

Secretary of the Treasury: Department of Treasury

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like a Secretary of the Treasury and be in charge of the country's money for a day!

Activity

Step 1: Background on Secretary of the Treasury (5 minutes)

- Show [Video: Secretary of the Treasury](#).
- Explain to students that the Secretary of the Treasury is in charge of managing the nation's money. Show [Handout: Responsibilities of the Secretary of the Treasury](#). Discuss how the Secretary is helped by different departments. One department collects taxes. Another department creates designs for our money. The Secretary's job is to make sure that all these duties are carried out.
- Have students brainstorm what would happen if the Secretary of Treasury didn't manage our country's money (e.g., there wouldn't be anyone in charge of keeping track of the country's budget, paper currency could be more easily counterfeited because designs do not change, there wouldn't be anyone paying attention to the money that the country has lent out or borrowed from other countries).

Step 2: Activity Set Up (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will pretend they are the Secretary of Treasury. They will be in charge of two important jobs! Show [Handout: Being the Secretary of Treasury](#). As a class, read through the handout.
- Teacher note: students can work in pairs or individually during the activity.

Step 3: Designing a Bank Note (15 minutes)

- Explain that one of the duties of the Secretary of the Treasury is to help decide on designs for the country's currency. Show [Handout: What is on a Banknote?](#)
- Explain to students that bank notes are different denominations of dollar bills. A denomination is a value given to a bank note. For example, one dollar, five dollar, ten dollar and twenty dollar bills are all different denominations.
- Tip: Get out dollar bills to show students. Have students make observations about different features on the bills. Examples include:
 - Serial numbers
 - Amount on the bill
 - National symbols
 - Words (Federal Reserve Note, United States of America, Secretary of Treasury)
 - Pictures (White House, flag, people)
 - Great Seal of the United States (only on the one dollar bill)
 - If students need help identifying different features on a bill, show [Video: Taking a Close Look at a Bill](#).
- As a class, discuss why there are so many details on each bill. Discuss how the government designs bills in a way that both honors specific parts of our country's history and makes the bills harder to copy.
- Explain to students that they will design their own banknote. Provide students with [Handout: Designing a Banknote](#).

Please contact Allison Bischoff, Director of Customer Service, at allison@rozzylearningcompany.com or 314-272-2560 with questions.

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- Have students design their banknotes. As students are working, ask the following:
 - Why does our money have pictures of the presidents or other famous people?
 - What kinds of symbols, people or places will you add to your design?
 - What could happen if bills did not have so many details on them? (they would be easier to copy)

Step 4: Lending and Borrowing Money (10 minutes)

- Next, explain to students that the secretary of the treasury is also responsible for deciding whether or not to loan money to other countries that are asking for a loan.
- Explain to students that they will get to be the secretary of the treasury and decide whether or not they would loan money to three countries.
- Provide each student with [Handout: Yes or No](#) and have students cut the handout in half.
 - Teacher Note: If you are short on time, students can just give you a thumbs up or thumbs down to report their answers.
- Explain to students that you (the teacher) will read off three different loan scenarios. Once the scenario has been read, students should hold up the sign of the answer (yes or no) they would give to the country asking for a loan. Then, have a class discussion about why students chose to loan or not loan the country money.
- Read the loan scenario for “Country A” on from [Handout: Loan Scenarios](#). Once you have finished reading, ask students to hold up either the “yes” or “no” sign they cut out earlier based on whether or not they would loan the money.
- Count up all of the yes answers and all of the no answers. Write the totals on the board. As at least one student from each side to explain why they chose their answer.
 - Extra time? Allow students to try and convince their classmates to change their answers. See if you can reach 100% consensus.
- Repeat the steps with scenarios B and C on the handout.

Step 5: Concluding Discussion (5 minutes)

- Have a concluding discussion about the history and the purpose of the Department of the Treasury.
 - Discuss how the Founding Fathers created the Department of Treasury so that they government would have a department that handles the country’s money.
 - Discuss how Alexander Hamilton was the country’s first Secretary of the Treasury under President George Washington. Hamilton wanted the Treasury Department to help the president with economic decisions for the nation.
 - Ask students to brainstorm how our country’s history could have been different if the Founding Fathers didn’t create the Department of Treasury.
- Extra Time? Go to <https://www.uscurrency.gov/denominations>. This website talks about different security features that are on each bill to prevent bills from being easily copied.

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Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Secretary of the Treasury
- Handout: Responsibilities of the Secretary of the Treasury
- Handout: Being the Secretary of Treasury
- Handout: What is on a Banknote?
- Video: Taking a Close Look at a Bill
- Handout: Designing a Banknote
- Handout: Yes or NO
- Handout: Loan Scenarios

Not Provided Online:

- Art Supplies
- Optional: Tablet or Computer

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