

Money Town at Childrenâ??s Museum Singapore: What You Can Learn About Money

Description

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A bank, a gold-panning station and a place to print money. Money Town at Childrenâ??s Museum Singapore had my attention straight away. This was going to be rather more interesting than a lesson about keeping coins in a piggy bank.

I visited the Coleman Street museum on Friday, 13 November 2026, ahead of the exhibitionâ??s public opening on 14 November. Iâ??m taking you through what caught my eye, with the practical visiting details checked against the museumâ??s website.

The exhibition is primarily designed for children aged 5 to 9. Its three areas, Heritage Quarter, Downtown and Money Barn, approach money through objects, games and choices. UOB Foundation is the Presenting Partner. You can read the museumâ??s official exhibition guide here.

Hello, Ready, Start

I started with the three onboarding booths labelled Hello, Ready and Start. They give the visit a clear starting point before children head off to the activities. The exhibitionâ??s welcome panel asks visitors to find their Money Town character at these stations.

I like that the welcome sign puts earning, saving, investing, spending and donating together. There is more to do with money than accumulate it. Though I suspect I would need a little supervision at the spending part.


HELLO!
READY?
START!



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A clear starting point. I could use one of these for my own spending habits.

Money before it fitted in a wallet

The Heritage Quarter was the part that made me slow down. The cases include animal-shaped tin money, tool-shaped money, coins, jewellery and a miniature cannon. Money has taken some wonderfully awkward forms.

One display brings together tin animals including tortoises, a fish and an elephant. Another groups spade and knife forms under tool-shaped money. Beside them are coins small enough to make you lean in for a better look.

These are useful objects for a conversation with a child. What makes something money? Does it have to be round? If both people agree an object has value, what changes when one of them disagrees? I would start with those questions before trying to explain anything more complicated.

I also came across a recreated office setting, a world map and a case about banknotes used by Chettiars. There is plenty here to connect the games with the history of trade and exchange.

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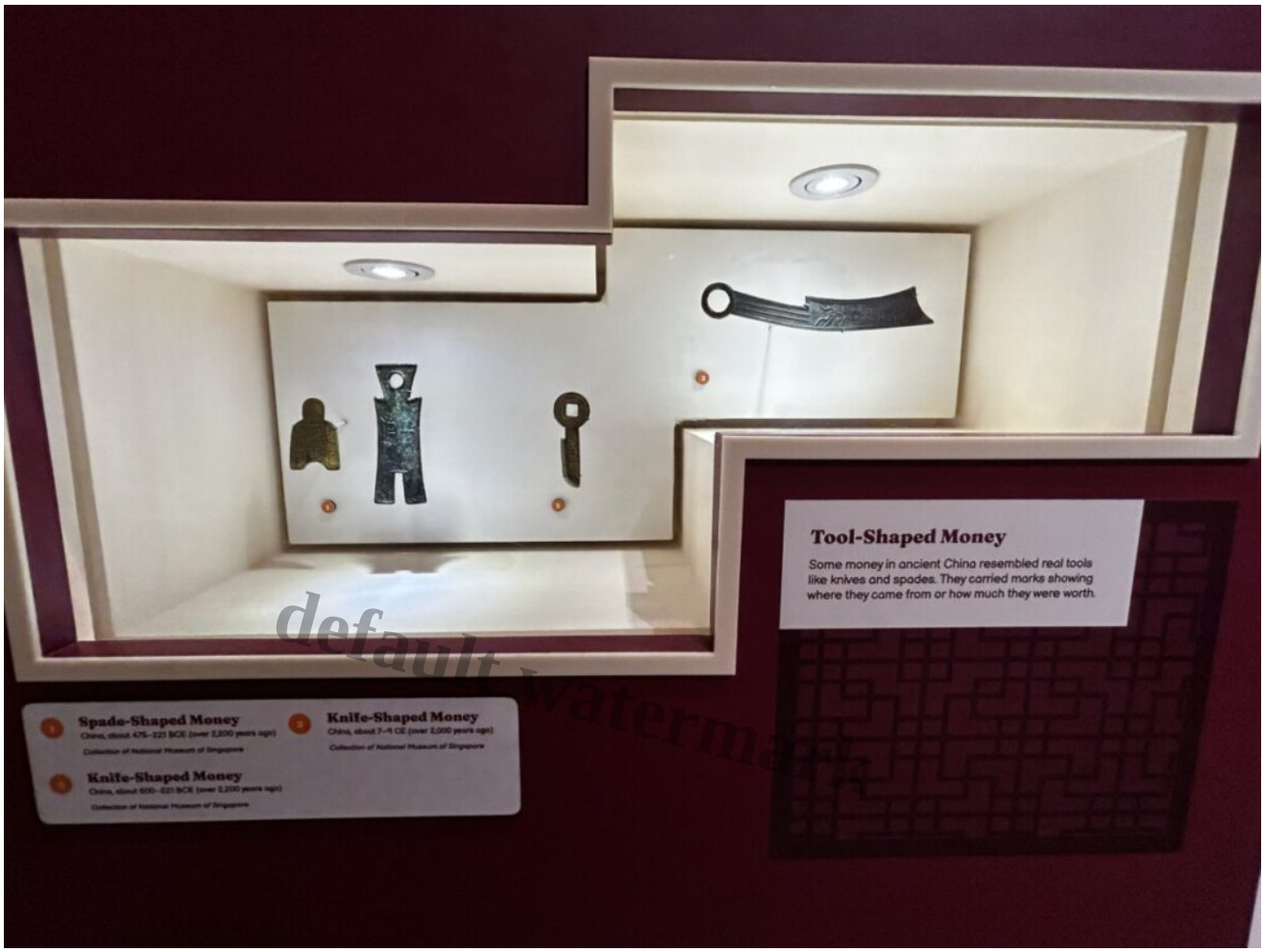

