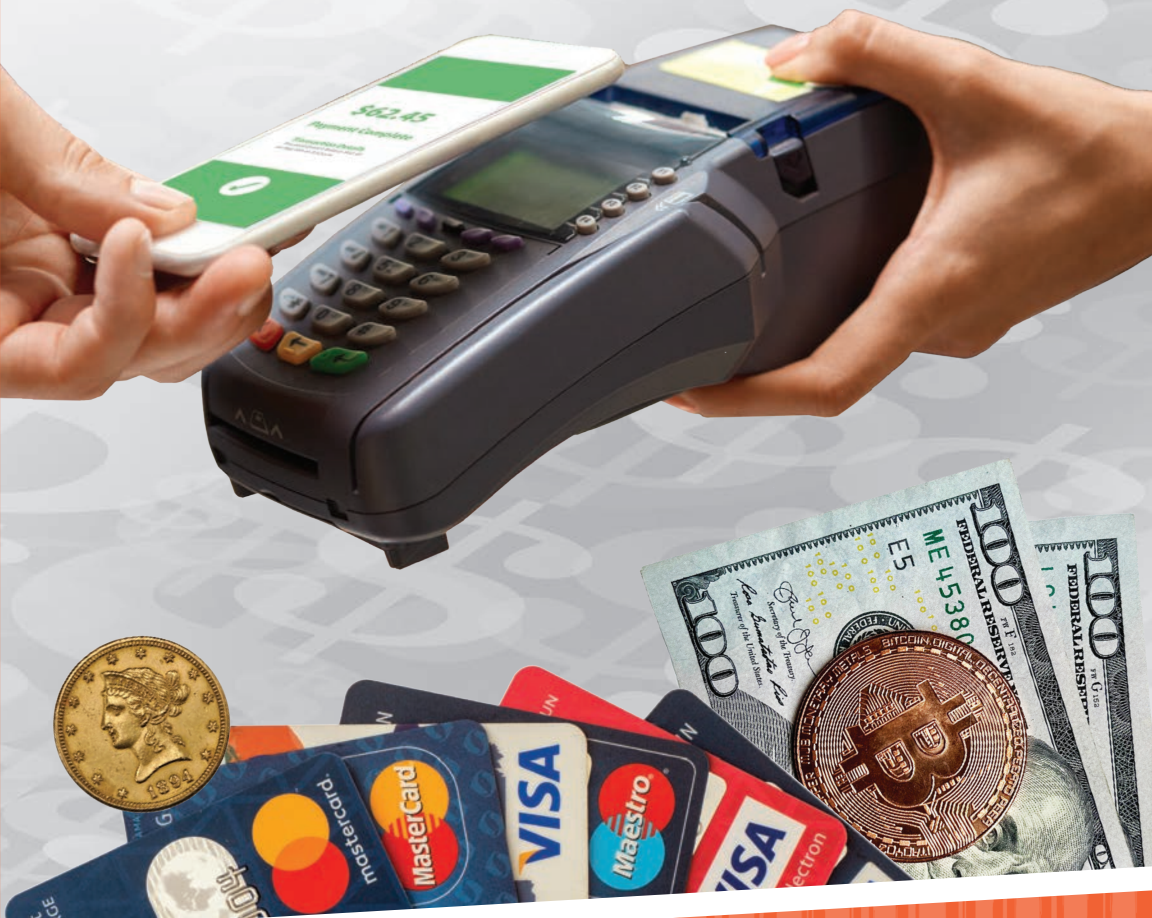
iCivics

Money Then and Now



Antonio Sacre

TCM Teacher Created Materials

