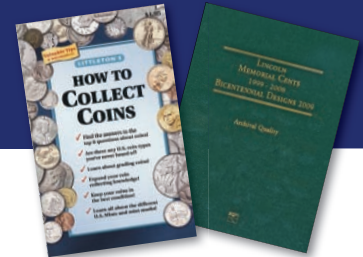


# Coinage Kids

Mail your completed quiz to February Quiz, *COINage* magazine, P.O. Box 7030, Ventura, CA 93006-9899. Five winners will be drawn from the valid entries received by February 28, 2014. Valid entries must include the correct answers, the entrant's name, age (17 or younger) and address, and the signature of a parent or guardian. *Please, only one entry per child per household.* The winners will each receive a Lincoln cent album and a coin collecting guide courtesy Littleton Coin Supplies.

by Marcy Gibbel



## Braille Coins

**L**ouis Braille was born January 4, 1809. The Frenchman invented a system of raised dots that allowed blind people to read and write.

When he was three, Louis had an accident in his father's workshop. He was using an awl, a pointed tool for making textured surfaces or holes. His hand slipped, and he lost his sight in one eye. The injured eye became infected, and the infection spread to his other eye. He was completely blind by the age of four.

Braille received a scholarship to the Royal Institute for Blind Children in Paris when he was 10. The students listened to their lessons, as most of the teaching was done by voice. There were also books printed with large, embossed letters that the students could feel with their fingers, but they were very hard to read.

Captain Charles Barbier de la Serre, a captain in Napoleon's army, visited the school when Braille was 12. He had invented a system called "night writing" so that soldiers could message each other in the dark. They could read these messages without having to light a match, which might alert the enemy. The groups of 12 raised dots stood for sounds, not actual letters.

Braille thought the system was too complicated. He experimented for several months until he developed a system that used only six dots. The system we call Braille today is basically the same one that he came up with when he was just 15. He made the raised dots by hand at the time, pressing the paper with an awl—the same tool that had led to his blindness.

The design on the reverse of the Louis Braille Bicentennial silver dollar includes Braille letters. This is the first coin that can be read by a person who reads Braille. Below the letters BRL, which stand for "Braille" in Braille code, a child is shown sitting beside a bookcase labeled "Independence," reading a book with his fingers. A forward-facing portrait of Louis Braille is on the obverse.

Braille would be 205 now, and while he would be proud of his invention, he would probably be a little embarrassed by all the fuss. Other countries have issued their own Braille coins, too. Here are just a few:

**Europe Without Barriers, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society for the Care of the Blind** - The main motif on the obverse of the coin is its denomination—"10 zlotys" in Braille. This is the first such coin in Poland. The reverse shows two figures, one of them holding a cane. The coin was issued in 50,000 pieces. The National Bank of Poland wanted to bring attention to the fact that there are over 1.8 million visually impaired people living in Poland.

**Ferritic stainless steel (FSS) two rupee coin issued by Reserve Bank of India** - This coin celebrates the bicentenary of Louis Braille's birth. The reverse side of the coin depicts a picture of Louis Braille, with his initials, "L. BRL" and the years "1809-2009." This coin was minted at Calcutta.

**Two-euro coins** - Belgium and Italy each issued a 2 euro to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Louis Braille's birth.



1. How old would Louis Braille be today?
  2. What was the first coin to carry readable Braille code as part of its inscriptions?
  3. How did Braille lose his sight?
  4. Where did young Braille go to school?
  5. What do the letters "BRL" stand for?
  6. How did Braille make the raised dots on the paper?
- Bonus:** What else did Braille accomplish during his short lifetime?

