



# Activity 1

## These Symbols Are Telling Us Something...

In *National Treasure*, the new film that uncovers clues to America's past, a young Benjamin Franklin Gates watches his grandfather take a one-dollar bill from his pocket. "These symbols are telling us something," his grandfather says, pointing to the Great Seal of the United States on the back of the bill. For Ben, the symbols are clues to a real treasure hidden during the American Revolution. But they are clues



Photo by Robert Zuckerman © Walt Disney Pictures

to American history as well. In this activity, you will find out how important these symbols actually are.



### PART ONE Ancient Symbols

In *National Treasure*, Ben Gates searches for a treasure that has been passed down by many ancient civilizations. You can find symbols of these ancient treasure keepers in the Great Seal on a dollar bill. Look for the symbols named below and circle each one on this picture of a dollar bill. Then unscramble the words to find out which ancient civilization each symbol represents.

| Symbol            | Civilization           |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Pyramid        | Ancient PEGYT _____    |
| 2. Star of David  | Ancient RAE LIS _____  |
| 3. Roman Numerals | Ancient MEOR _____     |
| 4. Shield         | Medieval HTINKGS _____ |

Each of these ancient civilizations helped to form America's ideals and values. Look up information about them on the Internet or in books.





## PART TWO Hidden Symbols

In **National Treasure**, Ben finds many clues leading back to 1776. That's when the original thirteen colonies united to declare their independence from Great Britain. Almost like a photograph, the Great Seal captures that moment in time. See if you can find these clues about 1776 in the Great Seal.

1. How many rows of stone make up the pyramid? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many letters are in the motto above the pyramid? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many stars are in the starburst above the eagle? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many leaves are on the olive branch in the eagle's right claw? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many arrows are in the eagle's left claw? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many stripes are on the eagle's shield? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many letters are in the motto on the banner in the eagle's beak? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you explain how these clues take us back to 1776? What do they remind us about from that year? What do they tell us about our nation?

You can learn more about the symbols on the dollar bill at the **U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing** website: [www.moneyfactory.com/document.cfm/18/120](http://www.moneyfactory.com/document.cfm/18/120).

## PART THREE Symbols for a New Age

Look closely at the symbols on the dollar bill. Do you see that the pyramid is unfinished? That's because America is always aiming higher. Our history is not finished. Now look at the Latin motto below the pyramid—**NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM**. That means "a new order of the ages." It's a reminder that the United States builds on the past to become an even greater nation in the future.

Now it's your turn to build on the past by designing a new dollar bill. Think about symbols that are important to Americans today. Then use your ideas to draw a new dollar bill in the space below. You can see how the design of American money has changed over the years at the **Bureau of Engraving and Printing** website: [www.moneyfactory.com](http://www.moneyfactory.com).

## DESIGN YOUR OWN DOLLAR BILL!



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## YOUR CLUE to the TREASURE

Ready for more historical detective work? Try the games section at the **National Treasure** website: [www.NationalTreasure.com](http://www.NationalTreasure.com). If you can find all thirteen thirteens on the back of a dollar bill, you're on your way to collecting real digital treasure. Good luck!