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**Social Studies – Current Events**

[**Women’s History Month: The American Quarter Program**](https://mhebtw.azurewebsites.net/?p=9140)

Have you ever noticed that most of the people who appear on American money are men? The American Women Quarters (AWQ) Program hopes to change that. Beginning this year and running through 2025, the United States Mint will be issuing five quarters per year that feature women on the “tails” side of the coin. The “heads” side will remain a profile of George Washington but will be a new version created by female sculptor Lauren Gardin Fraser. In 1921, she became the first woman to design a U.S. coin. Here, *By the Way* (btw) explains how the new coins were developed and which women are being honored with the new coins.

**How Were the Honorees Chosen?**

It was important to the committee to honor not only women of diverse backgrounds, but also a wide variety of achievements. They considered women who were involved in social justice work, as well as politicians and artists. It was also required that all the women appearing on the coins be deceased. Other than that, the selection criteria were intentionally broad.

The selection process began with an online web portal hosted by the National Women’s History Museum (NWHM). Between March and June 2021, the public submitted ideas for who should appear on the quarters. The portal received more than eleven thousand submissions. These were sorted through by the NWHM, along with the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative and the Congressional Bipartisan Women’s Caucus. Ultimately, the winning honorees were selected by Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen.

Once the honorees were chosen, a pool of financial consultants, artists, and historians worked together to ensure that the coin designs were aesthetically pleasing, historically accurate, and “coinable.” Final designs were then submitted to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) for comment before Secretary Yellen gave ultimate approval.

**Who are the 2022 Selections?**

In 2022, the U.S. Mint will issue quarters featuring the following women:

* Maya Angelou: writer, poet, activist, performer, and teacher
* Dr. Sally Ride: astronaut, physicist, science educator, and the first American woman in space
* Wilma Mankiller: first female principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation
* Nina Otero-Warren: suffragist, politician, and the first female superintendent of Santa Fe public schools
* Anna May Wong: first Chinese American film star in Hollywood

The quarters don’t just show a picture of the women. Each coin design also recognizes the woman’s contributions and achievements. For example, Maya Angelou is shown with the silhouette of a bird behind her. This honor’s her most famous book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The Wilma Mankiller quarter features the seven-pointed star of the Cherokee Nation. The Spanish words “Voto Para La Mujer” (“Votes for Women”) appear on Nina Otero-Warren’s quarter.

**How Do You Get the Quarters?**

The American Women Quarters Program is authorized by the Circulating Collectible Coin Redesign Act of 2020. This means that these quarters will circulate normally, like any other coins. You may receive one of the coins any time you get change. You can also go online to sign up for a program that will send you each year’s coins as soon as they become available.

***What Do You Think?****Imagine that you are on the selection committee to help choose the five honorees for the 2023 AWQ Program series. Who would you nominate, and why?*