



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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I was born in Boston in 1706. I was the fifteenth child in my family. I went to grammar school when I was eight years old. I learned to read easily. In fact, I can't remember when I couldn't read. My father decided I would make a good scholar. After just about a year of grammar school, he took me out of school and sent me to another school to learn writing and arithmetic. I quickly became a good writer but failed arithmetic.

My father found it difficult to support his big family, so he put me to work cutting wicks for candles and helping make candles and soap in his business. I did not like this type of work and my father sensed how unhappy I was. When I was twelve years old I went to work in my brother's print shop. I was to serve as an apprentice until I was twenty-one years of age. I quickly became very skilled in the printing business. The best part was I had access to many books to read. After working for my brother for two years, I knew I had to leave because we didn't get along.

I ran away to Philadelphia to find work when I was seventeen. I had a few coins in my pocket and a loaf of bread under my arm. I found a print shop that would hire me and I worked hard. Six years later I owned my own print shop. I started a magazine that became The Saturday Evening Post. I published Poor Richard's Almanac, a book with many wise sayings I wrote myself. You have probably heard this saying:

I wrote: "Early to bed, early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

Have you heard these simple sayings I included in the almanac?

"Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead."

"Fish and visitors smell in three days."

I married Deborah Read in 1730. She was a good wife and a good mother to our three children even though she didn't share my interest in books and science.

Fortunately, I didn't spend all of my time in my print shop. Business was doing well and I had time to work on some science experiments I had been wanting to do for a while. I invented bifocal glasses and the Franklin stove. My most famous experiment was flying a kite in a thunderstorm (don't try it!) I discovered that lightning is a huge spark of electricity. I invented the lightning rod to protect buildings from fires.

I served the colony of Pennsylvania in many ways. I spent many years in Europe representing the colonies. When I found that the colonies wanted their freedom, I returned to America. I helped write the Declaration of Independence and was one of the patriots who signed it. When I was nearly eighty years old I helped work on the Constitution and was one of the signers. I kept in touch with my old friends George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and James Madison. I was a diplomat, a scientist, an inventor, a philosopher, an educator and a public servant. I loved my country!