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Lesson Plans: Grades 6-8

Search By Standards

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats"

A PICTURING AMERICA RESOURCE

Introduction



Hiram Powers (1805–1873),
Benjamin Franklin, 1862.
Marble, height 97 1/2 in.,
width 34 7/8 in., depth 21 5/8
in. (247.7 x 88.6 x 54.9 cm.).

Credit: U.S. Senate
Collection.

Since our Time is reduced to a Standard, and the Bullion of the Day minted out into Hours, the *Industrious* know how to employ every Piece of Time to a real Advantage in their different Professions: And he that is prodigal of his Hours, is, in Effect, a Squanderer of Money."

—Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard Improved*, 1751

Ben Franklin, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution was also a philanthropist, a community leader, patriot, and Founding Father. This lesson plan exemplifies all our new country fought for in the Revolutionary War: individualism, democracy, community, patriotism, scientific inquiry and invention, and the rights of "We the People."

Guiding Questions

What were Franklin's many roles during the founding period of the United States?

What character traits helped make Franklin such a versatile and accomplished man?

What artistic movements and styles influenced Hiram Powers?

Learning Objectives

Have a solid understanding of Benjamin Franklin's life, philosophy, and accomplishments

Understand an artist's process of creating and executing a work of art

Background

"Franklin, elder statesman of the Revolution and oldest signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, sat on the committee that drafted the Declaration, attended the Constitutional Convention, and distinguished himself as a diplomat. But he was a self-made man and self-educated intellectual colossus whose interests far transcended politics. He won international renown as a printer, publisher, author, philosopher,

scientist, inventor, and philanthropist. On both sides of the Atlantic, he mingled with the social elite, whom he impressed with his sagacity, wit, and zest for life."

These EDSITEment Lesson Plans relate to Benjamin Franklin's role as a founding father of the United States:

The Constitutional Convention: What the Founding Fathers Said

The Constitutional Convention of 1787

There is a wealth of excellent resources available through EDSITEment's Best of Web and former Thinkfinity partners about Franklin in his many different "hats" or roles. These include:

300 Years of Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin—An Extraordinary Life. An Electric Mind

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary

National Park Service—Signers of the Constitution

Picturing America: 4b, Hiram Powers, Benjamin Franklin, 1862

Podcast: Walter Isaacson explores Benjamin Franklin's legacy

ReadWriteThink: The first edition of *Poor Richard's Almanack* was published in 1733

Sculptor — Hiram Powers (1805-1873)

In 1858 Congress commissioned one of America's most respected artists, Hiram Powers, to create statues of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson for the Capitol. Although born in Vermont, Powers' studio was in Florence, Italy, where he had ready access to skilled assistants, inspirational Classical art, and models — important resources that were in short supply in his homeland at that time. Learn more about Powers and his statue of Benjamin Franklin at the United States Senate website and Picturing America's Educators Resource Book, image 4b.

Neoclassical Art style

When Powers created his larger-than-life sculpture of Franklin, democratic leaders were often depicted in the Neoclassical style, which was based on Classical Roman and Greek art. Powers sculpted busts of George Washington and Andrew Jackson draped in Classical togas in this accepted Neoclassical style. But despite criticism, he chose to sculpt his statues of Franklin and Jefferson realistically in clothing they would have worn in the 1700's.

Hiram Powers' *Benjamin Franklin*

Although Powers depicted Franklin in contemporary clothes, much about the statue reminds us of ancient Greek and Roman sculptures. Like Classical art, it's carved of white marble and Franklin stands in a traditional contrapposto pose with most of his weight resting on one foot and the opposite leg bent. This creates a gentle curve extending through the midline of the figure. Folds in his coat and the vertical gash in the tree stump echo the curve of this center line, giving the sculpture unity. Franklin also rests one arm on the tree trunk. Roman sculptures that were modeled after original Greek works in bronze often included a support such as a tree trunk or shield to keep the fragile piece of marble stable.

Portraits can reveal personality and details about a person and their life as well as how artists feel and think about their subject. By resting Franklin's chin in his hand and showing a downward gaze, Powers suggests that Franklin is a thinker. The jagged line that scars the tree trunk represents a lightning strike and reminds us that Franklin's experiments with electricity made him an international celebrity and a respected scientist. Franklin's acceptance into Europe's scientific community eventually helped open doors of European courts to him as an American statesman.

Franklin wears the plain clothes of an 18th-century American citizen rather than the frilly European court dress of his day. Powers chose this type of dress very carefully, even having Franklin's actual garments sent to him in Italy so that he could copy them in detail. The artist wanted to use fashion to reinforce the concept that all citizens are equal before the law in a democracy. He also was careful to show how these garments would actually behave. The creases in the coat suggest its weight, while wrinkles in Franklin's hose show their texture and the way they would sag during wear. Franklin's hair also hangs in long loose curls in the manner of the 18th century.

These EDSITEment lesson plans also deal with portraits that reveal character:

I've Just Seen a Face: Portraits

Portrait of a Hero

What Portraits Reveal

Preparation Instructions

Students may learn about Benjamin Franklin and his roles or "hats" by completing and discussing the *Look and Think* worksheet (Answer Key provided). These will help them observe, analyze, and appreciate the many aspects of Powers' statue of Franklin. After reading the reproducible biography of Franklin, students may create hats illustrating some of the many roles that Franklin played in his life—statesman, politician, scientist, father, community activist, printer, publisher, writer, and inventor. Worksheets and directions for creating hats are included.

Make copies of the: Look and Think worksheet, Benjamin Franklin biography, Directions for The Many Hats of Ben Franklin. *See note in Activity 3. Materials needed: Colored markers and copy or drawing paper, Optional paper hat-making supplies such as scissors, glue, colored papers.

Lesson Activities

Activity 1. Look and Think

Activity 2. Read a Benjamin Franklin Biography

Activity 3. Design One of Benjamin Franklin's "Hats"

Activity 1. Look and Think

Observation: Have students carefully observe Hiram Powers' *Benjamin Franklin*. They may complete the *Look and Think* worksheet to guide them in their analysis of this work of art. In this worksheet students compare Franklin's dress to today's clothing as well as to that worn in ancient Greece and Rome.

