

Make Roman Relief Coins

Roman coins, dating as far back as 800 B.C., contained clues about the past. Inside each coin was a code which symbolized everything from Roman victories to successful emperors. Help your child bring the magnificent spirit of Rome to a modern day, personalized clay coin. She'll tell her own unique tales on the front and back of the carved relief coin. While she may not be able to spend her craft, she'll still get a good idea of how Romans created their currency!



What You Need:

- White paper
- Air dry clay
- Pencil
- Toothpicks
- Popsicle sticks
- Fork
- Gold paint
- Paint brush

What You Do:

1. Show images of Roman coins to your child. To find them, try checking out books from the library or searching for images online.
2. Discuss the meaning of *symbolism*, and together, look at symbols that are recognizable on actual coins, like laurel wreaths—meaning victory, and the olive branch—a symbol of peace. Ask your child why she thinks someone would want their portrait assigned to a coin.
3. Ask her to come up with some symbols of her own that represent herself, or a fictitious hero. If she wants to come up with a hero, have her brainstorm what that hero would be known for, or what her special powers would be. Perhaps she's known for slaying dragons; she might want to come up with a design that has a dragon in the background, or a sword.
4. Have her sketch a rough draft of the image that she wants to create, as well as any other symbols or ideas that she wants to include on the final coin. Often, there was a face on the front of the coin and symbols on the back. Historically, both sides of the coin also contained a phrase or a name. Encourage her to add traditional elements to her own modern-day coin.
5. Next, give her a blob of clay about the size of an adult fist.
6. Have her flatten the clay down into a thick pancake shape, at least 1" thick.
7. Ask her to pat down the edges of the clay pancake, so they are flat and smooth.
8. Give her the necessary tools to start carving a relief into her coin. Have her refer to her drawing for this portion of the project. Invite her to add details to both sides of the coin, to make it as authentic as possible.
9. Allow the finished coin to air dry completely.
10. Paint the coin gold, and then allow the paint to dry. Now, your child has her very own coin. And the best part: it can be

For a brighter gold coin, have her paint the entire thing bright yellow, allow it to dry, and then paint it gold. For a darker, tarnished-looking coin, have her allow the gold paint to dry, and then brush on black paint. Next, rub it off quickly with a towel, allowing some or most of the gold to show through.