



Name _____

Ben Franklin

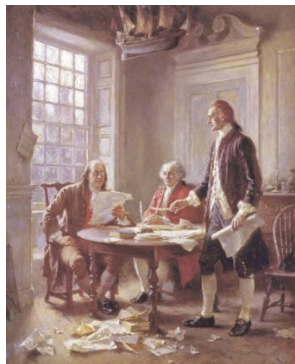
1706 – 1790

Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was the youngest of 13 children and entered school at the age of 8. Benjamin did very well in reading and writing but had great difficulty in mathematics and was asked to leave school. Since Benjamin did not want to become a soap and candle maker like his father, Josiah, Benjamin became an apprentice in his brother James' print shop. When James established his own newspaper, *New England Courant* in 1721, Benjamin secretly wrote several letters under the name, Silence Dogood. He slipped them into the editor's office without anyone's knowledge. The public enjoyed reading the letters and the *New England Courant* continued to publish them until Dogood's true identity was revealed. When Benjamin's secret was discovered, he decided to move to Philadelphia where he continued to work in print shops. He eventually took over the *Pennsylvania Gazette* newspaper. He authored many articles and even published an almanac called *Poor Richard's Almanac* under the name Richard Saunders. His almanac contained wise sayings such as "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise" and "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Benjamin married Deborah Read and they raised five children.

In 1737 Benjamin was appointed Postmaster General. He arranged mail service to and from major cities in the New England colonies and Canada as well. He worked on several ideas to help make daily life in Philadelphia better. He created a city tax to fund the first volunteer fire department, Union Fire Co. He arranged the purchase of hooks and ladders and also began the first fire insurance company in 1752. He chartered the Academy of Pennsylvania, currently renamed the University of Pennsylvania. He developed the Franklin stove in 1748, which was a safe and more efficient way to heat homes.

In 1748 Benjamin retired from the printing business to concentrate on his scientific experiments. He never had any formal scientific training, but his own curiosity led to the invention of several items that are still used today. Ben believed that lightning was a natural form of electricity and could be channeled for many uses. He developed the lightning rod and was able to conduct electricity from a bolt of lightning using a kite, a key and silk fabric in the famous experiment of 1752. He studied weather patterns across the United States. He created the odometer, bifocals, the catheter, and the Glass Armonica, which was a popular instrument used by Mozart and Beethoven. Benjamin became world renown for his experiments and inventions. He received many awards and honorary degrees from various universities and scientific organizations.

He wrote many articles and gave speeches explaining how he thought the colonies could gain their independence from England. In 1775, Benjamin was chosen to represent Pennsylvania in the 2nd Continental Congress. He was asked to continue his role as Postmaster General and to act as Chairman of the Safety Committee. Soon after, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin were called upon to draft the *Declaration of Independence*. It was adopted by the 2nd Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. Benjamin was disappointed that the eagle was chosen to be the symbol of the new nation and not the turkey as he had suggested. Benjamin was one of five American Representatives at the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which settled any remaining differences between England and the United States.



Benjamin was asked to stay in France to serve as the United States Ambassador. In 1785, Thomas Jefferson took Benjamin's place as Ambassador. Benjamin became ill and he wanted to see the new nation and his home city of Philadelphia once again before his death. Benjamin, now needing to be carried in a sedan chair, was asked to act as delegate from Pennsylvania during the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and help draft *The Constitution of the United States*.

Benjamin Franklin died on April 17, 1790 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His funeral was on April 21, 1790 and was attended by nearly 20,000 people. France and England held a national period of mourning in his honor. In spite of his fame and accomplishments, Benjamin Franklin lived and dressed simply. He only thought of himself as a common man.

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Discussion Questions:

Answer the following questions using the passage above

1. What career path did Benjamin follow? Did Benjamin have only one interest in life?
2. Name some of the inventions that Benjamin developed. Which do you feel was the most valuable and why?
3. Benjamin was asked to help write what important document with Thomas Jefferson and John Adams? Why do you think he was chosen for this responsibility?
4. What national symbol did Franklin propose?
5. While Benjamin served as a delegate for the Constitutional Convention, what other important document did he help write?

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1706 – 1790

Discussion Questions:

Answer the following questions using the passage above

1. What career path did Benjamin follow? Did Benjamin have only one interest in life?

A) *He became a printer as well as scientist, inventor, writer and politician*

2. Name some of the inventions that Benjamin developed. Which do you feel was the most valuable and why?

A) *Glass Armonica, odometer and bifocals*

3. Benjamin was asked to help write what important document with Thomas Jefferson and John Adams? Why do you think he was chosen for this responsibility?

A) *Franklin was an accomplished writer with a great reputation and a wealth of experience. He also had a relationship with many of the leaders in England.*

4. What national symbol did Franklin propose?

A) *The turkey*

5. While Benjamin served as a delegate for the Constitutional Convention, what other important document did he help write?

A) *Declaration of Independence with Thomas Jefferson and John Adams*