Money in Unusual Shapes
Money did not always look like coins! Across Southeast Asia, metal money came in surprising shapes such as hats, rings, bells, tools, and even miniature cannons. Some were used for payments, while others were also symbols of wealth and importance.
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Anima
Tin Mo


Learn Together
Do
Find the oldest coin and where it comes from.
Discover the most unusual object used as money.
Count how many animals you can spot.
Ask
Why did people use different things as money?
What makes something valuable?
If anything could be money, what would you choose?
WHAT IS MONEY?
Money can be anything people agree is valuable.
Money helps us buy things, save for later and understand what things are worth.
People around the world have used all kinds of things as money — from shells and animals to plants and stones!
Over 2,500 years ago, people in what is now Turkey began making coins from metal. Coins had standard weights and values, making them easier to count and trade. Later, paper money was invented in China. It was lighter and easier to carry in large amounts.
Today, money can even be digital, allowing us to pay quickly and easily using phones, watches and computers!
A buck is a male deer like me! Deer skins were once traded for things in North America. That's likely why dollars are called 'bucks'!



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1
Bar-Shaped Sycee
China, 1900–1939
Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum
2
Saddle-Shaped Sycee
China, 1904–1908
Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum
3
Shoe-Shaped Sycee
China, early 1900s
Collection of National Museum of Singapore