Class discussion: Use either activities in the *Picturing America Educators Resource Book*, 4b, or the *Look and Think* worksheet as a springboard for a class discussion of the art. (See the answer key for the *Look and Think* worksheet.)

Lines: Point out the similarity between the central line in the sculpture, the lightning-strike line, and lines in the coat. This repetition of line creates unity within the sculpture.

Contrapposto: Have students stand in a contrapposto pose as the figure does in the sculpture by resting most of their weight on one foot. They should note how this causes one hip to shift upwards and creates a curve through the body.

Negative space: Help student locate and describe the negative space in and around the sculpture.

Symbolism: Discuss how Powers suggested Franklin's personality and achievements through the pose, clothing, and tree stump.

Neoclassicism: Invite students to compare and contrast Powers' neoclassical busts of Washington and Jackson on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Web site, an EDSITEment-reviewed site, with that of Powers' *Franklin*. They may also read an essay describing Neoclassicism on the Met's site.

Neoclassical art and architecture refer to the timeless, Classical sculptures, buildings, and dress of ancient Greece and Rome. Because these were early democracies, this art style remained popular for government buildings and art in the United States well into the 20th century.

Encourage students to explain why they do or do not think that Franklin should be depicted wearing a toga.

Activity 2. Read a Benjamin Franklin Biography

Have students read the biography of Ben Franklin provided in the lesson. Because the biography is a bit long, you may want to stop and pause after each section and summarize what you have read in one or two sentences. This helps students pare down information and remember key ideas.

Activity 3. Design One of Benjamin Franklin's "Hats"

Visualize: After students have read the biography for understanding, have them then choose ONE hat from the examples on *The Many Hats of Ben Franklin* worksheet. Students should choose a hat that exemplifies how they feel Benjamin Franklin contributed to our country. Students will follow the directions provided by writing Ben Franklin's name at the top of their chosen hat. Underneath the hat, they should write how this hat demonstrates Ben Franklin's duties/contributions to our country when he was "wearing" it. Students can then decorate their hat with symbols that illustrate this.

Set out enough copies of the 8 full-page-size hat templates on the last pages of the "Franklin Hats" handout so that each student may choose one of the hat pages; or just print the first page of the handout and encourage students to draw their own hats on a separate sheet of paper.

Create: Students may create a larger colored drawing of their hat.

Display: Display the students' hats together to show how many "hats" Franklin had.

Extending The Lesson

Students may actually make paper hats that symbolize Benjamin Franklin's "hats" or roles. These hats may be as simple as large tissue paper sheets set on a student's head and fastened around the brow with a masking tape headband or folded paper hats as pictured on a number of Internet sites. Students may attach found and cut-paper objects to their hats to represent the role that they are symbolizing. Encourage students to describe and write about the symbolism in their hats. See *Make an Artrageous Hat*, *Paper Hat*, or *How to Make Paper Hats*.

Selected EDSITEment Websites

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
American Neoclassical Sculptors Abroad
Neoclassicism

Hiram Powers, Andrew Jackson bust) -- compare to Franklin

George Washington, *Hiram Powers* (American, 1805-1873)

Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Library

American Studies at the University of Virginia
Hiram Powers, Thomas Jefferson—The Capitol Project

Hiram Powers, Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Benjamin Franklin—A Site Dedicated for Resources to Teaching Benjamin Franklin

Internet Public Library

@rt junction

Make an ARTRAGEOUS HAT!

How to Make Paper Hats

Paper Hat

National Park Services—Signers of the Constitution

Picturing America

Hiram Powers, *Benjamin Franklin*, 1862 image 4b

Podcast: Walter Isaacson explores Benjamin Franklin's legacy

ReadWriteThink: The first edition of *Poor Richard's Almanack* was published in 1733

Smithsonian American Art Museum
Hiram Powers' sculptures

Time Required

3 class periods

Subject Areas

- Art and Culture > Subject Matter > Art History
- Literature and Language Arts > Genre > Biography
- Art and Culture > Medium > Visual Arts
- Art and Culture

Skills

- Compare and contrast
- Critical analysis
- Critical thinking
- Discussion
- Gathering, classifying and interpreting written, oral and visual information
- Historical analysis
- Representing ideas and information orally, graphically and in writing
- Using primary sources
- Visual analysis
- Visual art analysis

Authors

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Activity Worksheets

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats": Biography

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats": Look and Think Answer Key

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats": Look and Think Worksheet

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats": Worksheets and Directions for Creating Hats

Media

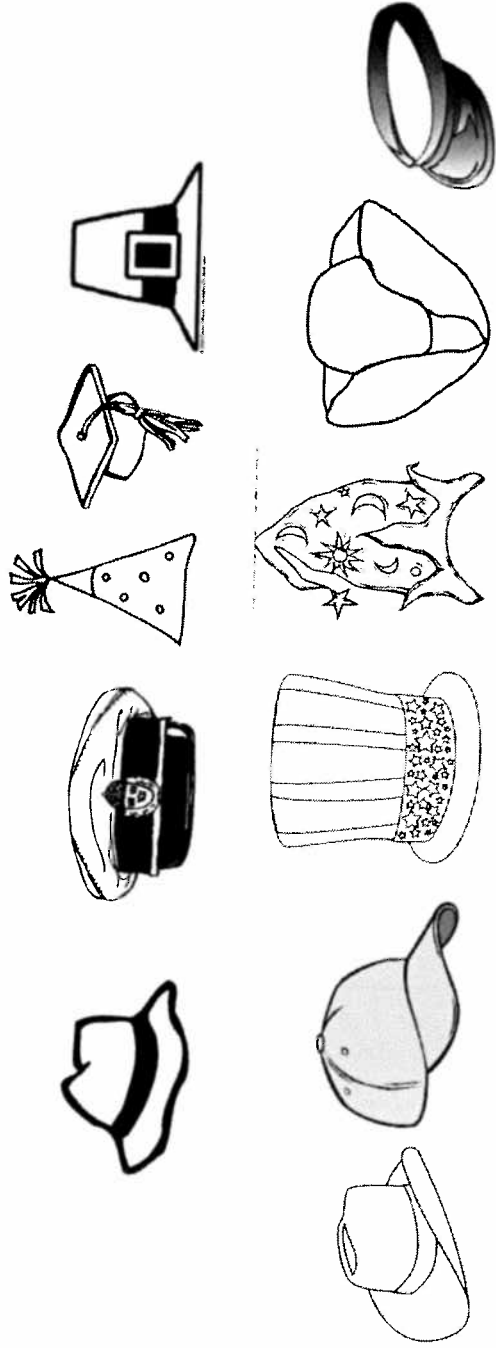


Hiram Powers (1805–1873), Benjamin Franklin, 1862. Marble, height 97 1/2 in., width 34 7/8 in., depth 21 5/8 in. (247.7 x 88.6 x 54.9 cm.).

