

## Unit 1, Lesson 6: “Change” Over Time

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### Lesson Overview

In this lesson students compare and contrast Lincoln pennies from 1942-1944 to identify and explain continuity, change, and causation. Estimated time to complete 20-25 minutes.

*\*Note to Teachers: You will notice that the historical context used in this lesson (Lincoln pennies from 1942-1944) falls outside of the 4th grade course chronology. This was purposeful. Pennies were selected because they are familiar to most students so that background knowledge would be less of a barrier for students to enter into a discussion of History Standards 1a and 2b. The goal of this lesson is for students to gain an understanding that things change and that change is one of the most important things that historians study, not to learn about the history of Lincoln pennies. In other words, this lesson uses pennies to introduce students to History Standards 1a and 2b.*

### Delaware Standard(s)

- **History Standard 1, 4-5 [Chronology]:** Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- **History Standard 2b, 4-5 [Analysis]:** Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them; and analyze change over time.

### Big Ideas

- Change

### Essential Questions

- What changed?

### Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that things change and that this is one of the most important things that historians study. By anticipating change, we will be better prepared to respond to it.

### Resources

- [Lesson 6 Google Slides](#)
- [Resource 1: Me Changing](#)
- [Resource 2: Three Lincoln Pennies](#)

### Procedures

1. **Warm-Up:** Distribute copies of [Resource 1: Me Changing](#). Ask students to think about themselves yesterday (past) and today (present). Ask – what changed? Then, have them think about themselves today (present) and tomorrow (future). What is likely to change?
2. **Introduce the Lesson:** Tell students that today’s lesson focuses on the concept of “change” and the Lincoln penny.

3. **Application:** Project or Distribute a copy of [Resource 2: Three Lincoln Pennies](#)
- a. Have students work with a partner to answer the 3 questions on Resource 2.
    - i. What stayed the same? [e.g. Lincoln’s profile remained as did dates]
    - ii. What changed? [e.g. color or composition of coins]
    - iii. Why might it have changed? [see scaffolding questions below]
  - b. Whole-class discussion:
    - i. Have volunteers share their responses.
    - ii. Scaffolding: Some students lacking prior knowledge are likely to struggle. Offer scaffolding questions. Ask,
      1. Notice the dates on the pennies. What big events happened in the 1940s, or Did you ever hear of World War II? When did the United States participate in World War II? [\[1941-1945\]](#)
      2. What things are made in especially large numbers during wartime? [\[e.g. bullets, bombs, guns etc\]](#)
      3. What do you think these wartime materials might have been made out of?
      4. How much of these materials would be needed during a war as big as a WORLD war? [\[lots\]](#)
      5. How might your answers to these questions explain why they changed the composition in 1942? [\[see below under Debrief\]](#)

### **Debrief**

Reveal the following information about the composition of the Lincoln penny from 1942-1944 and offer the explanations that follow (see below):

1942	bronze (95% copper, 5% tin and zinc)
1943	zinc-coated steel (also known as steel penny)
1944	brass (95% copper, 5% zinc)

The U.S. put a pause on making copper pennies in 1943, and switched to zinc-coated steel. (This is often referred to as the lead penny, but “lead” is actually a misnomer.)

- Change from 1942-1943: The US mint page states, "in 1943, the coin's composition was changed to zinc-coated steel. This change was only for the year 1943 and was due to the critical use of copper for the war effort." The copper was used to make ammunition and other military equipment.
- Change from 1943-1944: the change to the “steel” penny produced unanticipated consequences that led to public outcry. The new penny was often mistaken for a dime, created problems in vending machines, and sweat from fingers rusted the new metal. A new alloy made using copper scraps from shell casings resulted in a new penny only one year after the “steel” penny was introduced.

Emphasize that change happens every day. It is one of the most important things that historians study and that students will be studying this year in social studies. By anticipating change, we will be better prepared to respond to it.