

The US Dollar!

Bill's World-Class English Class Conversation Kickstarter #45 (Version 2.1)



Let's talk about the strongest currency in world history, the US dollar!

I. Jefferson and Lincoln

Valuable Vocabulary (read aloud, cite the number of any word you don't know, and follow links for definitions):

1. circulation
2. Civil War
3. controversies
4. currency

5. declaration
6. emancipation
7. independence

8. legacy
9. proclamation
10. relatively
11. victor



You might already be familiar with first US President George Washington and the one-dollar bill, but you might not know that it's [Thomas Jefferson](#) and [Abraham Lincoln](#) on the two- and five-dollar bills, respectively. Jefferson was the first US Secretary of State, third US President and author of the Declaration of Independence, while Lincoln was the 16th President, signer of the [Emancipation Proclamation](#), and victor in the [Civil War](#).

1. Do you know of any [controversies surrounding Jefferson's legacy](#)? What do you know about Lincoln?
2. A relatively small number of two-dollar bills [are in circulation](#). Why do you think [that is](#)?

II. Hamilton and Jackson

Valuable Vocabulary (read aloud, cite the number of any word you don't know, and follow links for definitions):

1. Cherokee
2. genre
3. gutted

4. hip hop
5. ironic

6. musical
7. R & B
8. soul music



Alexander Hamilton, the first US Treasury Secretary, is one of only two non-Presidents on US paper currency (though, partly thanks to [the hit musical](#), he's more widely known than most Presidents). Andrew Jackson is the face of the twenty-dollar bill, ironic perhaps, given the fact that he [gutted the second Bank of the United States](#).

1. Have you [seen](#) the musical *Hamilton*? Can you believe it includes [hip hop](#), [R&B](#), [soul](#) and other genres?
2. Some members of the [Cherokee](#) tribe claim to refuse \$20 bills as change. Can you guess [why](#)?

III. Grant and Franklin

Valuable Vocabulary (read aloud, cite the number of any word you don't know, and follow links for definitions):

1. aphorism
2. astoundingly

3. denomination
4. naive

5. panic
6. swindled



Ulysses S. Grant appears on the face of a higher current denomination than any other President, which is appropriate considering his support of sound money. Founding father Benjamin Franklin, the author of aphorisms like “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,” is on the \$100 note, which as a result is sometimes referred to as a “Benjamin,” as in “It’s All About the Benjamins” by Puff Daddy.

1. Can you believe that \$1 bills can still be bleached and reprinted as 100s? How would you suggest making the US money supply more secure, if you were chair of the Federal Reserve?
2. Grant was also astoundingly naive about financial matters and was so swindled by his business partner that the failure of Grant & Ward set off the Panic of 1884. Who else do you think belongs on the \$50 bill?

IV. Wilson

Valuable Vocabulary (read aloud, cite the number of any word you don't know, and follow links for definitions):

1. complicated

2. illegal

3. terribly

4. therefore

5. transaction



The largest denomination of banknote ever issued by the Federal government is the \$100,000 bill. It was printed in 1934, and also has the most interesting history: it was never issued for public circulation (it was only meant for [transactions between branches of the Fed](#)), and therefore [it's illegal](#) for a private citizen to own this note.

1. What's the largest denomination of currency you've ever had on you? Can you say what it got you?

2. Wilson has perhaps the most complicated legacy of anyone to appear on a US note. Are you surprised to hear that he watched [The Birth of a Nation](#) in the White House and called it "[so terribly true](#)"?

V. *Wall Street* “Greed is Good” (1987)

Valuable Vocabulary (read aloud, cite the number of any word you don’t know, and follow links for definitions):

1. encapsulate

2. vein

The below clip perhaps encapsulates an entire decade (the 80s) in two minutes. Have you seen this movie?

Let’s watch the (in)famous “Greed is Good” speech from *Wall Street*!



1. Have you heard of the character Gordon Gekko? Can you name [movies in the same vein](#) as *Wall Street*?

2. The above speech was once [blamed by the Vatican](#) for helping to foster a “greed market” (instead of a “free market”) that led to the 2007-2008 financial crisis. Do you think this is a bit of a stretch?

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