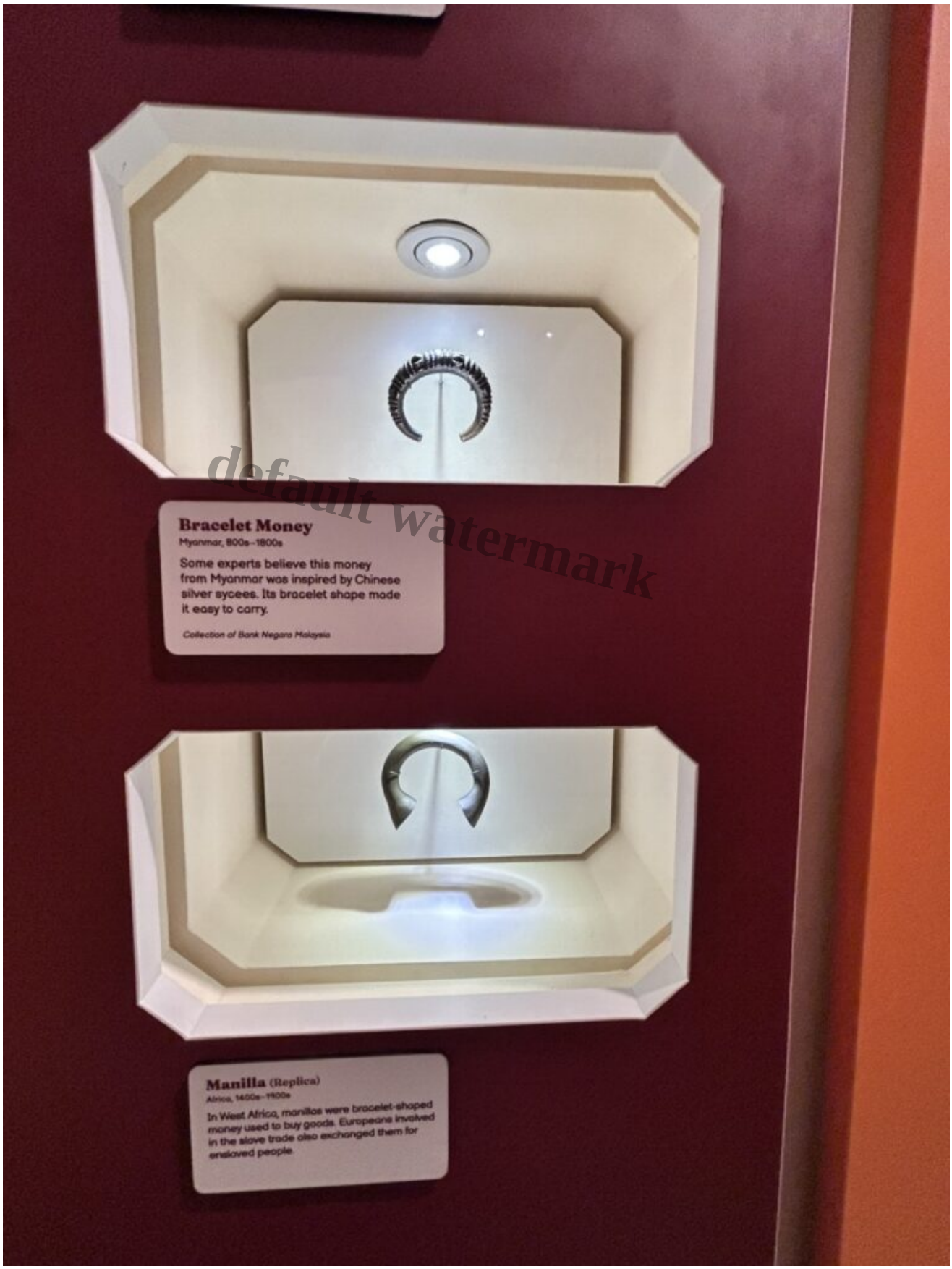

Tool-Shaped Money
Some money in ancient China resembled real tools like knives and spades. They carried marks showing where they came from or how much they were worth.
Spade-Shaped Money
Knife-Shaped Money
Knife-Shaped Money



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Gold Barter Rings (Enlarged Replica)
The Philippines, 900s–1200s
In the Philippines, gold rings were used to trade for goods. Some could also be worn as earrings.


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Try wearing this!


WHO ARE THE CHETTIARS?



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Banknotes Used by Chettiars
Chettiars used banknotes like these when lending money and collecting repayments. As Singapore's money changed over time, the notes they used changed too.
Look closely! What differences between the notes can you spot?
Did You Know?
Malayan tigers once roamed Singapore's jungles and even appeared on local banknotes. By the 1930s, they had been hunted to extinction here.
Straits Settlements Dollars
Malayan Dollars
Banana Notes
Malaya and British Borneo Dollars
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Tortoise-Shaped Tin Money
Malaysia, 1700s
Collection of National Museum of Singapore
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Fish-Shaped Tin Money
Malaysia, 1700s
Collection of National Museum of Singapore
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My wallet is small enough already. I am grateful nobody expects me to fit an elephant in it.

The River of Gold gets everyone leaning in

The River of Gold has a long trough, pans and a bright yellow backdrop. Children and adults were bent over their pans, examining what they had collected. I found this a much more engaging way to introduce the value of gold than a panel of explanation.

What caught my attention was the way adults were joining in alongside the children. The activity gives them something to do together and something concrete to talk about afterwards. Did finding a little take more work than expected? What would make a find worth keeping?


