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| PROJECT TITLE: <b>Benjamin Franklin</b><br><b>“World Famous” American</b> |                                                               |
| AUTHOR: Charity Paeschke                                                  | SUBJECT & GRADE LEVEL<br>Social Studies 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade |

### **SCHOLARSHIP & RESEARCH**

1. **Primary Investigative Question(s)** – Did you know that the famous American Ben Franklin was so famous for his good works, his citizenship, and his inventions that he became famous all over the world?
2. **Contextual Essay** –

Benjamin Franklin deserves the title of famous American leader. In his own words “If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worthy reading, or do things worth the writing (ushistory.org)”. Franklin did many noteworthy things in his lifetime. Through his travels he represented the colonies interests in Europe, Canada, and France. His inventions and discoveries helped set the stage for further inventions and discoveries. Acting as a good citizen he helped establish services that improved the lives of many. Benjamin Franklin is an American leader because he was a good citizen, a world traveler on behalf of his country and an inventor and discoverer.

When examining Benjamin Franklin as a good citizen, one must look at Franklin’s life in Philadelphia during the 1730’s and 1740’s. “As a practical man of the city, Franklin was always looking for ways to improve the general quality of life” (Krensky, 2008, pg. 44). He helped launch the Library Company in 1731. This was the first subscription library. Books were expensive and scarce. The Library Company allowed others who might not be able to afford a large personal library access to a variety of books. In the 1730’s fire was a serious threat to cities because almost all of the buildings were made of wood. To lessen this threat, he organized Philadelphia’s Union Fire Company, the first volunteer fire department. He also was the first postmaster and his image was on the first US stamp.

Franklin also played an important role in the creation of the United States. As the owner of

the Pennsylvania Gazette, he printed the first political cartoon (ushistory.org). The cartoon printed in 1754 depicted the Colonies as a snake cut apart with the caption *Join or Die*. This was his way of urging the Colonies to work together. When tensions rose between Britain and the Colonies, Benjamin went to England. Benjamin Franklin gave Thomas Jefferson advice and signed the Declaration of Independence in 1787 helping to promote a more unified nation. A citizen by definition is someone who helps their community and in the case of Benjamin Franklin, his country.

Benjamin Franklin also helped his country through his role as a diplomat (traveler) to England, France, and Canada. In order to travel to England and France his form of transportation was ship. “The voyage across the Atlantic took almost two months...There was little to eat...Seasickness was common on a small boat” (Krensky, 2008, pg. 30). He first traveled to London in 1724 to get the equipment necessary for his print shop. During his first trip to London he learned more about printing and met famous scientists and authors (Fradin, 2002, pg. 36). When Franklin traveled to England in 1757 he was seen as America’s greatest scientist and inventor (Fradin, 2002, pg. 70). He went before Parliament to try and convince them that they should consult with the Colonies before passing laws that affected them (Krensky, 2008, pg. 70-71). He traveled to England to protest the Stamp Act, speaking before Parliament to try and get them to see America’s point of view. While before Parliament Benjamin Franklin responded to a question and said “I never heard any objection to the right of laying duties to regulate commerce; but a right to lay internal taxes was never supposed to be in Parliament, as we are not represented there. . . . (www.historywhiz.com)”. His testimony to the House of Commons on behalf of the repeal established his reputation as a spokesman for American interests (Dull, 1982, pg. 3). Benjamin Franklin wanted the members of Parliament to allow the colonies to be represented in Parliament. Franklin traveled to Canada in 1776 to gain support to help in fighting for the Colony’s independence, he was unsuccessful.

