

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin

(1706-1790)

writer, printer, editor, free-thinker, inventor, diplomat



Franklin Memorial, Philadelphia

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, the tenth of seventeen children. He was raised as a Quaker, valuing thriftiness, perseverance, and hard work.

At the age of twelve, Franklin became an **apprentice** [somebody trained by a skilled professional] to his older brother James, a printer. When he was 16 years old he moved to Pennsylvania with no relatives or acquaintances, no job prospects, and one Dutch dollar and a copper shilling in his pocket. He quickly found work in the print shop, which he later was able to purchase.

At the age of twenty-four, Franklin was a success as a printer. He said his success was due to hard work, being careful with his money, and creativity. Franklin began a number of institutions that are part of today's American way of life—the first library, the first political discussion group, the first fire department, and the first postal system. He also wrote and printed the *Poor Richard's Almanack*, a very popular book of down-to-earth wisdom.



Franklin was interested in science, especially electricity, and loved to invent practical things. He invented the lightning rod that protected buildings from lightning damage, the safe-burning Franklin Stove, bifocal glasses, and an odometer for tracking traveling distance.



He served as a representative of Pennsylvania to the Colonial Congress; was a writer and signer of the Declaration of Independence; and helped in the writing of the U.S. Constitution. During his life, he received degrees from Yale University, Harvard University, and Oxford University in England.

Benjamin Franklin combined his love of his country with his commitment to personal achievement in order to improve his life and the lives of his fellow Americans.

Quotes from Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*:

1. Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all things easy.
2. Have you somewhat to do tomorrow? Do it today.
3. 'Tis easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it.
4. A penny saved is a penny earned.
5. A place for everything, everything in its place.
6. Energy and persistence conquer all things.
7. He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.