Credit: U.S. Senate Collection.

Jefferson vs. Franklin: Renaissance Men

Students examine primary sources in order to compare the intellectual achievements of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. The lesson serves as an introduction to the complementary EDSITEment lesson, Jefferson vs. Franklin: Revolutionary Philosophers.



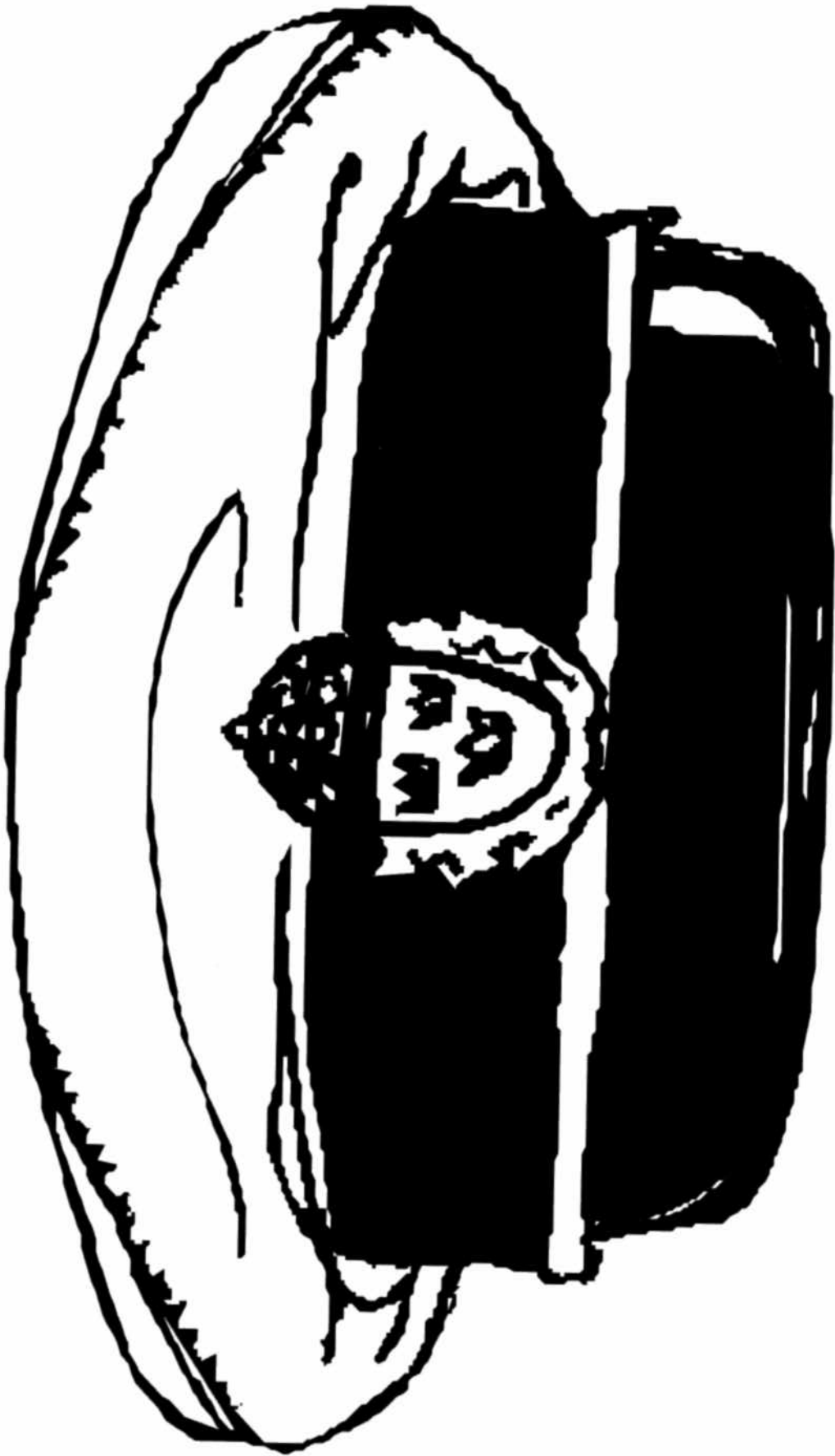
The Many Hats of Ben Franklin

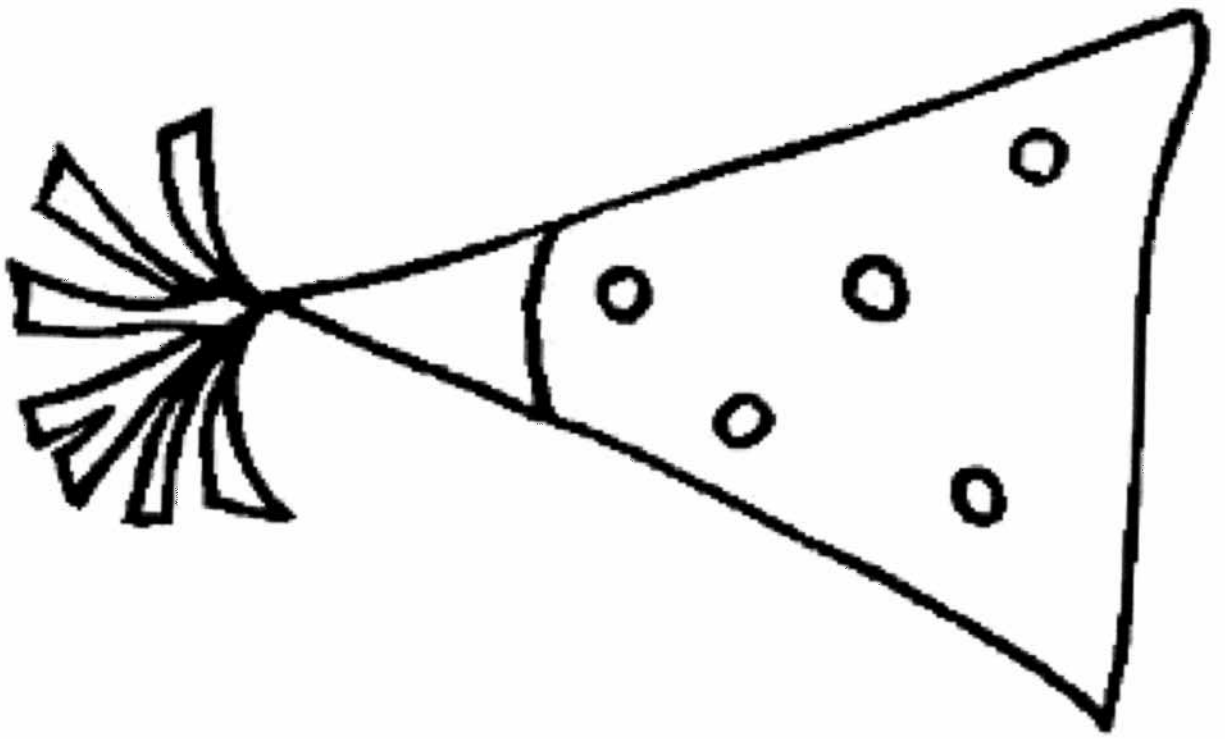
As you have read, Ben Franklin did many things for our country, even before it was a country! Using your knowledge from the reading, follow the directions below.

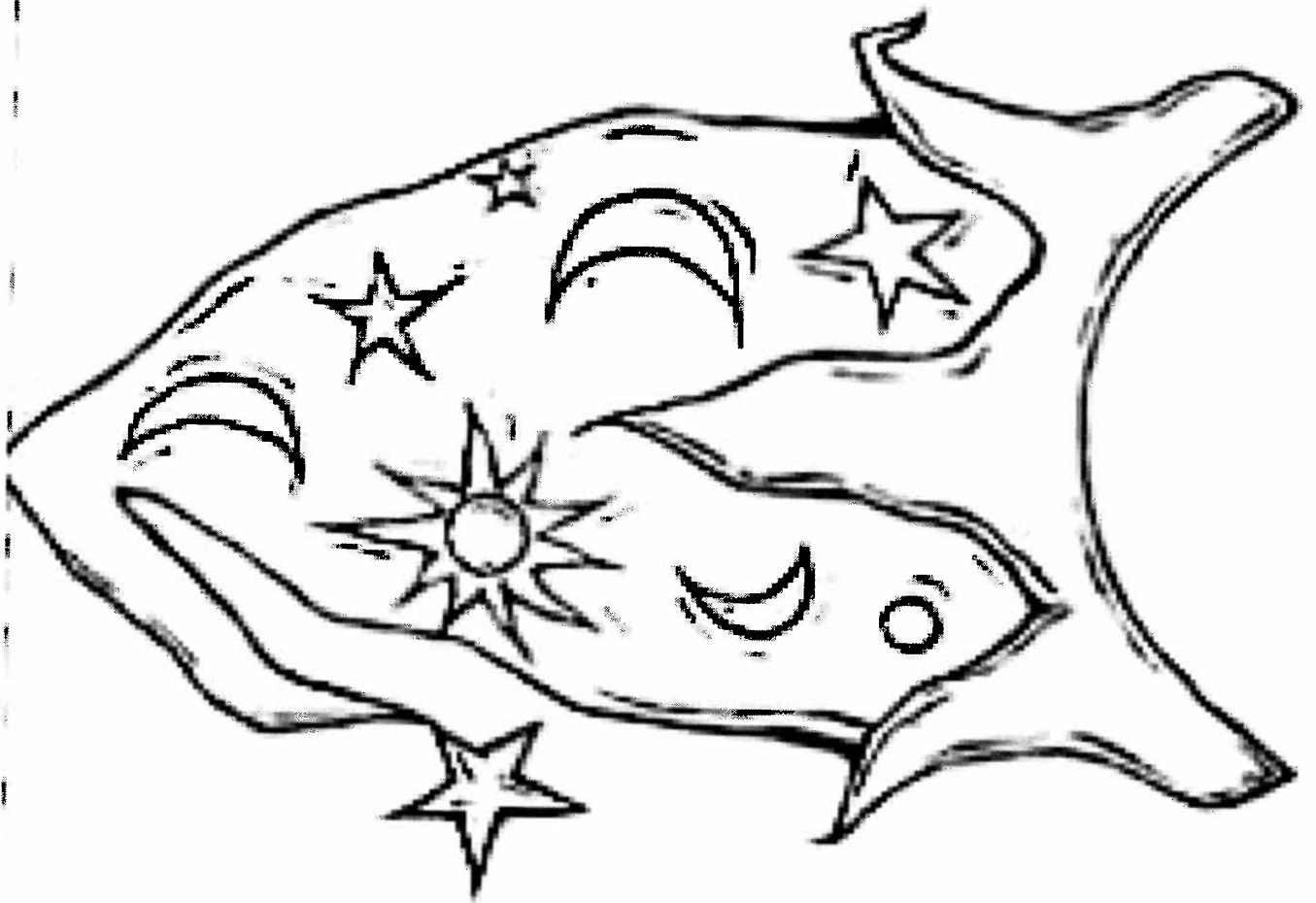
Directions:

