Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was one of the most important and influential Founding Fathers of the United States of America. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts on January 17, 1706. He was the youngest boy of seventeen children. Young Ben who had very little formal education left school at age 10 to work with his father as a chandler (candles & soap maker). A few years later, he became a printer's apprentice for his brother James. Although Ben was denied a traditional education, he loved to read, and he became quite knowledgeable over the years by reading lots of books. Ben ran away to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when he was 17 where he worked as a printer. He went on to work a variety jobs in London and Philadelphia

Early Career

In 1729, Franklin became the publisher of a newspaper called the Pennsylvania Gazette. As a newspaper publisher, Franklin became a prominent voice in Pennsylvania politics and his reputation began to grow throughout the American colonies. In the 1750s and 1760s, Franklin spent much of his time in London, England. At first, he acted as the voice of the Pennsylvania colonists to the British Parliament, mostly protesting the influence of the Penn family on the colony. Later, he represented all of the American colonies when he spoke out against the much hated Stamp Act of 1765. His arguments eventually led to the repeal of the act by Parliament.

Poor Richard's Almanack

In 1732, Franklin first published Poor Richard's Almanack. Poor Richard's Almanack was a yearly pamphlet that Franklin wrote under the pseudonym (fake name) of "Richard Saunders", also known as "Poor Richard." The pamphlet included all sorts of interesting information including poems, a calendar, interesting sayings, weather predictions, and scientific information.

Revolutionary War and the Continental Congress

Franklin was still living in London as the Revolutionary War approached. It was Franklin who first suggested that the colonies meet at the First Continental Congress in 1774. Franklin later delivered their petition to King George III of England. In 1775, Franklin returned to Philadelphia and was elected as the Pennsylvania delegate to the Second Continental Congress. By this time the Revolutionary War had begun. Franklin played an important role in the early part of the
Revolutionary War. He was part of the committee that wrote the Declaration of Independence and was the nation's first Postmaster General.

Ambassador and Europe

In 1776, Ben Franklin traveled to France. He spent the next few years gathering support in France for the American Revolution. In 1778, France allied with the colonies in their fight against England. Franklin remained in France throughout the war. In 1783, he helped to negotiate an end to the Revolutionary War with the Treaty of Paris.

What did Benjamin Franklin invent?

As if being a prolific writer and a major player in the founding of the United States wasn't enough, Ben Franklin still found time to be a prominent inventor and scientist.

Perhaps Ben Franklin is most famous for his experiments with electricity. He performed many experiments that proved that lightning is in fact electricity. This led to his invention of the lightning rod, which helps to keep buildings safe from lighting. Other inventions by Ben Franklin include bifocals (a type of glasses), the Franklin stove, an odometer for a carriage, and the glass harmonica. In science he studied and made discoveries in the areas of electricity, cooling, meteorology, printing, and the wave theory of light.

Other firsts Ben Franklin was involved in include starting the first lending library in America, founding the University of Pennsylvania, and establishing the first fire department in Pennsylvania.

Later Life and Death

Franklin returned from France to the United States in 1785. He participated in the Constitutional Convention and became the only founding father to sign the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Paris, and the Constitution. He also served as the President of Pennsylvania (like the governor). Franklin died in Philadelphia on April 17, 1790.
Fun Facts about Ben Franklin

- Ben was his dad's 15th child of 17 total children!
- Ben Franklin was the first Postmaster General of the United States.
- Later in life, Ben set his slaves free and became a fighter for the freedom of slaves.
- He didn't patent any of his many inventions, letting people use his ideas for free.
- Franklin became fairly wealthy from the publishing of *Poor Richard's Almanack*.
- He loved playing chess and was inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 1999.
- As a teenager, Franklin had several letters published in his brother's newspaper under the fake name "Silence Dogood." His brother was not happy when he found out.
- During his life, Franklin's views on slavery changed dramatically. In 1748, he purchased his first slave, but by 1760 he had freed all of his slaves. He became a staunch abolitionist and spent much of his later life campaigning for an end to slavery.

Links

https://www.ducksters.com/biography/ben_franklin.php (online article)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOF0OCI1xlc (video 1)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B454HvxfrWy (video 2)