He also traveled to France in 1776 for the same purpose. “What he carried with him to France were the qualities of character fostered by his English missions – patience, tact, prudence (Dull, 1982, pg. 5)”. Franklin was well received in France as a well know scientist and visited the court of the French King Louis XVI (Krensky, 2002, pg. 99). While in France, Benjamin was extremely popular. “Franklin’s popularity not only in France but throughout Europe was a factor of no small weight in swinging France towards support of America (Morgan, 2002, pg. 260)”. Once the war began,

Franklin was a good representative for America because “In Britain, people were more afraid of Benjamin Franklin than of George Washington and his army” (Fradin, 2002, pg. 90). Benjamin Franklin became a symbol of America in his coonskin cap. The coonskin cap represented everything that America was to Europeans. He was smart, popular, and well respected by others. His image appeared on medallions, dishes, and posters. If he had lived today he would have been seen as a superstar. “Franklin is not the first or only public figure of his era to be commemorated by prints and medals. However, the quantity and variety of the artifacts, and the documentation that survives surrounding their production and distribution suggests that Benjamin Franklin enjoyed more international attention than any other North American public figure of his era.” ([http://www.benfranklin300.org/etc\\_essays.htm](http://www.benfranklin300.org/etc_essays.htm)).

Lastly, Benjamin Franklin served his country and community as an inventor and discoverer which helped his country. He believed “As we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously” (Krensky, 2008, pg. 51). Electricity was long an interest to Benjamin Franklin. In 1752 he proved that light was made of electricity with his famous kite and key experiment. This led him to his invention of the lightning rod. He also invented the Franklin stove, bifocal lenses, swim fins, and the long arm. Franklin is also well known for his many sayings, such as: A penny saved is a penny earned; Honesty is the best policy. ([ushistory.org](http://ushistory.org)). These sayings are still used today and are an indicator of how Ben was well respected by others.

Benjamin Franklin was an inventor, discoverer, traveler, leader and a citizen. It is through his performance in each of these roles that he earns the title “World Famous” American.

### 3. **Annotated Bibliography** –

Dull, Jonathan R (1982) *Franklin the Diplomat: The French Mission*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Vol. 72, No 1. American Philosophical Society.

Summary: This article goes into detail about Franklin's diplomatic background and the role he played while in France. Page 1 – 15 are particularly helpful in understanding the importance of his trip to America.

Fradin, Dennis Brindell (2002) *Who was Ben Franklin?*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap

Summary: A book that depicts Ben Franklin as a founding father of the United States. The chapter "Doing Good" is useful when instructing students on Franklin as a citizen. This will help students make the connection between a citizen and doing good in their communities. The chapter "Revolution" will help students understand why he traveled in a simplified manner they will be able to understand.

Krensky, Franklin (2008) *Biography: Benjamin Franklin*. New York: DK Publishing

Summary: A photographic story of the life of Benjamin Franklin. Chapter 3, 7 and 8 are particularly helpful when discussing Franklin as a traveler (This will help the teacher gain more background knowledge, but may not be appropriate to read to the class.). These chapters give insight into what the traveling conditions were, the reason's for his travels, and the challenges he encountered.

Morgan, Edmund S. (2002) *Benjamin Franklin*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press

Summary: A biography of Benjamin Franklin. The subject matter of this book is focused on his role as a traveler and leader. Going into detail about how he was viewed as America's ambassador. Will help students see Franklin from a global perspective.

[http://www.benfranklin300.org/etc\\_essays.htm](http://www.benfranklin300.org/etc_essays.htm)

Summary: A website that has articles and essays about Benjamin Franklin. This sight is useful for

learning more about Franklin. Topics covered range from him as a superstar to his role in the American Enlightenment. When learning about Franklin and his many roles these articles and essays can give the reader a greater understanding of Ben.

[www.historywhiz.com](http://www.historywhiz.com)

Summary: A website with a variety of links about the founding fathers, the American Revolution, and the stamp act. Links can be found that leads to the testimony of Benjamin Franklin in the British Parliament in 1766. This testimony can be used to show how Franklin represented the best interests of the colonies. It also gives the reader a better understanding of the tact required of Franklin.

[www.ushistory.org](http://www.ushistory.org)

Summary: A website devoted to Benjamin Franklin. It can be useful for finding images and descriptions of his inventions. This site has many of his quotes listed. It can be used to gain information about Benjamin Franklin's life.