



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

1706 to 1790

Inventor, Diplomat, Writer, and Statesman

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Who Was Benjamin Franklin?

Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706 in Boston, one of seventeen children. He had very little formal schooling and went to work as a printer's apprentice as a boy. Through reading and hard work, he taught himself nearly everything and became one of the most famous people in the world.

Franklin was a successful printer and writer, best known for *Poor Richard's Almanack*, which was full of clever sayings about thrift and hard work. He used his success to retire early and spend the rest of his life on science, invention, and public service.

He was a brilliant inventor and scientist. His famous kite experiment helped prove that lightning is electricity, and he invented the lightning rod, bifocal glasses, and a more efficient stove, never patenting them so everyone could use them freely.

Franklin was the only person to sign all four of the documents that created the United States. As a diplomat in France, he won the crucial support that helped America win the Revolution. He is remembered for his wit, curiosity, and lifelong drive to improve himself and his community.

Did You Know?

- He invented bifocal glasses, the lightning rod, and the Franklin stove, but never patented them so all could use them.
- He started the first public library, the first volunteer fire department, and a fire insurance company in America.
- He helped found the U.S. Postal Service and became the first Postmaster General.
- He taught himself to read and write in five languages.
- He is the only Founding Father to sign the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris, and the Constitution.

Timeline of His Life

Trace the long and remarkable life of America's most famous self-made man.

1706	Born January 17 in Boston, Massachusetts.
1718	Becomes a printer's apprentice to his brother.
1723	Runs away to Philadelphia to start his own life.
1733	Begins publishing Poor Richard's Almanack.
1752	Conducts his famous kite and lightning experiment.
1753	Becomes Postmaster General of the colonies.
1776	Helps draft and signs the Declaration of Independence.
1778	Wins French support for the American Revolution.
1783	Helps negotiate the Treaty of Paris ending the war.
1787	Signs the U.S. Constitution at age 81.
1790	Dies April 17 in Philadelphia.

Quotes and Character Lessons

Franklin filled his almanac with wise sayings that people still repeat today. Read each one together and talk about what it teaches.

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

Lesson: Time spent learning is never wasted. It rewards you for the rest of your life.

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Lesson: Planning ahead is one of the surest ways to succeed.

"Well done is better than well said."

Lesson: Actually doing good work matters more than just talking about it.

"Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

Lesson: Good daily habits build a good life over time.

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

Lesson: We learn best by doing, not just by being told.

Talk About It: Franklin chose not to patent his inventions so everyone could use them freely. What does that choice tell us about how he wanted to help other people?