

5th Grade Opinion Writing Prompt

PROMPT

Write an opinion: Should the United States stop using pennies? Your essay must be based on ideas and information from the passage set.

TARGETED STANDARDS CONNECTION

Writing Standards

W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

- W.5.1.a Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
- W.5.1.b Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- W.5.1.c Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *consequently*, *specifically*).
- W.5.1.d Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

For those typing their responses: **W.5.6** With some guidance and support from adults, Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single setting.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Materials:

Grant, Tracy. "Do Pennies Make Sense?" *Washington Post* 01 March 2013; *Kids Post*. Web. 23 Feb. 2016.

URL http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost/do-pennies-make-sense/2013/03/01/36340140-7d34-11e2-9a75-dab0201670da_story.html

Sanburn, Josh. "Waiting for Change." *Time* 08 February 2013; *Time for Kids*. Web. 23 Feb. 2016.

URL <http://www.timeforkids.com/news/article-waiting-change/98991>

Instructional Sequence:

1. Teacher hands out the typed up prompt and text.

2. The teacher introduces the writing prompt, and explains that students will be reading/listening to three texts, and using those texts to answer the prompt.
3. The teacher reads aloud "Do Pennies Make Sense?" and "Waiting for Change?" to the students. As the teacher reads, students may be underlining or highlighting information that they may find useful for responding to the prompt.
4. Upon finishing the read aloud, students will be provided with paper to respond to the prompt.

After reading "Do Pennies Make Sense?" and "Waiting for Change," write 2-3 paragraphs in which you state your opinion, should the United States keep pennies or stop using pennies? Your essay must be based on ideas and information from the passage set.

Do Pennies Make Sense?

By Tracy Grant

Do pennies make sense?

That might seem like a strange question, but for countries including Canada and Australia, the answer is no.

Those are just two of the countries that have stopped making one-cent coins, and last month, President Barack Obama indicated that it might be time for the United States to stop making them, too.

Here's the problem. Pennies cost more to make than they're worth — a lot more. In 2012, it cost the government 2 cents to make each penny. As time goes by, that cost is likely to go up even more as the prices of the metals that are used in the coins go up, economists say. Last year, the government spent \$58 million minting, or making, the coins.

So how would you pay for that \$9.99 toy if there were no pennies?

Well, the toy would probably cost either \$9.95 or \$10 in a penniless world. At stores on U.S. Army and Air Force bases, all cash purchases are rounded to the nearest nickel.

President Obama said last month that he wondered whether it still makes sense to make the penny. "Anytime we're spending money on something people don't actually use, that's an example of things we should probably change," he said.

But the penny has its fans. There's even a group, cleverly named Americans for Common Cents, that says there's nothing to be saved by ending the penny. The group says that because prices would most likely be rounded up, people would be forced to pay more. That could be hard on the poor. It also says that without pennies, the government would need to turn out more nickels. And nickels cost 10 cents to make. The good news: Making a dime costs only 5 cents.

Source Citation (MLA 7th Edition)

"Do Pennies Make Sense?" *Washington Post* 01 March 2013; *Kids Post*. Web. 23 Feb. 2016.

Waiting for Change

By Josh Sanburn

Jarden Zinc Products, a large zinc plant a few miles outside Greeneville, Tennessee, has a special claim. Since 1982, it has been the only supplier of penny blanks for the U.S. Mint. The blanks are the metal disks that become 1¢ coins.

It's a good business for Jarden—since 2000, the company has earned more than \$800 million. But it may not be a good deal for the U.S.

The value of the penny has been dropping for years. In 2006, it began to cost more than a penny to make a penny. It now costs 2¢ to produce a 1¢ coin. Many countries have stopped using pennies. Canada, which has a currency similar to that of the U.S., will end penny circulation on February 4. Is it time for the U.S. to do the same?

Two Sides to the Coin

Jarden and the zinc industry are fighting to keep the penny. Since 2006, Jarden has given \$1.2 million to Americans for Common Cents (ACC). The group's mission is to keep the penny in use. Mark Weller is ACC's executive director. He argues that there are three main reasons for keeping the penny: Without it, we would become more reliant on the nickel, which also has problems; charities that depend on penny drives would not be able to raise as much money; and a 2012 poll shows that 67% of Americans want to keep the penny. Many people polled said they feared they would end up paying more for products.

Many experts disagree with ACC. They point to the dozens of countries that have gotten rid of their lowest-value coins without raising prices for consumers. And charities don't seem too concerned either. Major George Hood of the Salvation Army says the group, which gets many coin donations, is not worried. "If pennies were to be removed from circulation, the Salvation Army hopes the American public will continue to donate generously to help people in need," he says.

Weller has one strong argument for keeping the penny, and that's the problem with the nickel. Each nickel costs the U.S. Mint 10¢ to make. If getting rid of the penny led to a greater use of the nickel, wouldn't that be trading one bad coin for another? For that reason, some experts have proposed getting rid of the penny and the nickel. Cash deals would then have to be rounded to the nearest dime.

Penny-Wise or Penny-Foolish?

Seigniorage (sayn-yor-ij) is the word for the difference between the value of a currency and its production costs. The cost of making U.S. coins dropped in 2012. But there is still no positive seigniorage on pennies or nickels.

President Barack Obama says the mint could explore using cheaper metals to make pennies. Steel is less expensive than zinc. Pennies are 97.5% zinc and 2.5% copper. But no matter what it is made of, the penny's days may be numbered. Most in-store purchases are now made with debit or credit cards, not cash. Is it time for a change?

Source Citation (MLA 7th Edition)

"Waiting for Change." *Time* 08 February 2013: *Time for Kids*. Web. 23 Feb. 2016.