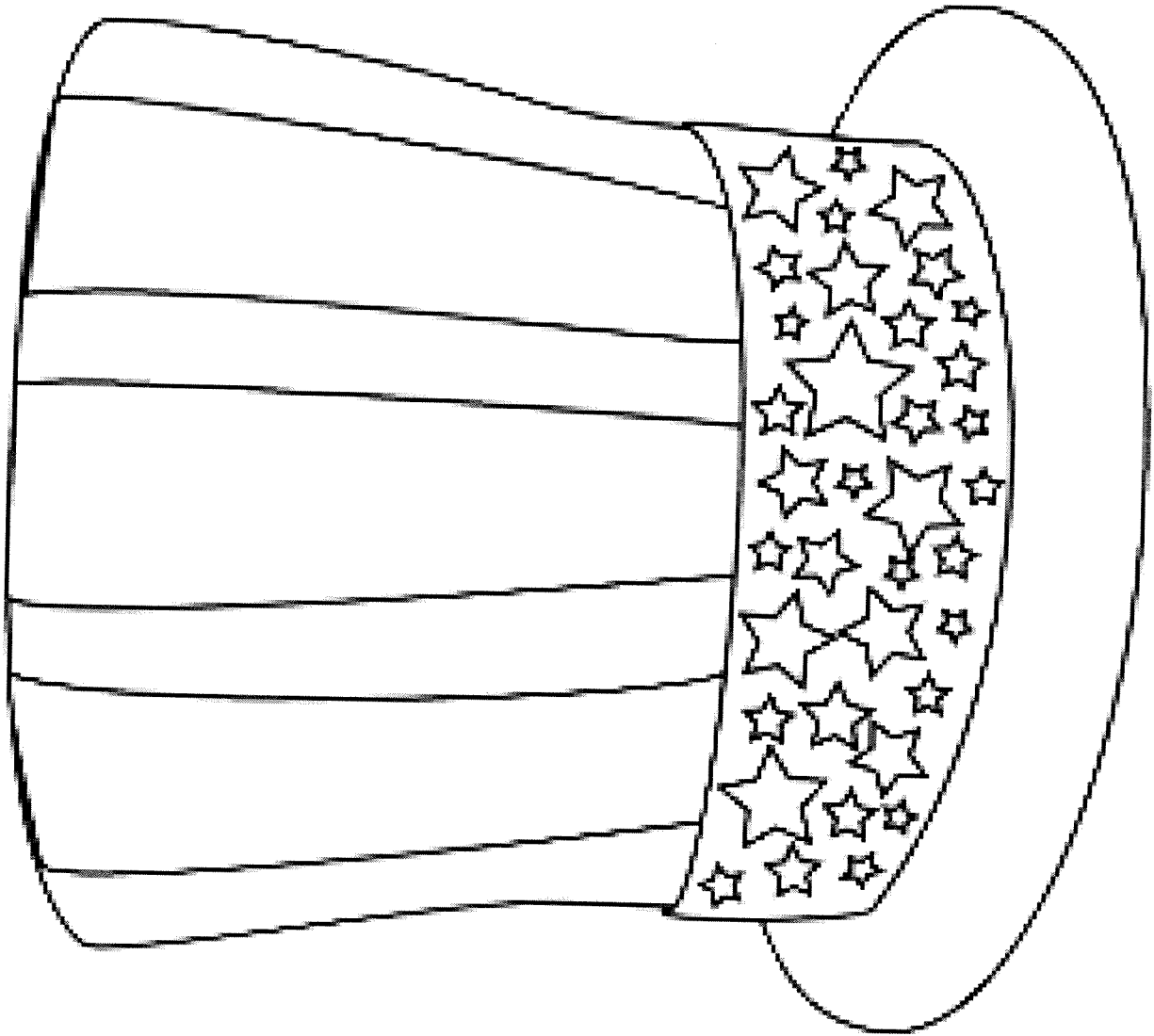
1. Choose **ONE** hat from the examples that you feel symbolizes one of the things that Ben Franklin did for our country.
2. On the hat:
 - At the top, write Ben Franklin.
 - At the bottom, write **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**, what contributions Ben Franklin made while “wearing” this hat.
 - Decorate your hat with three symbols that illustrate what Ben Franklin did while “wearing” this hat.

