The New Ten: Redesigning Our Nation’s Currency

To the Teacher

Students can read the content below to explore the history of currency and the redesign of the next series of notes, starting with the $10 note. Decisions about who will be featured on the redesigned $10 note will be announced by the end of the year, but these resources will be useful for students even after announcements have been made, since the process of redesigning currency is ongoing. Inspired by the new $10 note, students can continue to explore the history of American women and their role in shaping our past and can learn about the process of U.S. currency design throughout U.S. history.

Note: This content is provided by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Introduction

United States coin and currency have long been a way to honor our past and express our values, including the images of great leaders and landmarks they depict. In 2013, the United States Department of the Treasury selected the $10 note for redesign based on a number of factors. The next generation of currency, starting with the new $10 note, will include various elements of design that celebrate democracy. In keeping with that theme, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew has decided that our paper currency should feature a woman who was a champion for our inclusive democracy. The Department of the Treasury, with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, expects to unveil the new $10 note in 2020, the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

In addition to featuring a woman, the new $10 note will include a tactile feature that increases accessibility for the visually impaired.

Get Involved!

The Treasury Department is asking the public to use #TheNew10 to express what democracy means to them and to spread the word about the new design. Who would you like to see on the $10 note? How can we best honor our inclusive democracy? Tell us.

Why Do We Redesign Currency?

There are two main components of currency redesign: Technical and Aesthetic. (Students, if you are not familiar with the term Aesthetic, you can search for the definition in a dictionary or another reference source.)

1) The primary technical goals in the redesign of U.S. currency are to:
   • Ensure that U.S. currency employs unique and technologically advanced features to deter counterfeiting
   • Facilitate the public’s use
   • Provide access and usability
   • Maintain public confidence

2) The aesthetic goals in the redesign are to:
   • Institutionalize our American history by depicting people, monuments, symbols and concepts that reflect the past and reinforce a theme for that particular era of history.

What Is A Currency Theme?

A series of concepts which capture the core values of the United States during a specific time period are reflected in U.S. currency notes. Other examples include commerce, peace, energy, democracy, war, harvest, liberty and knowledge.

Example of a redesigned note:

Redesigned $5 Note - 2008

A redesigned $5 note was issued on March 13, 2008. The redesigned $5 note retains two of the most important security features first introduced in the 1990s: the watermark and embedded security thread.

Example of currency themes:

• The $10 note features the Statue of Liberty’s torch.
• The Statue’s official name represents the important symbol “Liberty Enlightening the World.”
Today is Women's Equality Day and begins the five-year countdown to the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. 2020 is also the year that the United States Department of the Treasury will unveil the redesigned $10 bill, and it will be the first time in our history that a woman will be featured on U.S. currency.

The Treasury Department is excited to announce that U.S. paper currency will now feature the image of a historical American woman: Harriet Tubman. In assuming this responsibility to redesign currency features, Secretary Lew is asking the American people to share ideas of what woman they believe best represents our democracy. And while putting a women’s image on a currency sound simple, there are many aspects of redesigning the U.S. currency that we must consider.

Since Secretary Lew announced this initiative in June, we have traveled across the country and met with thousands of Americans to hear their feedback first-hand and learn what democracy means to them. Democracy, the theme for the next family of notes to be redesigned, sends a powerful message both at home and abroad.

After considering the public’s input on the qualities that best represent our value democracy, the Secretary will announce the changes to the $10 note. However, the design process is very involved and detailed and the final redesigned note will not be complete for several years.

The Treasury Department anticipates the new redesigned $10 note to enter circulation after 2020. The Treasury Department expects to unveil the new $10 note in 2020, the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

Who is Involved?

The Secretary of the Treasury makes the final decision on currency design as established by the Second Legal Tender Act of July 11, 1862 and 12 U.S.C. 418.

Historically, the Secretary has relied on the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) to provide advice on themes, symbols and concepts to be used on currency. However, for the newly redesigned $10 note and the next family of notes, the Secretary will select a woman recognized by the public who was a champion for democracy in the United States. The person should be iconic and have made a significant contribution to democracy, the theme for the next redesigned series of notes and the Secretary will select a woman recognized by the public who was a champion for democracy in the United States. The person should be iconic and have made a significant contribution to democracy.

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Which woman will the Secretary choose to feature on our paper currency?

The last changes in Federal Reserve notes occurred between 1914 and 1928 and the series 1886 and 1891 $1 silver certificates and on the back of the $20 National Bank Notes were engraved by Charles Kennedy Burt for the American Bank Note Company. The Original Series and the 1875 Series of National Bank Notes were issued from 1863 to 1882. This vignette “Baptism of Pocahontas” appeared in the series 1866 and 1891 $1 silver certificates and on the back of the series 1896 $1 silver certificate.

When will the new redesigned $10 note enter circulation?

The Treasury Department anticipates the new redesigned $10 note to enter circulation after 2020. The Treasury Department expects to unveil the new $10 note in 2020, the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

Activities:

1. Why The New $10? Students can read the blog on page 18 by United States Treasurer Rosie Rios to learn why a woman will be featured on the new $10 note. Discuss with the larger class or group. Who do you think should be featured?

2. #TheNew10. Lend your voice to the conversation about the new $10 note. Visit this page to share which woman you think should be featured on the new bill.

3. Research! Students can research an interesting woman from the American past and write an Op-Ed or short essay about why the woman of their choice should appear on the new $10 note. Students can search the hashtag #TheNew10 to see some of the women who have been recommended so far to spark ideas.

4. Follow the Story. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and his office will keep the public updated on the process of redesigning the $10 note and other currency. Follow the story here.