

# Text structure, central idea, context clues

## Classwork

### Reading

► Read the selection and answer each question.

### Money in Early America

<sup>1</sup> Today our country's currency system—that is, our system of bills and coins—is well established. When we need to pay for something, we can use money printed by the U.S. government. But after early American colonists arrived from England and other countries, how did they pay for what they needed?

<sup>2</sup> At first, English colonists used silver coins from their homeland. But the British government believed that the colonies should be sending silver back home rather than taking it away. For this reason, Britain passed laws that prevented the export of silver coins. These coins soon became hard to find in the colonies.

<sup>3</sup> England also stopped the colonists from making their own coins, so money became scarce. This made it difficult for the colonists to do business. They began to barter for what they needed. The colonists used nails, lumber, farm products, and other things instead of money. They also turned to the wampum that many Native American tribes used for trade. Wampum were beads that were made out of shells.

<sup>4</sup> Colonists also began to rely on coins from countries other than England. A lot of these coins made their way to the colonies by way of trade. One of the most popular coins in colonial America was the Spanish milled dollar. It was also called a piece of eight. In order to make change, merchants sometimes divided these coins into small pieces called bits. Eight bits made one dollar. A quarter of a dollar became known as two bits, and half of a dollar was four bits. These coins were the beginning of what would one day be the U.S. dollar, half dollar, and quarter.

<sup>5</sup> Some colonists did not think Britain should have the power to control the use of coins in the Americas. They decided to make money in spite of British rules. Starting in 1652, people in Massachusetts produced a coin called the pine-tree shilling. The coin was named for the pine tree pictured on one side. Pines were used to make ship masts and were one of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's most important exports. The place where the coins were made in Massachusetts lasted only a short time. However, the making of coins in the colonies could still be considered a form of rebellion against British rule.

<sup>6</sup> After the colonies declared and then won their independence, the United States no longer had to follow British laws. The country started producing its own official coins in 1792. The number of coins made each year was not nearly enough to satisfy the needs of the people in America. Therefore, the Spanish milled dollar and other foreign coins remained in use. As late as 1830, about one-quarter of the coins in the United States were made in Spain.

<sup>7</sup> In 1857 Congress passed the Coinage Act. Earlier laws had allowed citizens to use coins from other countries. Congress revised those laws by passing the Coinage Act, which made it against the law to use foreign coins in the United States. Citizens still owned a lot of silver coins from Spain and other nations. The U.S Mint came up with a way to help remove these coins from use. It allowed people to exchange them for copper U.S. coins for the next two years. The Mint took in a lot of silver. Since silver was worth more than copper, the Mint profited. In fact, in 1858, the Mint used the silver to pay for all of its operating costs.

<sup>8</sup> Six years later the government passed the National Banking Act. This law created a banking system and set up a national currency. For the first time, the United States had a single form of currency that everybody used. The government began to offer paper money called “greenbacks.” Having a national currency made it simpler for people to pay for the goods they needed.

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**1** What effect did British laws about coins have on the American colonies?

- A They forced the colonists to use only paper money.
- B They made it difficult for the colonists to find money.
- C They kept the colonists from using any foreign money.
- D They prevented the colonists from using money for business.

**2** What is the central idea of paragraph 3?

- A Colonists were unhappy with English laws.
- B England wanted to run businesses in the colonies.
- C Colonists found many different ways to buy things.
- D Native Americans had the same money as the colonists.

3 Read the sentence from paragraph 5.

*However, the making of coins in the colonies could still be considered a form of rebellion against British rule.*

What is the meaning of rebellion as it is used above?

- (A) not being obedient
- (B) creating new laws
- (C) not agreeing with something
- (D) separating two different groups

4 The use of what type of early money led to the current system of dollars, half dollars, and quarters?

- (A) wampum
- (B) British coins
- (C) pine-tree shillings
- (D) Spanish milled dollar

5 Read the sentences from paragraph 7.

*Earlier laws had allowed citizens to use coins from other countries. Congress revised those laws by passing the Coinage Act, which made it against the law to use foreign coins in the United States.*

Think about the Latin root *vis*. What is the meaning of revised as it is used above?

- (A) ignored
- (B) changed
- (C) prepared
- (D) considered