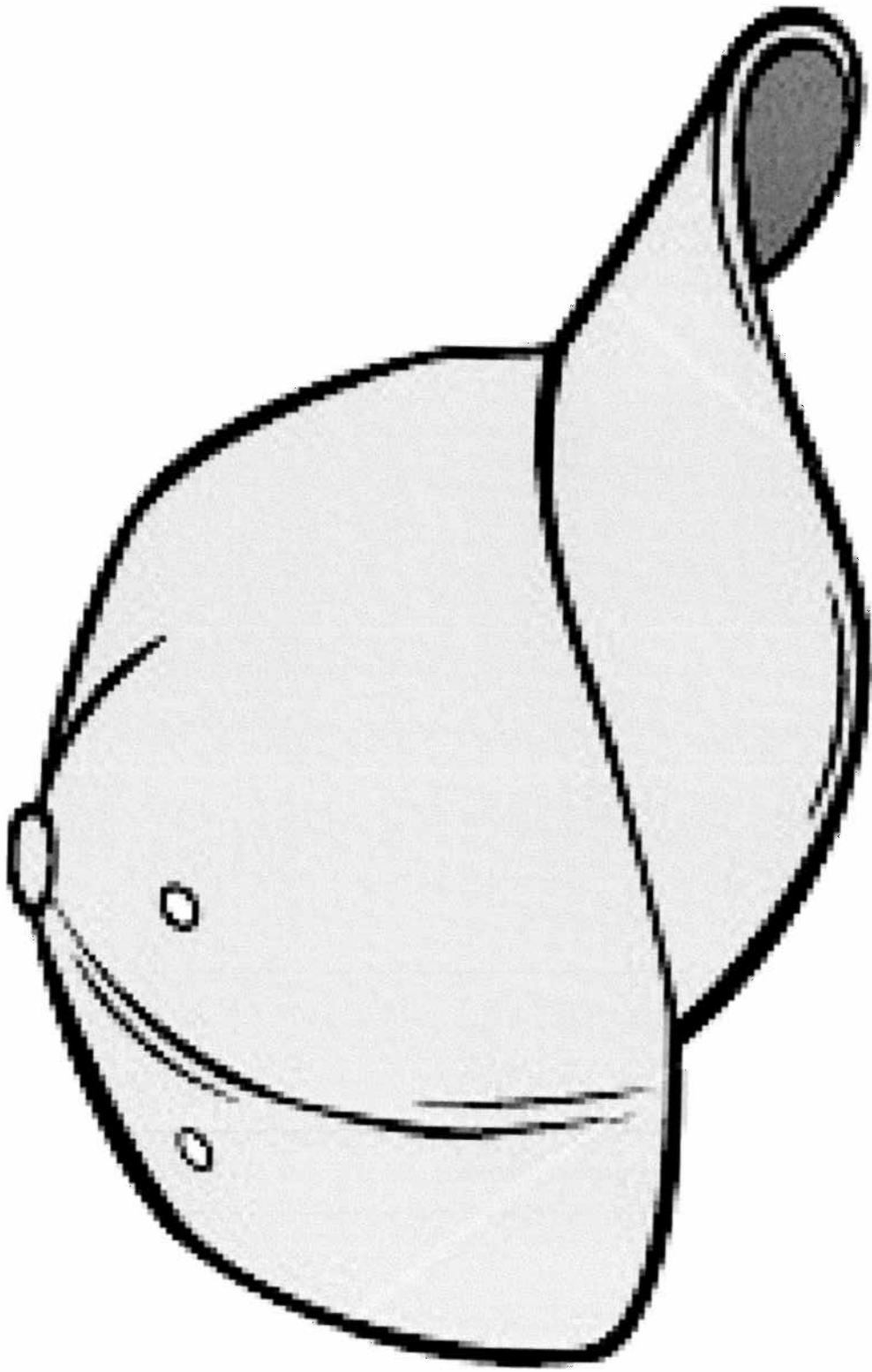


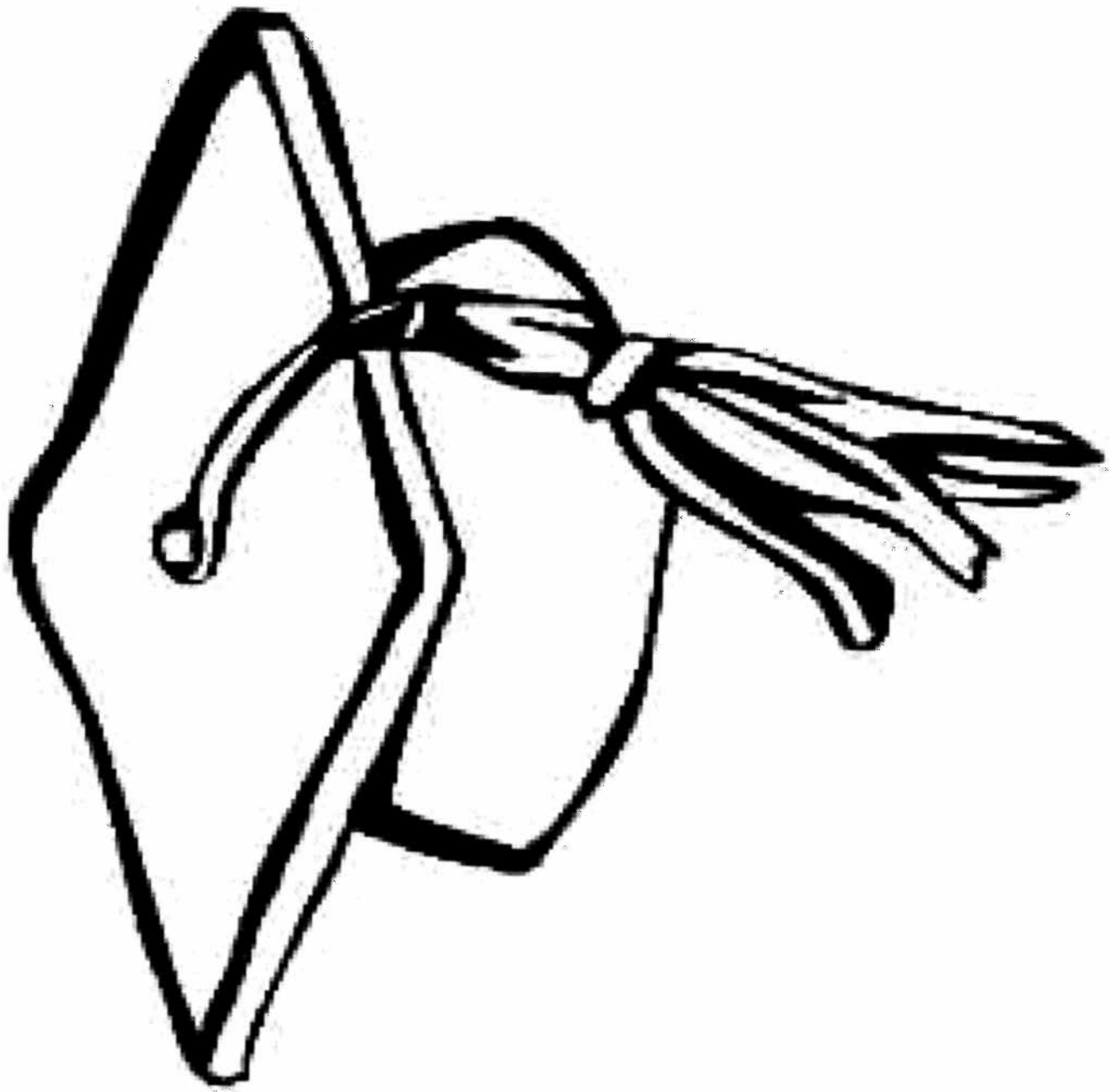


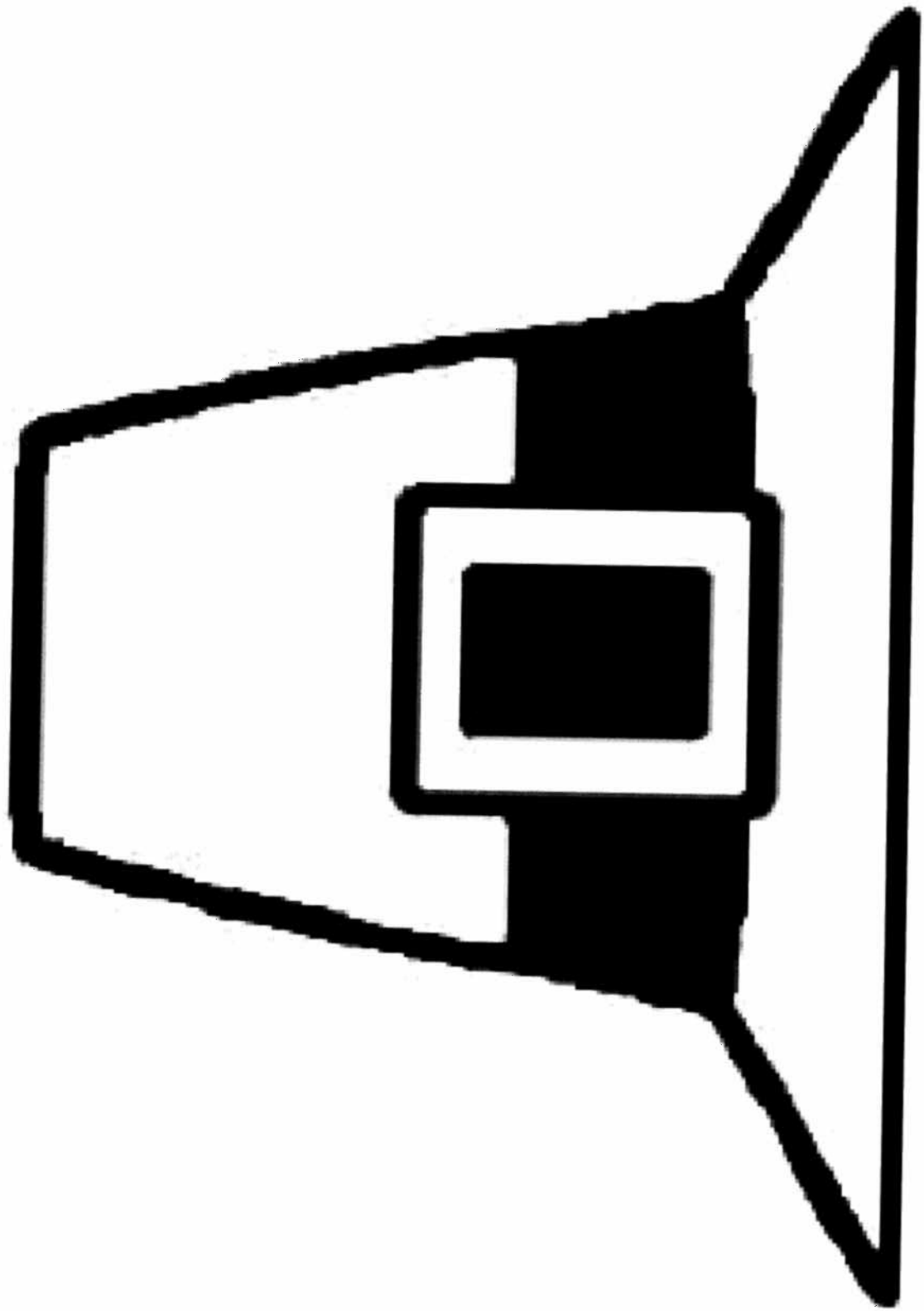


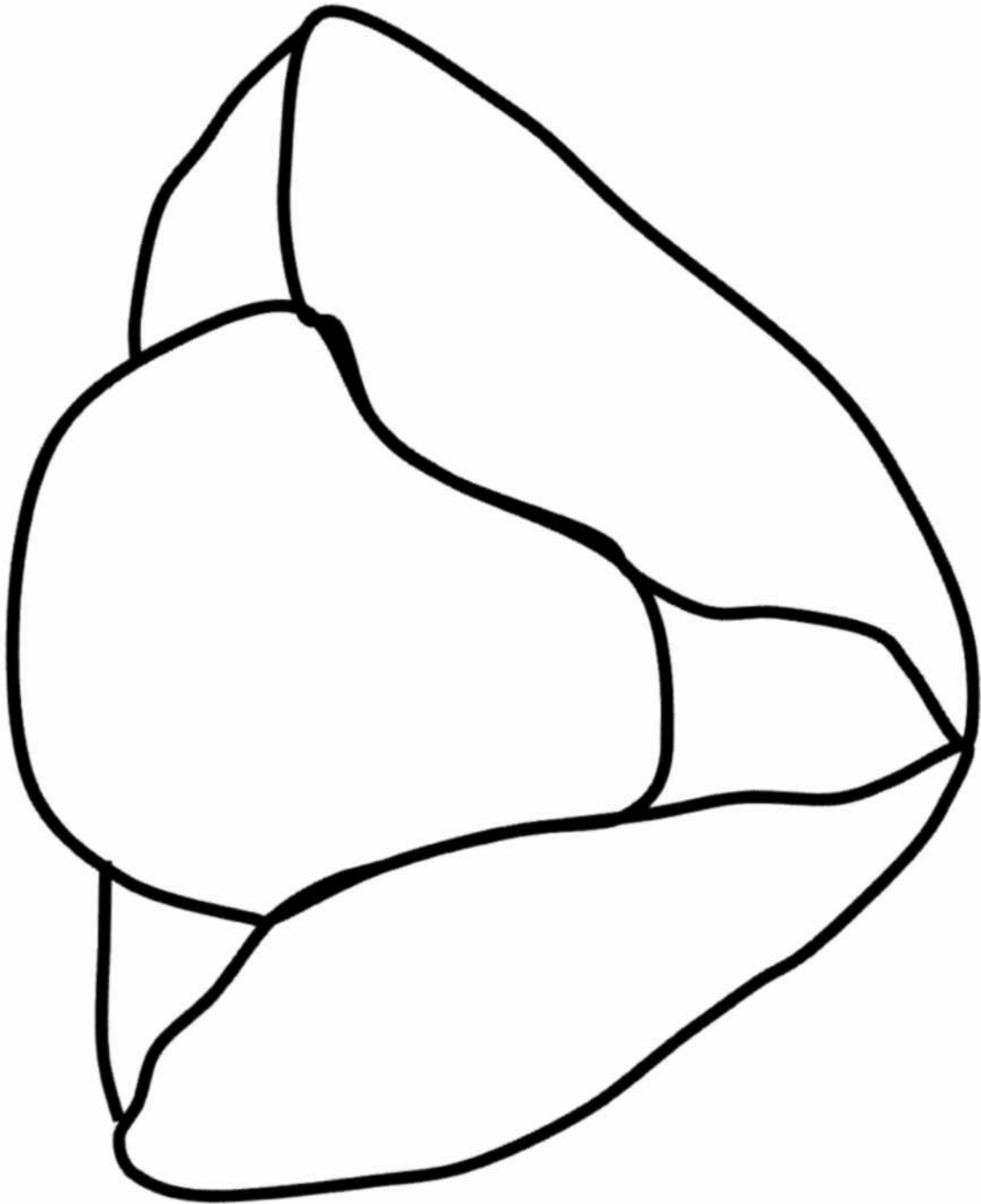














Biography of Benjamin Franklin

Student Name _____ Date _____

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston on January 17, 1706. He was the tenth son of soap maker, Josiah Franklin. Benjamin's mother was Abiah Folger, the second wife of Josiah. In all, Josiah would father 17 children.