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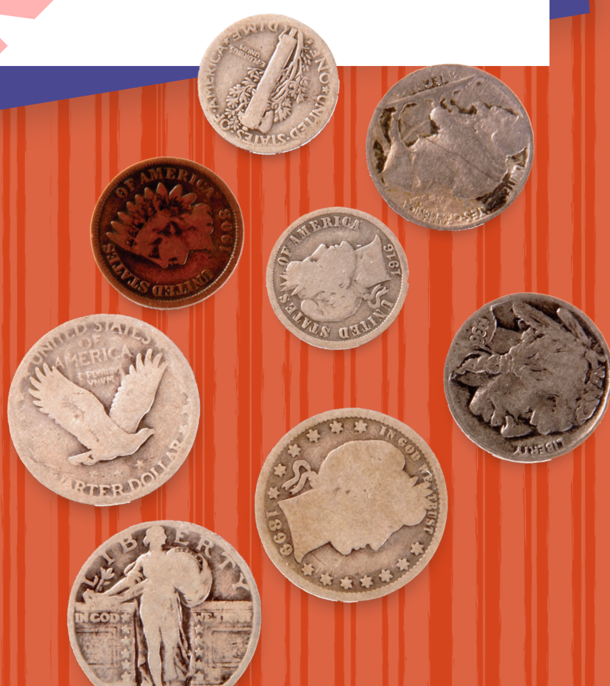
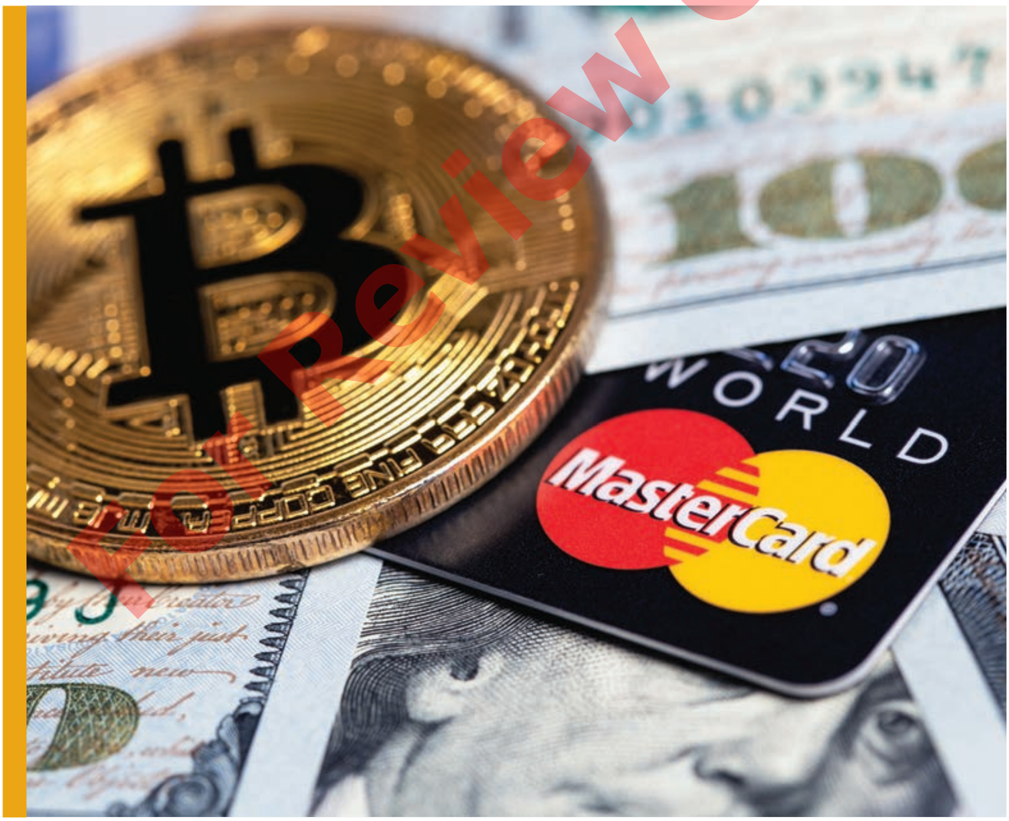


Would You Rather...?

