

People, Power and Coins

Medieval rulers often used their coins to communicate political or religious messages to wide audiences. In the crusader states, coins provided the opportunity for the Holy Land's new Christian rulers to promote themselves as powerful and influential leaders.

Here are two crusader coins. These coins are studied by historians who want to understand more about the people and places that were significant in the history of the crusades.

Coin 1



front

back

Coin 2



front

back

Task: Compare the similarities and differences between the two coins.

The first coin is very worn and faded. It looks like there could be an image of a man on the front but it is difficult to be sure who it could be.

Now look at the image of the man on the front of coin 2. Look very closely and write down three physical features that you can see.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How many of those features can you see on coin 1?

Task: The letters around the edge of the coins also provide clues about who the figure might be. Can you spot the letters REX on coin 2?

Rex is the Latin word for king. Now can you find the word REX on coin 1? Circle it when you find it.

By comparing the details of the two coins, it is possible to use clues on one coin to help us understand details about the other.

Being a ruler in the crusader states was an important job, and these rulers wanted to be celebrated and remembered for their work. By putting an image of themselves on a coin, they sent out a powerful message about their importance and influence.

Guy of Lusignan is the figure on the coins above. He was the king of Jerusalem from 1186 until 1192. On the other side of the coins is an image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

These coins were produced after Guy of Lusignan lost his power over the kingdom of Jerusalem, but he used the images of himself and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to keep people thinking that he still had authority over the holy city.

Draw: Look closely at one image of the coins above and draw it here. Note the different shapes and details and try to draw them as accurately as you can.



Military Power

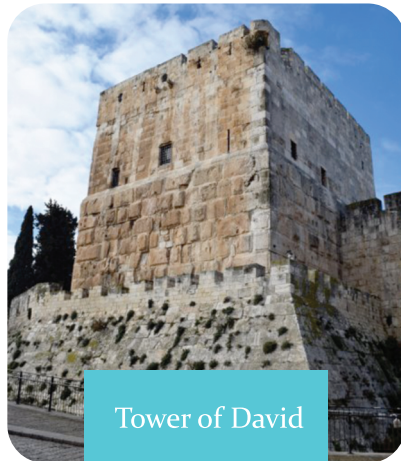
On 15 July 1099 the armies of the First Crusade broke into the holy city of Jerusalem and established Christian control over the city and its sacred sites. The crusaders did this because they believed they were agents of God's will and thought that Jerusalem should belong to Christians rather than Muslims.

Medieval rulers often used their coins to communicate political or religious messages to wide audiences. The coin below makes a statement about the military and religious power of the rulers of the crusader states.

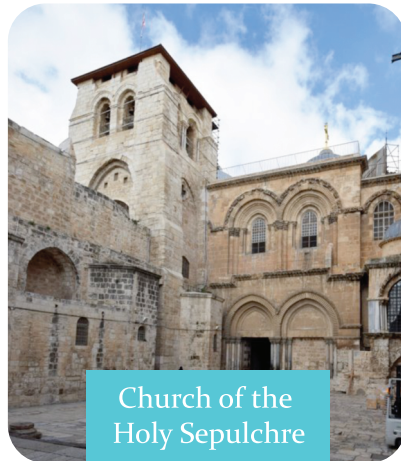


front

back



Tower of David



Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Task: Look at the symbol in the centre of the coin and then look at the images below. Which building in Jerusalem is represented on the coin?

Draw: Look closely at one image on the coins above and draw it here. Note the different shapes and details and try to draw them as accurately as you can.

The sign of the cross was a key symbol in the history of the crusades, as it has been throughout the history of Christianity. The cross on the coin is a reminder of the religious motivations of the crusaders, who sought to take control of Jerusalem and to protect the city's most sacred sites, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The reverse of the coin shows the Tower of David in Jerusalem. The Tower was the main military stronghold and point of defence used by the crusaders to maintain their control over the holy city. This symbol was used as a display of military strength, and to show the power and status of the rulers of the kingdom of Jerusalem.

Questions for discussion: Who did the crusaders believe they were defending Jerusalem from?

