

Benjamin Franklin Carousel

A. Background Information

1. What was Benjamin Franklin's childhood like?
2. What kind of family did he come from?
3. What were some of Franklin's accomplishments?

B. Benjamin Franklin: Patriot

1. What was Benjamin Franklin's message in the cartoon "Join or Die"?
2. What does the snake represent?
3. What does Franklin's letter to William Strahan say about his commitment to American independence?

C. Benjamin Franklin: Diplomat and Statesman

1. List four examples of Benjamin Franklin's accomplishments as an American diplomat and statesman (reflect back on his background information, as well):
2. Why do you think Benjamin Franklin was able to become such an important figure in American politics, when unlike the other founding fathers, he came from humble beginnings?

D. Benjamin Franklin and Slavery

1. What were Franklin's views on slavery? Did they change over time?
2. Do you think Franklin's views on slavery reflect the image of Benjamin Franklin as a symbol of individualism and social mobility?

E. Benjamin Franklin: Inventor and Scientist

1. Benjamin Franklin was constantly trying to improve himself and encouraged others to do the same. How do you think his dedication to science and inventing reflected this ideal of his?

F. Benjamin Franklin: Printer and Businessman

1. How did Benjamin Franklin become wealthy? (What did he do for a living?)

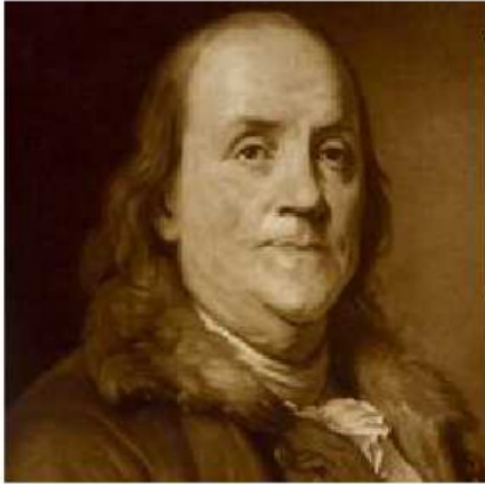
2. What kinds of things did Franklin write and print?

G. Benjamin Franklin: The "Self-Made Man" and the American Dream

1. Why is Benjamin Franklin a "Self-Made Man"?

2. What is the "American Dream"?

3. Do you agree that Benjamin Franklin helped shape the American dream based on what you've learned about his life?



A. Background Information

Benjamin Franklin, born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706, may by his life alone be the most profound statement of what an American strives to be.

With no formal education beyond the age of 10 years, Franklin was celebrated throughout Europe, welcomed in any Royal Court, sought out by every prestigious society. Indeed, when the reputations of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had yet to be sorted out, Franklin was worshipped wherever his name was known.

He attended grammar school at age eight, but was put to work at ten. He apprenticed as a printer to his brother James, who printed the *New England Courant*, at age twelve, and published his first article there, anonymously, in 1721. Young Benjamin was an avid reader, inquisitive and skeptical. Through his satirical articles, he poked fun at the people of Boston and soon wore out his welcome, both with his brother and with the city. He ran away to New York and then on to Philadelphia at the age of 16, looking for work as a printer. He managed a commission to Europe for the purpose of buying supplies to establish a new printing house in Philadelphia, but found himself abandoned when he stepped off ship. Through hard work and frugality he bought his fare back to Philadelphia in 1732 and set up shop as a printer. He was appointed clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1736, and as Postmaster the following year. In 1741 he began publishing *Poor Richard's Almanac*, a very popular and influential magazine. He was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1751 and served as an agent for Pennsylvania (and ultimately for three other colonies) to England, France, and several other European powers. He was elected to the Continental Congress in 1775, where he played a crucial role in the rebellion against Great Britain, including service to Jefferson in editing the Declaration of Independence. Franklin, who was by this time independently wealthy and retired from publishing, continued to serve an important role in government both local and national. He was the United States first Postmaster General, Minister to the French Court, Treaty agent and signer to the peace with Great Britain, Celebrated Member of the Constitutional convention. Benjamin Franklin: Businessman, Writer, Publisher, Scientist, Diplomat, Legislator, and Social activist, was one of the earliest and strongest advocates for the abolition of Slavery, and for the protection of the rights of American aboriginal peoples. He died on the 17th of April in 1790.

