

A Million-Dollar Nickel

Five cents doesn't buy you much these days, but the 1913 Liberty Head nickel is worth a fortune. Just ask the family of George Walton.

A month after Paul Montgomery, a coin collector in New Hampshire, offered a \$1 million reward for the 1913 Liberty Head nickel—one of the rarest American coins—the Walton family came forward and said that they thought they owned one.

The family had put the coin away after Walton's death in 1962, believing the nickel was worthless. But after learning of the offer, the family decided to see if their nickel was genuine. Experts determined it was.

The story of the Liberty Head nickel began in 1883. That's when the U.S. Mint began producing the coins. In 1912, the mint replaced the Liberty Head nickel with the Indian Head, or Buffalo, nickel.

But in 1913, someone—probably an employee of the U.S. Mint—illegally minted five additional Liberty Head coins.

Two of the rare 1913 nickels are now owned by coin collectors, and two others are in a museum. What happened to the fifth one remained a mystery—until now.

"It's been missing for so long," said coin dealer John Dannreuther. "People would say there are only four, but we knew there were five. And there it is."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Why was a million dollar reward offered for a Liberty Head nickel?
 - A The coin was minted in 1913.
 - B Paul Montgomery lived in New Hampshire.
 - C The coin was extremely rare.
 - D The Walton family wanted money.

2. According to the passage, which of the following happened FIRST?
 - A George Walton died and his family put his Liberty Head nickel away.
 - B The Liberty Head nickel was replaced by the Buffalo Head nickel.
 - C Someone illegally minted five Liberty Head nickels.
 - D A coin collector offered a reward for a 1913 Liberty Head nickel.

3. Which of the following conclusions about the 1913 Liberty Head nickel is supported by the passage?
 - A George Walton and his family wanted to keep the Liberty Head nickel for themselves.
 - B Over the years, many people wanted to find the missing 1913 Liberty Head nickel.
 - C John Dannreuther wanted to buy the Liberty Head nickel from Paul Montgomery.
 - D The U.S. Mint should never have stopped making the 1913 Liberty Head nickel.

4. "Five cents doesn't buy you much these days, but the 1913 Liberty Head nickel is worth a fortune." As used in the passage, **fortune** means
 - A a great deal of luck
 - B an enormous pile of coins
 - C a lot of time
 - D a huge amount of money

5. This passage is mostly about
 - A the discovery of the fifth 1913 Liberty Head nickel
 - B the decision of the Walton family to put their nickel away
 - C the illegal minting of 5 Liberty Head nickels in 1913
 - D the location of the four known 1913 Liberty Head nickels

6. What kind of coin replaced the Liberty Head nickel in 1912?

7. Why do you think Paul Montgomery offered so much money for the 1913 Liberty Head nickel?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

The Walton family owned a 1913 Liberty Head nickel _____ they received a \$1 million dollar reward.

- A then
- B because
- C so
- D after

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Paul Montgomery wanted a 1913 Liberty Head nickel because it is one of the rarest American coins.

Who? Paul Montgomery

(wanted) What? _____

Why? _____

10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: genuine (gen·u·ine): real or not fake; someone who is honest or sincere.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline the word **genuine**.

1. The museum was given a genuine painting by Leonardo da Vinci.
2. If your silver dollar is genuine, you will be able to buy a snack at the store with it.
3. Please show a genuine smile to the photographer for our class photo.
4. If a student's apology for disrupting class is genuine, she will change her behavior in the future.
5. My best friend always tells the truth when I ask for her opinion, so she is genuine.

10b. Which of the following picture shows a genuine wild bear?



11. Are the chocolate coins that you get for Halloween genuine money? Why or why not?

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 760

Featured Text Structure: Sequence – the writer provides an order of events or steps in a process

Passage Summary: The passage tells about the discovery of a rare coin, a 1913 Liberty Head nickel. Only 5 were minted in 1913. Four were in collections or museums, and the fifth was discovered when a coin collector offered a reward.

