Extension Activity
Disappearing Penny

Try this experiment with a US penny made after 1982. These coins have a center made of zinc, a silvery metal that reacts with vinegar and salt.

Materials Needed:

- Pennies minted after 1982
- Sandpaper
- Salt
- Vinegar
- A clear container

Instructions:

1. Rub the penny's edge with sandpaper until you see silvery zinc. Do the same on the other side of the penny.
2. Mix 1-½ tablespoons of salt and ½ cup of vinegar in a clear container.
3. Drop in the penny and watch!

Discussion:

What do you notice? Leave the penny in the mixture overnight.

In our experiment, the center of the penny dissolved leaving behind a thin shell of copper. What happened in your experiment?