



Day 28-29 American Revolution

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin: America's Original Renaissance Man

Time: Two class periods (60–70 minutes each)

Unit: Founding Fathers / American Revolution

Lesson Overview

In this two-day lesson, students explore the life and accomplishments of Benjamin Franklin through a teacher-led PowerPoint presentation, interactive digital modules, and creative and analytical activities. Students examine Franklin as a printer, writer, inventor, scientist, diplomat, and Founding Father, and then apply their learning through scavenger hunts, visual design, reading comprehension, and evaluative games.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe key events in Benjamin Franklin's life
 - Explain Franklin's contributions to printing, science, and government
 - Analyze why Franklin is considered a "Renaissance Man"
 - Apply historical knowledge through creative, interactive, and evaluative tasks
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Materials

- **Benjamin Franklin PowerPoint** (anchor)

- Online **Benjamin Franklin article**
 - Franklin **Inventions Interactive Module** + scavenger hunt
 - Bonus articles:
 - Silence Dogood
 - Franklin's electricity experiment
 - Franklin in France
 - The Hutchinson Affair
 - Activities:
 - *The Franklin Family Shield*
 - Differentiated Benjamin Franklin Interactive Comprehension Story
 - Reading comprehension worksheets
 - Coloring activities
 - Game: *Who Is Your Founding Father?*
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DAY ONE

Hook: What Does It Mean to Be Remarkable? (5–7 minutes)

Begin with discussion:

- Can one person be good at many very different things?
- What makes someone truly “remarkable”?
- Is it intelligence, curiosity, hard work—or all three?

Introduce Benjamin Franklin as someone who excelled in **many fields**, not just one.

Anchor Activity

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/revwar/franklin.pptx>

Benjamin Franklin PowerPoint (30–35 minutes)

Below is a detailed slide-by-slide teacher script.

Slide 1 – Benjamin Franklin

Teacher Script:

“Benjamin Franklin was one of the most versatile people in American history. He wasn’t just a politician—he was a writer, printer, inventor, scientist, and diplomat. Today we’ll explore how one person shaped so many parts of American life.”

Slide 2 – Early Life

Teacher Script:

“Franklin was born in 1706 into a large, working-class family. His father made soap and candles, and there was no money for advanced schooling. This makes Franklin’s later success even more remarkable—most of what he learned came from reading and experience.”

Slide 3 – Apprentice Printer

Teacher Script:

“At age twelve, Franklin apprenticed with his brother James, learning how to set type and print newspapers. Printing exposed Franklin to new ideas and taught him how powerful words could be.”

Slide 4 – Silence Dogood

Teacher Script:

“When Franklin wanted to write but wasn’t allowed, he created the fictional character Silence Dogood. These letters criticized society and defended women’s rights. Franklin learned that ideas could change minds—even when people didn’t know who wrote them.”

Slide 5 – Conflict and Escape

Teacher Script:

“After arguments and physical punishment from his brother, Franklin ran away to Philadelphia. This was risky, but it marked the beginning of his independence.”

Slide 6 – Philadelphia and London**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin found work in Philadelphia and was later sent to London. When the governor broke his promise, Franklin was stranded, but the experience taught him resilience and independence.”

Slide 7 – Marriage and Business**Teacher Script:**

“Back in Philadelphia, Franklin started his own printing business and married Deborah Read. Hard work and smart decisions helped him become financially successful.”

Slide 8 – Pennsylvania Gazette**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin turned the Pennsylvania Gazette into the most popular newspaper in the colonies. He used humor, cartoons, and clear writing to inform and influence readers.”

Slide 9 – Poor Richard’s Almanac**Teacher Script:**

“This almanac mixed advice, jokes, and wisdom. Many sayings we still use today came from it, showing Franklin’s lasting influence on American culture.”

Slide 10 – Improving Philadelphia**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin believed communities should help themselves. He helped start libraries, hospitals, fire companies, and insurance programs—ideas that still exist today.”

