MADE WITH LITTLE STORYBOOK

Why Were Shells Once Money?

Visual lesson



Is this a toy?

On a park bench, Kai finds something glossy at the bottom of Grandma Rosa's bag. It is a small, smooth shell. "Is this a toy?" he asks. Grandma Rosa's eyes twinkle. "Long ago, this was money!"





littlestorybook.ai

The shell island

Grandma Rosa lifts the lid of her box. Pop! A sunny beach unfolds around them. Long ago, people here gathered these little shells, called cowries, and sent them across the sea. In markets from Africa to India to China, cowries were used as money.

Shell or banana?

Why shells? Kai has an idea. He holds a shell in one hand and a banana in the other. Which one would make better money?

> TALK ABOUT IT
> Which one will still be good money next week?





Shells last

A week later, the banana is brown and squishy. Yuck! But the shell is still smooth and shiny. Shells last a long, long time, so people could keep them and spend them later.

A cord of shells

In the market, people thread cowries on a cord to carry them. Kai wears a cord like a necklace and jingles it. A rice seller smiles and holds out her hand: shells can buy rice, cloth and fish.





Money that grows on trees

Far away in old Mexico, people paid with something else that was small and precious: cacao beans, the beans that chocolate is made from!

TALK ABOUT IT

Can you find the cacao beans?

Saving up

Pop! They are home again. Kai still wants the red kite from Grandma Rosa's shop, but he only has a few coins. So he drops them in his jar and waits, and saves. Then his cowrie shell goes into the box, right next to the tiny clay pot.



Check your wonder

1 **Why were shells good money?**

A. They stay hard and shiny for a long time

B. They are big and heavy

2 **What did people in old Mexico use as money?**

A. Cacao beans

B. Red tomatoes

3 **Kai wants the kite but doesn't have enough. What does he do?**

A. Saves his coins and waits

B. Pays with his old shell

ANSWERS 1-A 2-A 3-A

1. Yes! Shells last, so people could keep them and spend them later. 2. That's right, the beans that chocolate is made from! 3. Yes! Sometimes we wait and save up.

THE END

Visual lesson



Put your child in this story

Free to try. Scan the code or visit

littlestorybook.ai/learn/en/why-were-shells-once-money-for-kids

LITTLE STORYBOOK

littlestorybook.ai