1. Why was a million dollar reward offered for a Liberty Head nickel?
 - A The coin was minted in 1913.
 - B Paul Montgomery lived in New Hampshire.
 - C **The coin was extremely rare.**
 - D The Walton family wanted money.

2. According to the passage, which of the following happened FIRST?
 - A George Walton died and his family put his Liberty Head nickel away.
 - B **The Liberty Head nickel was replaced by the Buffalo Head nickel.**
 - C Someone illegally minted five Liberty Head nickels.
 - D A coin collector offered a reward for a 1913 Liberty Head nickel.

3. Which of the following conclusions about the 1913 Liberty Head nickel is supported by the passage?
 - A George Walton and his family wanted to keep the Liberty Head nickel for themselves.
 - B **Over the years, many people wanted to find the missing 1913 Liberty Head nickel.**
 - C John Dannreuther wanted to buy the Liberty Head nickel from Paul Montgomery.
 - D The U.S. Mint should never have stopped making the 1913 Liberty Head nickel.

4. "Five cents doesn't buy you much these days, but the 1913 Liberty Head nickel is worth a fortune." As used in the passage, **fortune** means
 - A a great deal of luck
 - B an enormous pile of coins
 - C a lot of time
 - D **a huge amount of money**

5. This passage is mostly about
 - A **the discovery of the fifth 1913 Liberty Head nickel**
 - B the decision of the Walton family to put their nickel away
 - C the illegal minting of 5 Liberty Head nickels in 1913
 - D the location of the four known 1913 Liberty Head nickels

6. What kind of coin replaced the Liberty Head nickel in 1912?

Suggested answer: The Liberty Head nickel was replaced by the Indian Head, or Buffalo, nickel in 1912. [paragraph #4]

7. Why do you think Paul Montgomery offered so much money for the 1913 Liberty Head nickel?

Suggested answer: He probably wanted to try to add such a rare coin to his collection since he was a coin collector. Or maybe he wanted to see if the fifth Liberty Head nickel really existed. [paragraph #2 and paragraph #7]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

The Walton family owned a 1913 Liberty Head nickel _____ they received a \$1 million dollar reward.

- A then
- B because
- C so
- D after

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Paul Montgomery wanted a 1913 Liberty Head nickel because it is one of the rarest American coins.

Who? Paul Montgomery

(wanted) What? **a 1913 Liberty Head nickel**

Why? **because it is one of the rarest American coins**

10. ReadWorks recommends that the following vocabulary word be taught to the whole class out loud using the steps below.

Vocabulary Word: genuine

Step 1: Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (gen-u-ine)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is genuine. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "genuine."]

Step 2: Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Genuine means real or not fake. Genuine can also refer to someone who is honest and sincere."
- b. Teacher says: "In the passage, the Walton family decides to find out if the nickel that they own was a genuine, or real, 1913 Liberty Head nickel. They find out that their coin is not a fake, and they are given one million dollars."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "genuine."]

Step 3: Practice the word

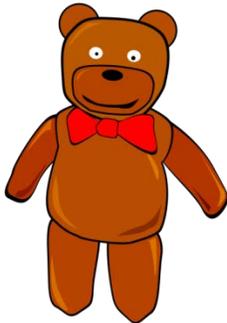
Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the first sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. The museum was given a genuine painting by Leonardo da Vinci.
 2. If your silver dollar is genuine, you will be able to buy a snack at the store with it.
 3. Please show a genuine smile to the photographer for our class photo.
 4. If a student's apology for disrupting class is genuine, she will change her behavior in the future.
 5. My best friend always tells the truth when I ask for her opinion, so she is genuine.

Step 4: Check for student understanding.

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

- 10b.** Which of the following picture shows a genuine wild bear?



- 11.** Are the chocolate coins that you get for Halloween genuine money? Why or why not?

Suggested answer: Chocolate coins are not genuine money. Genuine means something is real or not fake. Chocolate coins are made of chocolate, not metal and they are not worth anything!

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: fortune, worthless