<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/signers/franklin.htm>

B.

Benjamin
Franklin: Patriot



Join, or Die Political Cartoon by Benjamin Franklin

A political cartoon that accompanied an editorial by Benjamin Franklin calling for American colonies to band together for protection against Indians and the French. First published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754.



William Strahan, an English printer and publisher, who was Franklin's friend and correspondent for many years, voted with the majority of Parliament to proclaim the Americans as rebels. Franklin drafted but never sent this well-publicized letter to Strahan to sever their friendship.



C. Benjamin Franklin: Diplomat and Statesman

Benjamin Franklin returned from London in May, 1775, and was quickly drafted as one of the Pennsylvania delegates to the second Continental Congress. Franklin's plan for a government for a united colonial confederation was read in Congress on July 21, 1775, but was not acted upon at that time. Thomas Jefferson, a fellow delegate, annotated this copy of Franklin's plan.



Several weeks before the Treaty of Paris, Franklin arranged for the translation and publication of the thirteen state constitutions along with other founding documents and treaties of commerce and alliance. Believing the publication would be influential in supporting recognition of the new country by European powers, he had sumptuously bound copies presented to the French king and queen and all the French foreign ministers. The Great Seal of the United States, approved by Congress in June 1782, made its first printed appearance here. This copy is personally inscribed by Franklin to the translator.

D.

Benjamin Franklin and Slavery



Benjamin Franklin, despite having brought two Black slaves to England in 1757, became an eager supporter and correspondent of Anthony Benezet, the Philadelphia abolitionist and educator, who had written important anti-slavery pamphlets, books, and newspaper articles. As president of the Pennsylvania anti-slavery society, Franklin appealed for public support of a humanitarian plan to not only emancipate slaves, but to educate free blacks and their children and to facilitate their progress toward good citizenship.



E.

*Benjamin
Franklin:
Inventor and
Scientist*

Franklin wrote this description of the stove he had invented to promote sales of a model being manufactured by his friend Robert Grace. A series of partitioned iron plates permits a continuous supply of fresh warm air, separated from the smoke, to be distributed equally throughout the room. By controlling the airflow, less heat is lost, and much less wood is needed. Franklin's stove became so popular in England and Europe that this essay was frequently reprinted and translated into several foreign languages.

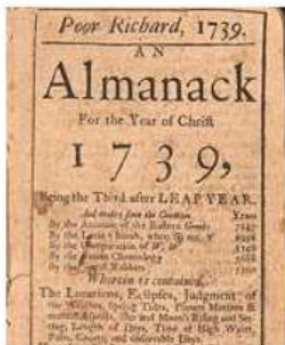


F.

Benjamin Franklin: Printer and Businessman



Soon after establishing himself as an independent printer, Benjamin Franklin was awarded the "very profitable Jobb" of printing Pennsylvania bills of credit, partly because he had written and published a pamphlet on the need for paper currency in 1729. He was similarly employed by New Jersey and Delaware. Aware of the threat from counterfeiters, Franklin devised the use of mica in the paper and leaf imprints as ways to foil counterfeiters



As a writer, Franklin was best known for the wit and wisdom he shared with the readers of his popular almanac, *Poor Richard*, under the pseudonym "Richard Saunders." In his autobiography, Franklin notes that he began publishing his almanac in 1732 and continued for twenty-five years: "I endeavour'd to make it both entertaining and useful, and it accordingly came to be in such Demand that I reap'd considerable Profit from it, vending annually near ten Thousand."



*G. Benjamin
Franklin: The
"Self-Made Man"
and the
American Dream*

Benjamin Franklin helped shape the foundational myth of America and the "American dream." Relying on his own cleverness and hard work to rise from his station as a poor indentured apprentice and become a successful businessman, writer, philosopher, and politician, Franklin served as a model of the "self-made man." In Franklin's time, prejudice and oppression limited the definition of who counted as an American, but Franklin's work inspired men and women of subsequent generations to strive to expand those boundaries.