint**. A mint is a factory where coins are made. One of the first coins the government made was me, the one-cent coin! In 1787, my good friend Ben Franklin suggested how I should look. But over the years, my look has changed several times.



For a while, I carried a picture of Lady Liberty wearing a Native American **headdress**. This picture appeared on my **obverse**, or my face. My back is called—you guessed it—my **reverse**. You probably call it “heads” and “tails!”

In 1909, I got an important makeover. America decided to honor President Abraham Lincoln by putting his picture on me. On my reverse, you could see stalks, or stems, of wheat. Some folks called me “the wheat penny.” Look at all the pennies in your pocket. You might find an old wheat penny.



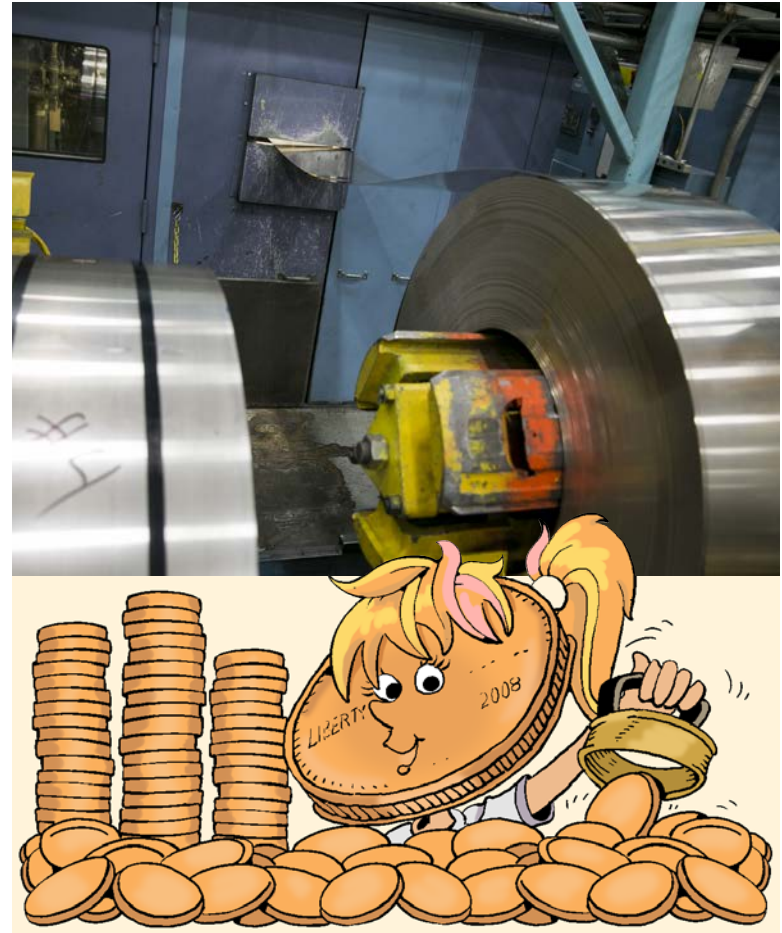
In 1959, I got the Lincoln Memorial on my back. A memorial is a building or statue used to remember someone. If you look closely at my reverse, you can see a teeny-tiny statue of Lincoln inside the memorial.

All pennies are made at the U. S. Mint. First, the mint asks an artist to draw pictures for the coin's front and back. When the drawings are perfect, the artist carves them into a sculpture called a **relief**.

A machine uses a model of the relief to carve the drawing into a hard steel stamp.

Penny's Birthday

In 2009, the U.S. Mint celebrated the 100th birthday of the Lincoln penny with a new design. The Lincoln penny was first used in 1909. The year 2009 was also the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth.



Each coin starts off as a cut **blank**, or coin-shaped piece of metal. Blanks are plain and flat, with no pictures or words. Penny blanks used to be made of 100 percent copper. Today they are made of copper and zinc.

The cut blanks are heated until they become soft. Then they go through a washer and dryer. Next, a machine pushes up a rim around the edge of each blank. Look closely at a penny. It has a raised edge around it.



Then, each blank is **struck**. The hard stamp with the artist's relief on it slams into the blank. It presses the pictures and words right into the metal.





Then, a worker uses a magnifying glass to check the pennies. The finished pennies are counted, put into bags, and sent to banks around the United States.



Do You Know?

The U.S. Mint has a Web page just for kids. To learn more about money, visit <http://www.usmint.gov/kids>



Today, the U.S. Mints in Denver and Philadelphia make all the coins in the United States, including me. They make billions of pennies each year. Can you guess how much it costs to make one penny? 1.4 cents! It costs more than a penny to make a penny!

So that's my story. I've been around a long time. Some people don't think I'm important. But if you get a bunch of us together, we can do a lot.

By the way, if you find me, it's good luck, so I hope you find a lot of my friends. Just remember to put a few of us away for a rainy day.



Glossary

- blanks** (*n.*) flat, round, blank pieces of metal that become coins (p. 10)
- cent** (*n.*) a coin worth one penny; 1/100th of a dollar (p. 4)
- headdress** (*n.*) a special piece of clothing worn on the head for festivals or other occasions (p. 6)
- mint** (*n.*) a factory where money is made (p. 5)
- obverse** (*n.*) the “heads” or face of a coin (p. 6)
- relief** (*n.*) a shallow carving or design on a flat surface (p. 9)
- reverse** (*n.*) the “tails” or back of a coin (p. 6)
- struck** (*v.*) stamped with pictures or words (p. 12)