RIVER OF GOLD
How to Pan for Gol


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Everyone is looking for gold. At least this search comes with its own pan.

Coins, tools and places to put the savings

Nearby, I found historical tools and containers alongside a circular coin activity table where children were getting hands-on. There are close-up displays to inspect and hands-on stations to try.

I would let the children set the pace here. There is no need to turn every case into a quiz. An unusual object can be enough to start a question, and the answer on the label is there when they want it.




Spot the Tools!


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Unfinished Silver Bowl


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Clay Money Pots




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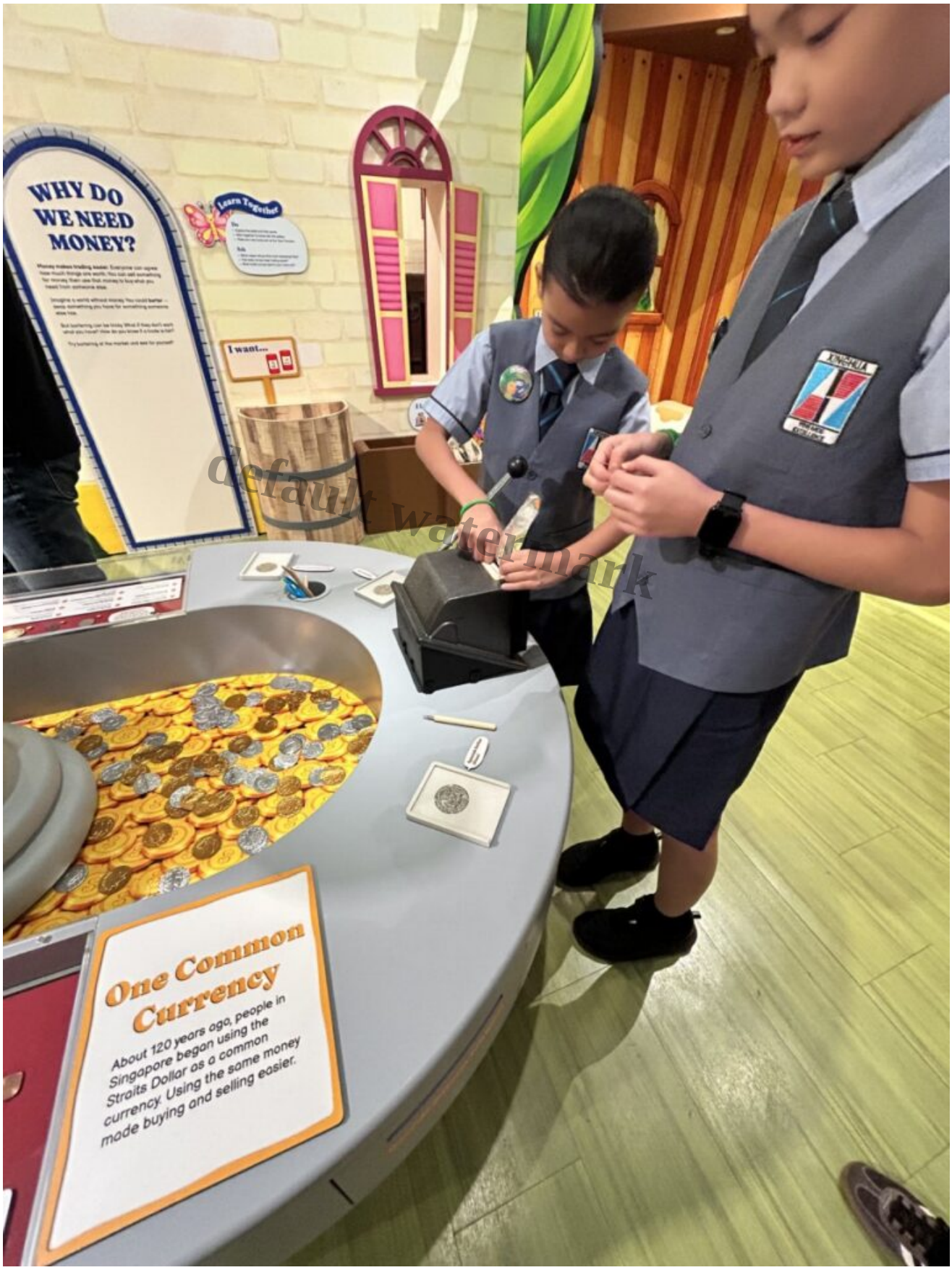

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Spot the Tools!
Make Your Own Lucky Coin!
Create a lucky coin inspired by coins once used in Singapore.
How to play:
1 Take a piece of foil.
2 Place it over a coin design and rub.
3 Use the coin cutter to cut out your coin.
4 Toss your coin into the fountain and make a wish!
Many Coins, Many Values
British Trade Dollar



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Plenty to examine before anyone declares themselves the household treasurer.