Slide 11 – Scientific Achievements

Teacher Script:

“Franklin invented practical tools like bifocals and the Franklin stove. He believed science should solve real-world problems.”

Slide 12 – Electricity Experiment**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin’s kite experiment proved that lightning is electricity. This discovery made him famous around the world and showed how curiosity leads to discovery.”

Slide 13 – Political Career**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin spent many years in England as a colonial representative. Over time, he realized that Britain was not going to treat the colonies fairly.”

Slide 14 – Founding Father**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin helped draft the Declaration of Independence and used his charm in France to secure a crucial alliance. Without Franklin, independence might not have succeeded.”

Slide 15 – Later Years and Legacy**Teacher Script:**

“Franklin signed the Constitution and died in 1790. Thousands attended his funeral, showing how deeply Americans respected him.”

Day One Closure (5 minutes)

Ask:

- Which Franklin accomplishment surprised you most?
 - Why do historians call him a Renaissance Man?
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DAY TWO

Guided Reading & Interactive Exploration (25–30 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/benjamin-franklin>

Students:

1. Read the **Benjamin Franklin article**
2. Explore the **Franklin Inventions interactive module**
3. Complete the **online or printable scavenger hunt**

Bonus Reading Options:

- [Silence Dogood](#)
- [Franklin's electricity experiment](#)
- [Franklin in France](#)
- [The Hutchinson Affair](#)

Students may choose one or more based on interest.

Activity Option 1: *The Franklin Family Shield* (20–25 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/fun-printables-of-the-revolutionary-war/franklin-family-shield>

Task:

Students design a shield or coat of arms representing Franklin's life.

Benjamin Franklin was unquestionably one of the most remarkable figures in American history. For starters, he discovered that lightning was electricity through his famous key experiment. He was also a prolific inventor, creating the Franklin stove, bifocals, and the lightning rod among other things. He penned *Poor Richard's Almanac*, a famous publication which included predictions, jokes, and sayings such as “a penny saved is a penny earned.” He helped the city of Philadelphia create its first library, fire insurance company, and hospital. He also founded the University of Pennsylvania in 1740. Finally, he was a Founding Father who spent many years in Europe championing the American cause, before coming back to America to help write the Declaration of Independence.

If you could create a shield or coat of arms that illustrated Benjamin Franklin's life and all of his accomplishments, what would it look like? Use lots of color.

Requirements:

- Symbols for science, printing, invention, diplomacy, and public service
 - Use of color and labels
 - Written explanation of each symbol
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Activity Option 2: Differentiated Interactive Comprehension Story (20–25 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-people/adventures-through-the-lives-and-times/adventures-through-the-life-and-times-of-benjamin-franklin>

In this interactive story, students travel through key moments in Benjamin Franklin's life, guided by his words and experiences. At each historic location, they explore illustrated scenes, read narrated passages, and answer thoughtful comprehension questions to track their progress. When all sites are visited, students receive a printable score report showing their journey through America's founding story.

Activity Option 3: *Who Is Your Founding Father?* Game (15–20 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/revolutionary-war-online-games/who-is-your-founding-father-revolutionary-war-game>

Students evaluate the significance of accomplishments by Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton on a 1–10 scale. Each judgment advances the Founding Father responsible, reinforcing comparative historical thinking.

Sharing & Reflection (10 minutes)

Students share:

- Shield designs
 - Favorite Franklin accomplishment
 - Game outcomes and reasoning
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Final Discussion (5 minutes)

Discussion prompts:

- Why was Franklin successful in so many fields?
- Which Franklin contribution matters most today?
- How does Franklin's curiosity still inspire learning?

Addition Activity Options:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/revolutionary-war/people-of-the-revolutionary-war/benjamin-franklin>

Scroll to the bottom of the page linked above to access dozens of more interactive and printable Benjamin Franklin activities.