

READING

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was an American printer and publisher, author, inventor and scientist, and diplomat. He is best known for playing a key role in the writing of the *Declaration of Independence* and for signing the original *United States Constitution*.

Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706, in Boston. His father, Josiah Franklin, had seven children with first wife, Anne Child, and ten more with second wife, Abiah Folger. Ben was his 15th child and youngest son. He learned to read at an early age and was a good student, but he stopped going to school when he was ten and started working full-time. When he was twelve, he started working at his brother's print shop. He learned a lot about publishing and newspapers. In 1723, he moved to New York and then to Philadelphia.

In Philadelphia, Franklin worked as a printer. He wanted to start his own printing shop and travelled to London to buy the things that he needed for it. In London, he had to work, but he also had a lot of fun. He went to coffee houses and swam in the Thames. He returned to America in 1726 and continued his printing activities. He also continued studying. Franklin bought *The Pennsylvania Gazette* and made it one of the most successful newspapers in America. In 1732, he started publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack*.

Franklin became one of the richest men in Pennsylvania. In 1748, he moved into a new house and bought his first slaves. Later, he came to see that slavery is evil and he freed his slaves in the 1760s. Franklin also became interested in electricity and made some important scientific discoveries. He also took part in politics. In 1776, he became one of the five men who wrote the *Declaration of Independence*.

After the USA became independent, Franklin went to France as America's first ambassador. He was very popular with French aristocrats. After ten years in France, Franklin returned to America. He was politically active and worked against slavery.

Benjamin Franklin died on April 17, 1790, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the home of his daughter, Sarah Bache. His *Autobiography* got published in 1794.

1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 How many children did Benjamin Franklin's father have? _____
- 2 How old was Benjamin Franklin when he started working? _____
- 3 Where did Benjamin Franklin move in 1723? _____
- 4 Why did Benjamin Franklin travel to London? _____
- 5 What did Benjamin Franklin do in 1748? _____
- 6 What did Franklin later think about slavery? _____
- 7 Where did Franklin live after America became independent? _____

2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Benjamin Franklin was his father's youngest child. _____
- 2 When he was twelve, Benjamin Franklin worked for his brother. _____
- 3 When Benjamin Franklin was in England, he spent all his time working. _____
- 4 Benjamin Franklin bought a newspaper and made it popular. _____
- 5 Benjamin Franklin did some experiments with electricity. _____
- 6 Benjamin Franklin stopped taking part in politics after he returned from France. _____
- 7 Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* was published after his death. _____

KEY

1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 How many children did Benjamin Franklin's father have? **17**
- 2 How old was Benjamin Franklin when he started working? **he was 10 years old**
- 3 Where did Benjamin Franklin move in 1723? **to New York and then to Philadelphia**
- 4 Why did Benjamin Franklin travel to London? **to buy the things that he needed for his printing business**
- 5 What did Benjamin Franklin do in 1748? **he moved into a new house and bought some slaves**
- 6 What did Franklin later think about slavery? **that it is evil, he worked against it and freed his slaves**
- 7 Where did Franklin live after America became independent? **in France**

2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Benjamin Franklin was his father's youngest child. **F (he was the youngest son, but not the youngest child)**
- 2 When he was twelve, Benjamin Franklin worked for his brother. **T**
- 3 When Benjamin Franklin was in England, he spent all his time working. **F (he also had fun, read books, swam etc.)**
- 4 Benjamin Franklin bought a newspaper and made it popular. **T**
- 5 Benjamin Franklin did some experiments with electricity. **T**
- 6 Benjamin Franklin stopped taking part in politics after he returned from France. **F (he was politically active and worked against slavery)**
- 7 Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* was published after his death. **T**