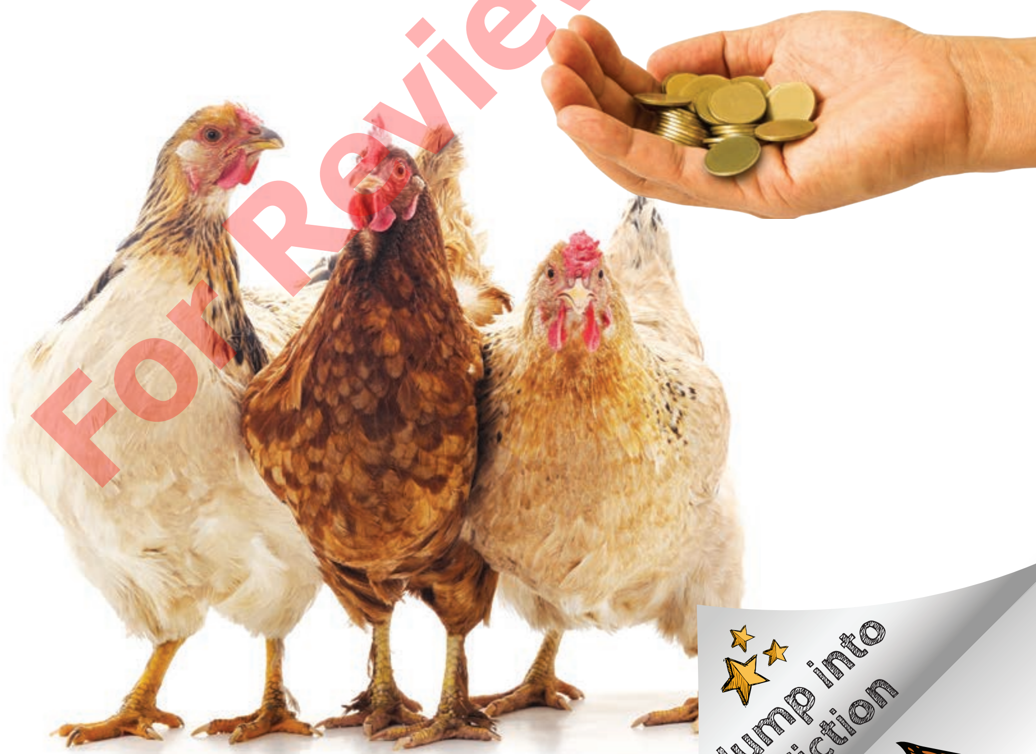
Why is money important? Who invented money? How has it changed over time, especially in the United States? Could people ever live without money?

Speaking of money, would you rather have one hundred thirty quarters or one twenty-dollar bill? Would you rather have five thousand dollars or one bitcoin? Before answering these and other questions, let's look at how people got the things they needed before money was invented.



When early humans unlocked the secrets of agriculture and taming animals, people paid for what they needed by **bartering**. Let's say a wheat farmer wanted to trade some wheat for a cow. How much wheat equals one cow? People had different answers to this question.

Money made these transactions easier. Money was portable, durable, and convenient. You could pay a handful of coins for three chickens. The chicken farmer could give those coins to a dairy farmer for five gallons of milk. Easy? Not so easy. Who says what the coins are worth? Where does the U.S. government fit in to all this?



Jump into Fiction

A Skateboard for a Bike?

Stella was putting the finishing touches on an elaborate replica of Independence Hall for her science project when her mom knocked on her door. She came into the room holding a cell phone.

"Wow, you've been working incredibly hard on your project!" her mom exclaimed.

"Thanks, Mom! What's up?" Stella asked.

"Mario's dad asked to put you on a video call with Mario. He has a problem with his Mars Rover model. Is now good?"

"Sure. Thanks, Mom." Taking the phone, Stella said to her friend, "*¿Hola*, Mario. *Cómo estás*?"

Mario sulked on the small screen and whined, “Miserable, Stella. My rover won’t rove! I have to debug all 124 lines of code. Did you figure out how to power the LED bulbs in your hall using produce?”

“Yes, I discovered that citrus provides the longest power,” Stella told him.

“Wow! If I can fix my code, maybe we can both place in the district science fair!” Mario said.

Stella sighed happily, “I hope so! I’d love to win that skateboard!”