A bank, a savings nursery and a loan race

Downtown takes the subject into more familiar territory. There are activities for supermarket budgeting, printing Money Town Dollars, growing savings, investing and racing to repay loans.

The Bank of Money Town caught my eye with an investing game that uses a Pineapple Index, complete with buy and sell options. The nursery presents savings through a screen filled with growing trees.

There is also a loan activity with a large wheel and a moving game on the screen. I appreciate the chance to introduce borrowing as something that has to be paid back. I like how the activity makes repayment something children have to work at, rather than just a word on a panel.

I would use these activities to ask what happened after a choice, rather than concentrate on who ended with the biggest number. What did you keep? What did you spend? Would you try something different next time?

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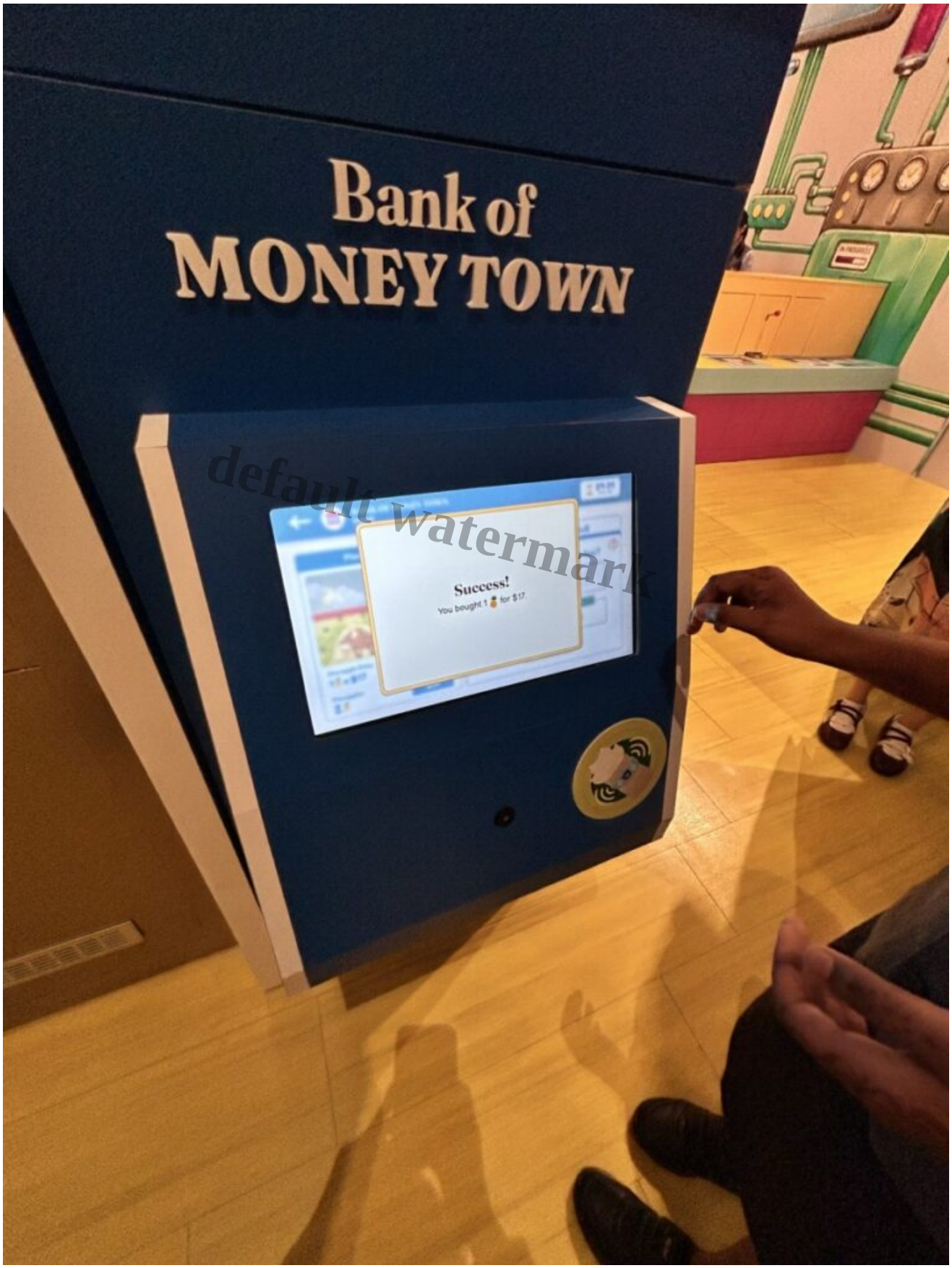

