

Familiar knowledge

Bring 8 sheets of white card stock. In case some students came to class without pencils, be sure to supply about 10-15 pencils with erasers for back-up.

Tell students that you're collecting pennies for a project, and that you'll need every penny that people may have in their pockets, purses, or billfolds -- all of them, every last penny in the room. No other coins, just pennies. Be sure to add some pennies to the collection yourself as well.

Divide the class into 8 groups of 3 people.

Now that all pennies have been removed from students' reach, ask each group to draw a penny on the sheet of cardstock: the front of the penny on one side of the paper; the back of the penny on the other side of the paper. Think long and hard about each detail. Points will be awarded for the penny with the most features accurately drawn and drawn in the proper spot. The winning group will get chocolate!

Hand each team a real penny. Have each team evaluate their drawing by comparing it with a real penny. As a whole class, compare the drawings. Which group drew the best penny? Give the winning group members some chocolate coins.

Discuss what we can learn from an activity such as this one:

- Frequently, a group knows more than an individual
- Sometimes we don't have much basis for our opinion, just a hunch, and then it's hard to defend our opinion.
- Sometimes we think we know something well, because we've been around it all our lives, but when we have to re-think the phenomenon, it becomes slippery in our minds.
- Sometimes, we know something very well, but when we have to put it in a new context and analyze it differently, that's a new challenge.

In college, we'll be learning lots of new ideas as well as new ways of discussing old ideas.