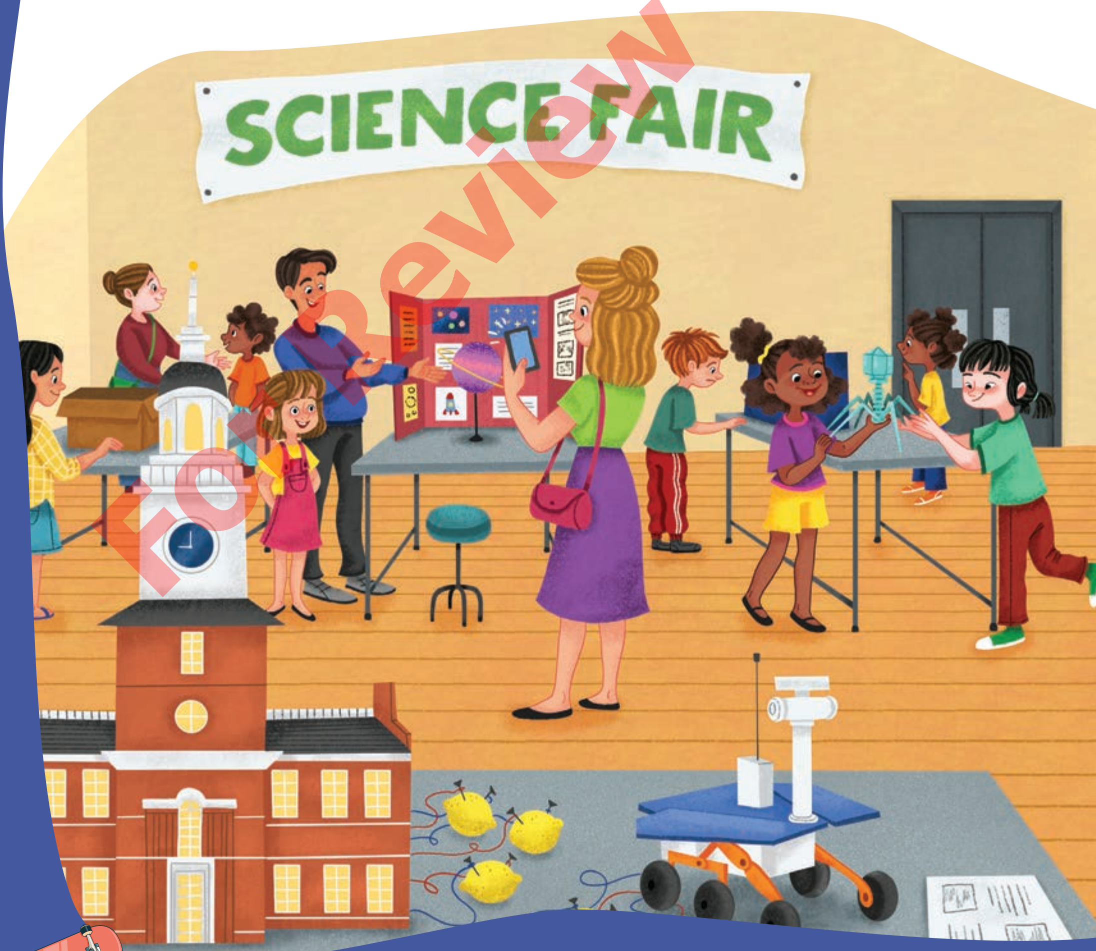
Mario nodded. “And I’d love to win that bike!”

At the fair, Stella won first place—a bike worth $75! And Mario took second, a skateboard worth $50.

After collecting their prizes, they looked at each other. Stella asked, “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

Mario said, “I think I am! I’ll give you the skateboard, and you give me the bike! But wait a minute . . . that’s not a fair exchange. Your prize is worth $75, and my prize is worth $50.”

Stella held the bicycle by the handlebars and murmured, “It’s OK. We both created great projects, and we’re both getting what we wanted.” She rolled the bicycle toward Mario. He set the skateboard on the floor and pushed it to Stella.



Mario stared at the gleaming bicycle, scratched his head thoughtfully, and said, “Well, I could give you something to make up the difference. What about some of my trading cards? I could give you four blocker cards and ten attacker bird cards. That would be worth exactly $25!”

Stella shook her head and said, “No, thanks. I never got into that trading game.”

Mario thought some more. “What about that enormous stuffed animal I won at the amusement park?”

“It won’t fit in my room,” Stella replied.

Mario slapped his head and yelled, “Now, I’ve got it! How about I give you the $25 I was saving for a new bike?”

Stella smiled. “Wow, thanks! Now we’re really equal.”

“It’s a deal!” Mario said with a big grin.

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Money Then and Now

Bartering to get the things we need can be challenging. So, money was invented. As the United States grew, how money was made, handled, and protected changed. Each change had its own opportunities and challenges. Technology helped overcome some of these challenges and created some new problems. Find out more about money—then and now!

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