Savings Nursery
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Bank of
MONEY TOWN
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Pineapple Index
Sell
$0
$3



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Savings Nursery
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The Pineapple Index is considerably more appealing to look at than my usual banking screen.

The suspicious phone call has its own corner

The telephone station was another one that caught my attention, with a screen, answer buttons and a jail backdrop beside it. The museumâ??s scam-awareness activity turns a suspicious approach into something children can practise responding to.

One screen instructs the player to hang up the phone to keep playing. I liked that small design detail: children handle a real receiver as part of the screen activity. The response becomes an action, rather than just something to read.

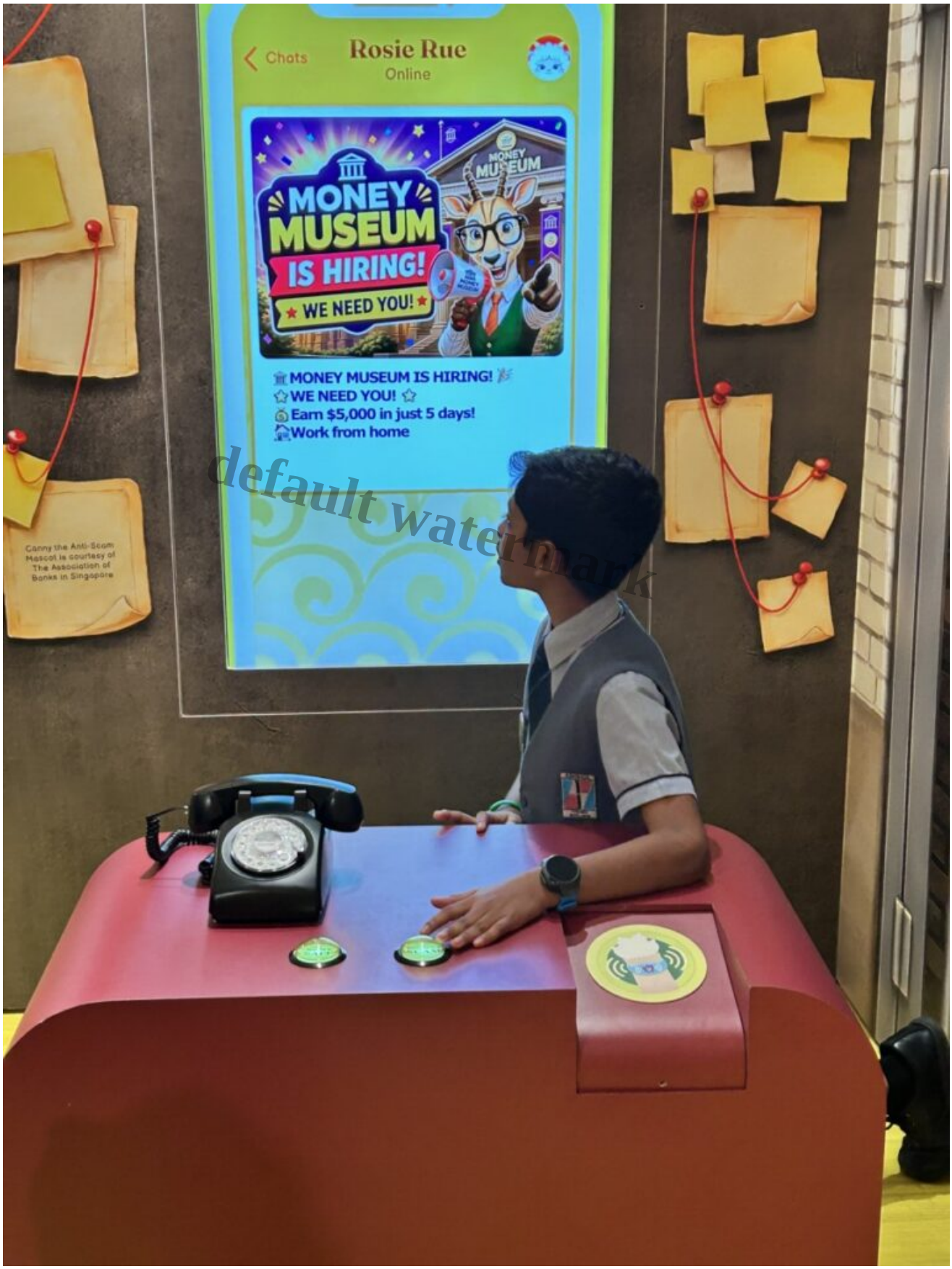
I would carry the conversation home from here. If someone offers a prize or asks for information, who can you check with before doing anything? There is no need to make the subject frightening to make that pause useful.

