

Name _____ Date _____

Benjamin Franklin & Curiosity

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706 in Boston. At that time, Boston was part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The United States was not yet a country. Franklin was the 15th child of Josiah Franklin, a soap- and candle-maker. He loved to read and was a great student. However, he only went to school for two years. His family was poor, and his father needed help, so Franklin dropped out of school and started working full-time at his father’s store. He was only 10 years old.

Notes

2. After working in the soap and candle shop for two years, Franklin became an apprentice in his older brother James’s print shop. James Franklin was the founder and publisher of a newspaper called The New England Courant. Benjamin Franklin learned quickly on the job. He wanted to write for the paper, but he knew his brother would not allow it. He then made up a pseudonym, Mrs. Silence Dogood, to write letters to the editor. Fourteen of his letters ended up being published in the newspaper. James was very angry when he found out the truth.

Notes

3. At the age of 17, Franklin left Boston. He was tired of following his brother’s rules all the time. He went first to New York and then to Philadelphia. He also spent a couple of years in London to work at another print shop. In 1730, Franklin was named Philadelphia’s official printer. He bought a struggling newspaper called The Pennsylvania Gazette. The Gazette became the most widely read paper in the American colonies, and Franklin made a lot of money from it.

Notes

4. Thanks to The Pennsylvania Gazette, Franklin became one of the richest men in Pennsylvania. He retired from the printing business at the age of 42. He did not spend his time relaxing, though. He became a member of Philadelphia's city council and a judge. He was later named the deputy postmaster general of North America. He also worked as an inventor and conducted many scientific experiments. Some of Franklin's inventions include the lightning rod, rocking chair, street lamp and a type of stove. He was one of the first people to figure out how the common cold is spread and how exercising improves health. He also created the first lending library, the first community hospital and the first firefighting company. Franklin never tried to get patents, or exclusive rights, to his inventions. He thought they should be available to benefit all people.

Notes

5. Franklin published Poor Richard's Almanack every year for 25 years. At that time, almanacs contained a calendar, weather forecasts, farming information and other useful items. Franklin's almanac was famous because it included many aphorisms. Aphorisms are clever or funny sayings that teach a lesson or make you think about real life. People still use some of Franklin's aphorisms today. For example, he wrote, "There are no gains without pains" and, "Hunger is the best pickle."

Notes

6. Later in his life, Franklin became an important leader of the new United States. He was one of the five men to write the Declaration of Independence in 1776. He helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution. He was also elected to represent Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. He was the only person to sign all three documents.

Notes

Franklin died on April 17, 1790 in Philadelphia at the age of 84. Despite all his accomplishments, he most wanted to be remembered as "B. Franklin, Printer." We can still see his face on our currency: His portrait was added to the \$100 bill in 1914.