Why did they think it was important for Jerusalem to be controlled by Christians? List one reason here:



Crusader States

In order to secure their control over the holy city of Jerusalem, the crusaders established a network of Christian territories in the Holy Land that are now referred to as the 'crusader states'. These crusader states were important for maintaining control over the Holy Land, and each state produced different coins promoting key messages about the region and its rulers.



Coin 1:



Coin 2:

Task:

Using the information below, can you work out which coin belongs to which crusader state?



Edessa

Edessa was the first crusader state and was established in 1098 by Baldwin of Boulogne, who went on to become King Baldwin I of Jerusalem in 1100. His successor, Baldwin of Le Bourcq (1100–1118), produced a series of coins through which he announced his rule as the count of Edessa. Through the imagery on his coins, Baldwin sought to remind his new subjects that he was both firmly committed to the Christian religion and a powerful warrior, who was ready to draw his sword in defence of his crusader state if he needed to.

Antioch

Antioch was the second crusader state to be established in 1098. The crusader Bohemond of Taranto, who had led the siege of the city in 1098, declared himself prince of Antioch later that year. Sixty-five years later, Bohemond of Taranto's great-grandson (also called Bohemond!) became the prince of Antioch. Through the imagery on his coins, Prince Bohemond III (1163–1201) declared that he was both a warrior and a Christian. The use of other religious symbols suggests that the coins recognised Bohemond as a ruler of Muslims and Jews as well.

Task: Look closely at the coin from Antioch. What images and symbols do you see depicted on the coin? Write down three:



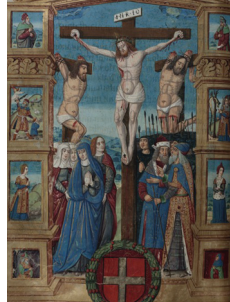
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Draw: Look closely at the image of the coin from Edessa and draw it here.



Religious Symbols

Medieval rulers often used their coins to communicate political or religious messages to wide audiences. In the crusader states, coins provided the opportunity for the Holy Land's new rulers to promote themselves as faithful Christians and to express their devotion to God.



This coin depicts the True Cross, the object upon which Jesus was understood to have been crucified. The crusaders believed they had discovered a fragment of the True Cross shortly after their conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, which they identified as a powerful holy relic.



front

back

This coin shows St Peter, who was a disciple of Jesus Christ and is one of the most important saints in the history of Christianity. St Peter was the first bishop of Rome, and Pope Urban II – who called for the First Crusade – was one of his successors, and the head of the western Church. The image of St Peter on this coin was therefore used to reinforce the crusaders' claims to rule over the city of Antioch and the wider Holy Land region.

Each crusader coin includes a series of letters inscribed on the coin which tell us more about the messages being conveyed.

On the reverse of the coin above, there are four lines of letters which can be translated to mean:

Lord, help your servant Tancred

Task: Using the information you already know about the crusades and pilgrimage to Jerusalem, can you think of one other sacred symbol, object or place which could be used on a coin to represent the crusaders' commitment to Christianity?

Why did you choose this symbol, object or place?

Task: The letters are copied below but with some gaps. Study the coin to work out which letters fill in the gaps.

K E _ O I
O _ T _ A _
_ O C O V T
A _ K P I

Draw: Look closely at one image of the coins above and draw it here. Note the different shapes and details and try to draw them as accurately as you can.



Collecting Souvenirs

Consider these two models brought back by pilgrims from Jerusalem to remind them of their journey and the religious importance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These models were made and sold in the 1600s, more than three hundred years ago.



Task: Write down three physical features of these objects, and then think of three words to describe the models. These can relate to what they look like or what they represent.

Features	Descriptive words
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Today we have looked at the role of sacred objects and holy places in the history of the crusades, and the meaning and value of objects that have been brought to England from the Holy Land and survive in a museum today.

Task: Now think about your own experiences and a journey you have been on. Have you found, bought or been given a souvenir that you have brought home with you? This could be from a religious journey, or from a time spent with family and friends, or a place that you particularly like. Draw the object below:

When thinking about your object, consider the following questions:

- What does this object remind you about your journey?
- Why is it important to you?
- Imagine your object is discovered 800 years from now. Do you think people in the future would be able to understand what it is and who owned it?