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JAIL
TAP
E-WALLET



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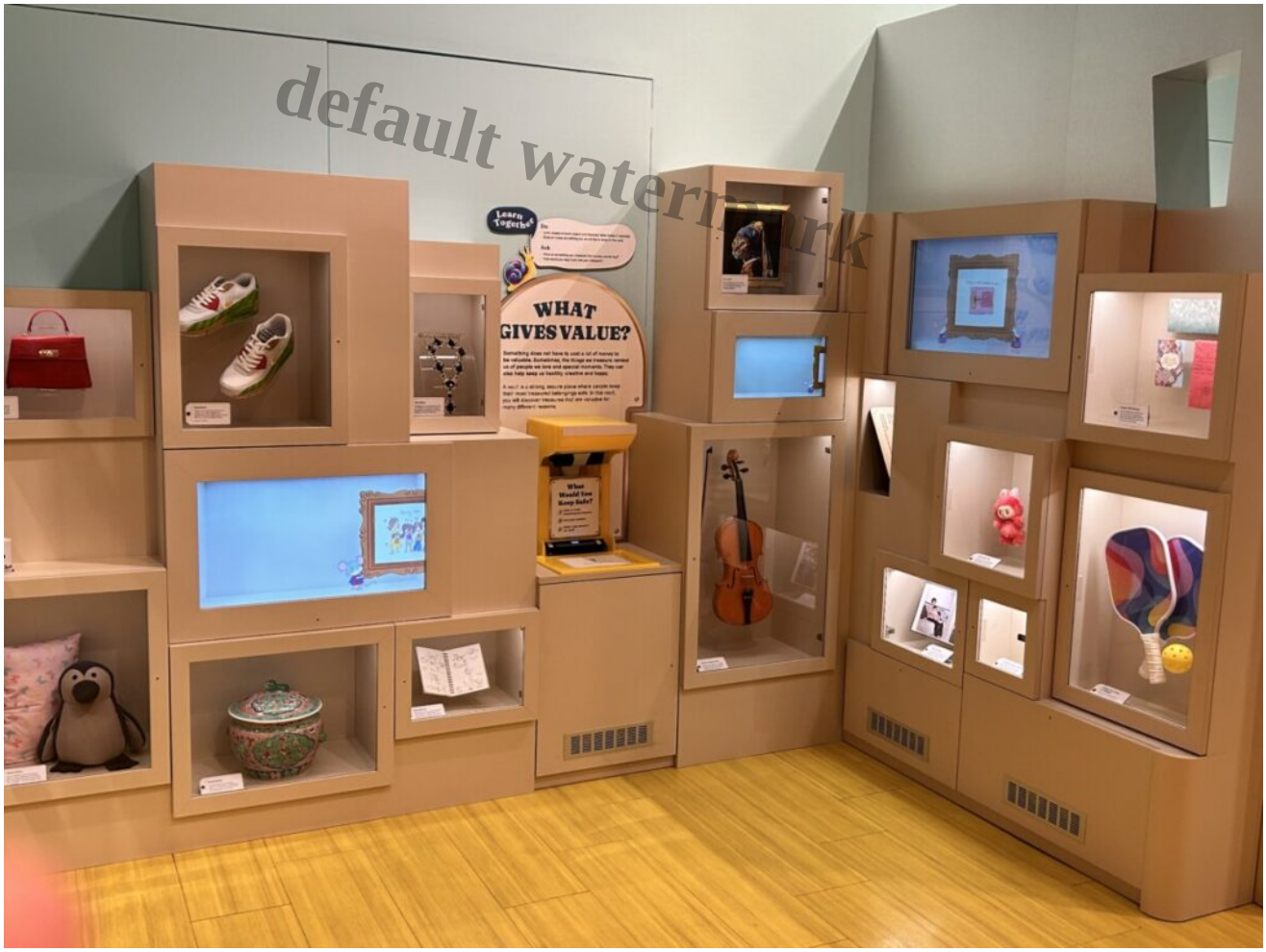
A telephone call you can practise ending. A useful skill at any age.

