



Bio4Kids: Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

Brief Outline

Benjamin Franklin was a man of many talents. He wrote and published newspapers and books, conducted scientific experiments, came up with new inventions, and helped create the United States of America. To be a person who did so many things so well, Franklin worked hard and with great determination. He once wrote, “Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

Franklin was born on January 17, 1706, in Boston, Massachusetts. Like many children at the time, he had little schooling and went to work when he was young. At first, Franklin worked for his father, helping to make candles. Later he served as an apprentice to his older brother James in his print shop. The brothers didn't get along, and Franklin decided to run away.

Franklin went to Philadelphia. He found work at print shops and even started one of his own. In 1730 Franklin began publishing a newspaper called *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. He even wrote many of the articles in it. Franklin later published a book called *Poor Richard's Almanac* every year for many years. Each edition included predictions on the upcoming year's weather as well as sayings and other information. These books became very popular and helped make Franklin become a successful businessman.

In the late 1740s, Franklin began to devote much of his time to science. He was a pioneer in the study of electricity. He figured out that lightning was a form of electrical energy. Franklin created a device called a lightning rod, which protects property by redirecting the lightning bolt's energy. He made many other inventions, including a special type of stove that made people's homes warmer using less fuel.

Franklin went to London in 1757 to represent the interests of the Pennsylvania Assembly with the government of Great Britain. Over time, he became aware of how unfair the American colonists were being treated by the British government and often fought on their behalf. The government passed the Stamp Act in 1765, which required that colonists would have to buy a special stamp to use on all of kinds of documents, such as newspapers, advertisements, and legal papers. Franklin helped convince the British government to change its mind, but later other taxes were forced on the colonists. A frustrated Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1775.

The colonists had already started their fight for independence from Great Britain by the time Franklin got home. He served as a representative to the Second Continental Congress, which brought together people from different colonies to talk about how to establish their own government. At this meeting, Franklin became a member of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, which was set up to help gather information on the British enemy and convince others to join the American colonists' cause. He also worked on the committee that created the Declaration of Independence. This document officially stated that the colonies were breaking away from Britain.

A well-respected man and skilled negotiator, Franklin also advanced the American Revolution by serving as the minister to France. He helped convince the French to support the colonists' fight for freedom. Franklin also assisted in writing the Treaty of Paris, which brought the war to an end in 1783.

After the war, he again helped the nation by participating in the Constitutional Convention in 1787. The country's most important document was created at this meeting—the United States Constitution. Only a few years later, Franklin died on April 17, 1790.

Related Websites

More about Franklin from the Franklin Institute

<http://www.fi.edu/franklin/rotten.html>