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A Hot Topic

Cryptocurrency has been in the news. People trade millions of “coins” every day. These coins are a kind of money. But they are not like traditional cash. What makes so many people want them?

Digital Cash

Crypto is short for “cryptography.” This is a code. It keeps data hidden. Currency is money. Cryptocurrency is a type of **digital cash**. It hides who uses it.



FAST FACT: Gold was found in California in 1848. People rushed there from all over the world. About 300,000 were mining gold by 1855. The gold ran out five years later.

Digital cash is a kind of money. People buy things with it. They can invest in it too. But there are key differences. Cash is physical. People can hold it in their hands. Countries control it. Digital cash is not physical. Records are only online. No country controls it. Banks do not either. People do.

Some say it is like gold. This is because people mine for it. There is a kind of frenzy about it too. Many hope to get rich. It is like the Gold Rush of the 1850s.

Fraud or the Future?

There are people who like digital cash a lot. They think this is the money of the future. To them, it is safe and private. Some have made money with it.

Others do not trust digital cash. They say it is a fad. The coins have no real value. Some even call it a **fraud**. Warren Buffett is a money expert. He said digital cash “. . . will come to a bad ending.” He swore he would never buy it.



FAST FACT: Bitcoin is the most well-known digital cash. There are many others. All use the same basic system.

No one knows what the future will bring. But digital cash may play a big part. It is changing how people think of money.

YOUNG MILLIONAIRE

Erik Finman turned 12. His grandmother gave him a gift of \$1,000. He used the money to buy his first bitcoin. This was in 2011. Over time, Finman bought more. By the time Finman turned 19, he owned 401 bitcoins and was a millionaire. Finman tells young people to buy digital cash. But he also gives advice. Only invest what you are willing to lose. Experts give this advice too. Digital cash has shot up in price, and prices can sink just as fast.

Money Matters

People did not always use money. They traded. A person might have given someone a cow. They may have gotten corn in return. This changed over time.



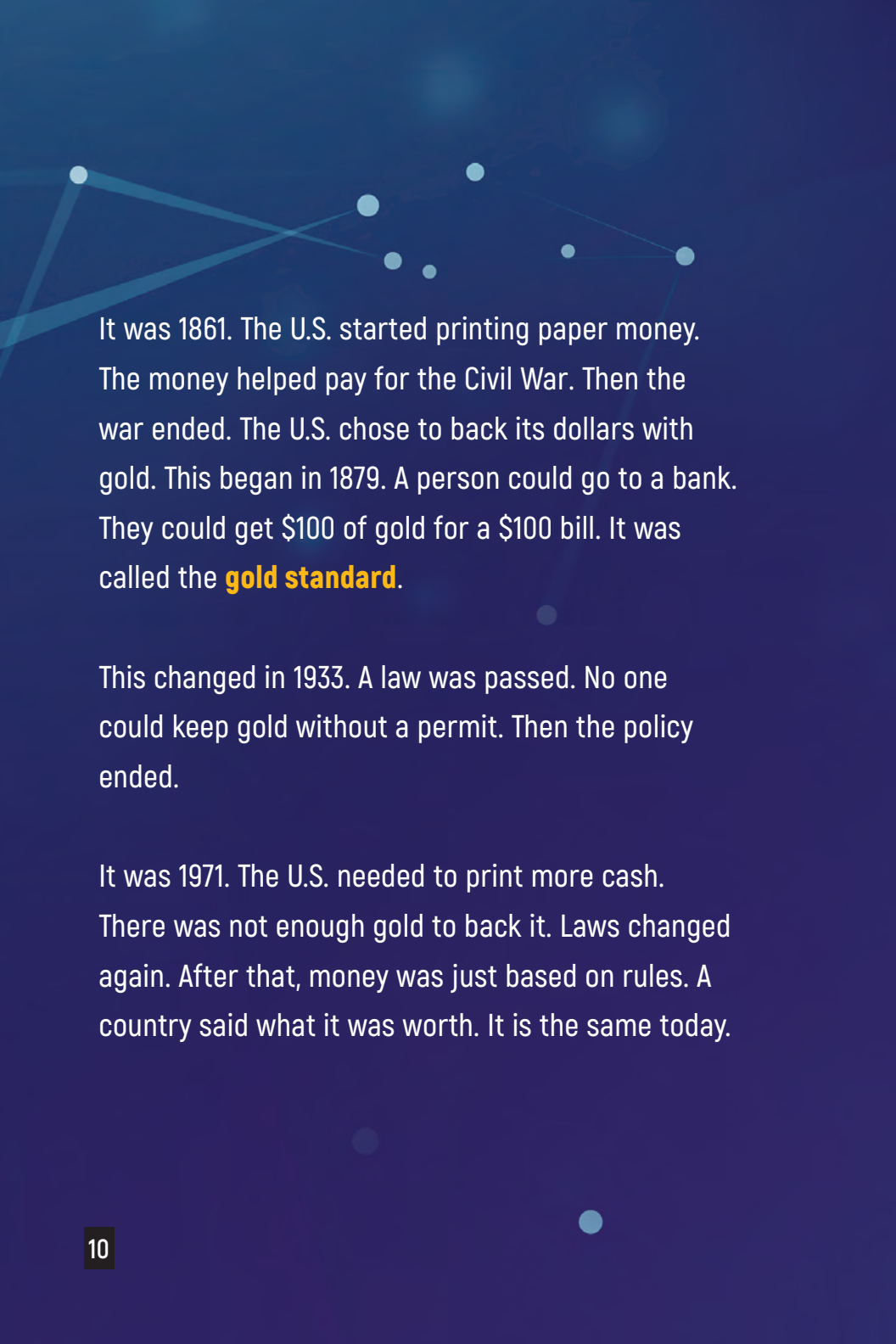
The System Changes

It was 3,000 years ago. Metal coins came into use. They were worth the metal they were made of. Gold coins were common.

This system worked for thousands of years. Then something changed. Countries needed to pay for wars. There was not enough gold. They had to find another way. Paper money came into use. These bills were a kind of promise. Countries said the bills had value. People could use them like coins. But they could not trade bills for gold. That left more gold for the country to use.



FAST FACT: Some pictures show digital coins. But the coins are not real. They only exist online.



It was 1861. The U.S. started printing paper money. The money helped pay for the Civil War. Then the war ended. The U.S. chose to back its dollars with gold. This began in 1879. A person could go to a bank. They could get \$100 of gold for a \$100 bill. It was called the **gold standard**.

This changed in 1933. A law was passed. No one could keep gold without a permit. Then the policy ended.

It was 1971. The U.S. needed to print more cash. There was not enough gold to back it. Laws changed again. After that, money was just based on rules. A country said what it was worth. It is the same today.