What would you keep safe?

The display asking what gives value was another one that held my attention. It brings together a camera, trading cards, festive envelopes, collectible toys and other possessions. Not everything meaningful has the same meaning to everyone.

A nearby safe has three dials to turn and a large handle. There is also a lift-the-gold-bar challenge. Those two activities sit neatly with the bigger question: what is valuable, and why do we want to protect it?

A favourite toy may be a much better starting point for that conversation than its shop price. I would be interested to hear what children choose, especially when the adults would choose something completely different.




Collectible Toys
Limited-edition toys can become very valuable. When only a small number are made, collectors are excited to find and keep them.
Collection of Emmanuel Then



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Canon
AE-1
Camera
A camera captures special moments and memories. Some cameras are also valuable because they are rare, old or made by famous brands.


Can You Crack the Safe?
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Lift the Gold Bar!
Many countries and investors own gold bars as a way to store wealth. To keep them safe, the bars are locked inside vaults.
Real gold bars are at least 99.5% pure gold and come in standard sizes. The gold bar here is an 8-kg replica.
Can you lift it?
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The things we keep are not always the things with the largest price tags.

Would I put it on the family outing list?

Yes, particularly for children who enjoy moving between objects and activities. There is enough variety to start several different conversations about money without making the visit feel like a worksheet.

The museum also has Money Barn for children aged 48 months and below, with sorting, counting, matching and sensory play. My suggestion would be to pick a few activities to explore properly and leave room for the childâ??s questions. The museum provides pre-visit and post-visit parental guides if you want help keeping the conversation going afterwards.

Official Details

Money Town: Make It Count! at Childrenâ??s Museum Singapore
Address: 23-B Coleman Street, Singapore 179807.
Public opening: 14 November 2026.
Best-fit ages: 5 to 9. The museum welcomes children aged 12 and under; Money Barn is for children aged 48 months and below.

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Opening hours and booking
Tuesday to Sunday, 9am to 5.45pm. Closed on Mondays and from 12.45pm to 2pm daily for cleaning.
Entry slots: 9am, 11am, 2pm and 4pm. Each visit lasts 1 hour 45 minutes from the start of the booked slot.
Advance booking is strongly encouraged. Tickets open up to 30 days ahead; walk-ins depend on availability.

General admission
Singapore citizens and permanent residents: free for children and adults.
Foreign residents and tourists: S$10 per child, S$15 per adult, or S$40 for 2 adults and 2 children, before prevailing GST. At 9% GST, these are S$10.90, S$16.35 and S$43.60 respectively.
Check eligibility, admission conditions and availability on the official booking page before visiting.

Getting there
The museum lists an approximately 8-minute walk from City Hall, Clarke Quay and Bras Basah MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) stations. Nearby parking options include Funan, Capitol Piazza, Grand Park City Hall, Peninsula Excelsior Hotel and the Peranakan Museum. Check the selected car parkâ??s current rates before driving.

Official visitor information | Book museum tickets | Accessibility information
Instagram: @ilovecmsg

Which activity would your child head for first: the gold, the bank or the safe? I would like to hear their choice.

Date Created
15/11/2026
Author
willietan