Josiah intended for Benjamin to enter into the clergy. However, Josiah could only afford to send his son to school for one year and clergymen needed years of schooling. But, as young Benjamin loved to read he had him apprenticed to his brother James, who was a printer. After helping James compose pamphlets and set type which was grueling work, 12-year-old Benjamin would sell their products in the streets.

Apprentice Printer

When Benjamin was 15 his brother started The New England Courant the first "newspaper" in Boston. Though there were two papers in the city before James's Courant, they only reprinted news from abroad. James's paper carried articles, opinion pieces written by James's friends, advertisements, and news of ship schedules.

Franklin as printer

Benjamin wanted to write for the paper too, but he knew that James would never let him. After all, Benjamin was just a lowly apprentice. So Ben began writing letters at night and signing them with the name of a fictional widow, Silence Dogood. Dogood was filled with advice and very critical of the world around her, particularly concerning the issue of how women were treated. Ben would sneak the letters under the print shop door at night so no one knew who was writing the pieces. They were a smash hit, and everyone wanted to know who was the real "Silence Dogood."

After 16 letters, Ben confessed that he had been writing the letters all along. While James's friends thought Ben was quite precocious and funny, James scolded his brother and was very jealous of the attention paid to him.

Before long the Franklins found themselves at odds with Boston's powerful Puritan preachers, the Mathers. Smallpox was a deadly disease in those times, and the Mathers supported inoculation; the Franklins' believed inoculation only made people sicker. And while most Bostonians agreed with the Franklins, they did not like the way James made fun of the clergy, during the debate. Ultimately, James was thrown in jail for his views, and Benjamin was left to run the paper for several issues.

Upon release from jail, James was not grateful to Ben for keeping the paper going. Instead he kept harassing his younger brother and administering beatings from time to time. Ben could not take it and decided to run away in 1723.

Escape to Philadelphia

Running away was illegal. In early America, people all had to have a place in society and runaways did not fit in anywhere. Regardless Ben took a boat to New York where he hoped to find work as a printer. He didn't, and walked across New Jersey, finally arriving in Philadelphia via a boat ride. After debarking, he used the last of his money to buy some rolls. He was wet, disheveled, and messy when his

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats"

future wife, Deborah Read, saw him on that day, October, 6, 1723. She thought him odd-looking, never dreaming that seven years later they would be married.

Franklin found work as an apprentice printer. He did so well that the governor of Pennsylvania promised to set him up in business for himself if young Franklin would just go to London to buy fonts and printing equipment. Franklin did go to London, but the governor reneged on his promise and Benjamin was forced to spend several months in England doing print work.

Benjamin had been living with the Read family before he left for London. Deborah Read, the very same girl who had seen young Benjamin arrive in Philadelphia, started talking marriage, with the young printer. But Ben did not think he was ready. While he was gone, she married another man.

Upon returning to Philadelphia, Franklin tried his hand at helping to run a shop, but soon went back to being a printer's helper. Franklin was a better printer than the man he was working for, so he borrowed some money and set himself up in the printing business. Franklin seemed to work all the time, and the citizens of Philadelphia began to notice the diligent young businessman. Soon he began getting the contract to do government jobs and started thriving in business.

In 1728, Benjamin fathered a child named William. The mother of William is not known. However, in 1730 Benjamin married his childhood sweetheart, Deborah Read. Deborah's husband had run off, and now she was able to marry.

In addition to running a print shop, the Franklins also ran their own store at this time, with Deborah selling everything from soap to fabric. Ben also ran a book store. They were quite enterprising.

Join or Die

In 1729, Benjamin Franklin bought a newspaper, the Pennsylvania Gazette. Franklin not only printed the paper, but often contributed pieces to the paper under aliases. His newspaper soon became the most successful in the colonies. This newspaper, among other firsts, would print the first political cartoon, authored by Ben himself.

During the 1720s and 1730s, the side of Franklin devoted to public good started to show itself. He organized the Junto, a young working-man's group dedicated to self- and-civic improvement. He joined the Masons. He was a very busy man socially.

Poor Richard's Almanack

But Franklin thrived on work. In 1733 he started publishing Poor Richard's Almanack. Almanacs of the era were printed annually, and contained things like weather reports, recipes, predictions and homilies. Franklin published his almanac under the guise of a man named Richard Saunders, a poor man who needed money to take care of his carping wife. What distinguished Franklin's almanac were his witty aphorisms and lively writing. Many of the famous phrases associated with Franklin, such as, "A penny saved is a penny earned" come from Poor Richard.

Civic Contributions

Franklin continued his civic contributions during the 1730s and 1740s. He helped launch projects to pave, clean and light Philadelphia's streets. He started agitating for environmental clean up. Among the chief accomplishments of Franklin in this era was helping to launch the Library Company in 1731. During this time books were scarce and expensive. Franklin recognized that by pooling together

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats"

resources, members could afford to buy books from England. Thus was born the nation's first subscription library. In 1743, he helped to launch the American Philosophical Society, the first learned society in America. Recognizing that the city needed better help in treating the sick, Franklin brought together a group who formed the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1751. The Library Company, Philosophical Society, and Pennsylvania Hospital are all in existence today.

Fires were very dangerous threat to Philadelphians, so Franklin set about trying to remedy the situation. In 1736, he organized Philadelphia's Union Fire Company, the first in the city. His famous saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," was actually fire-fighting advice.

Those who suffered fire damage to their homes often suffered irreversible economic loss. So, in 1752, Franklin helped to found the Philadelphia Contribution for Insurance Against Loss by Fire. Those with insurance policies were not wiped out financially. The Contributionship is still in business today.

Electricity

Franklin's printing business was thriving in this 1730s and 1740s. He also started setting up franchise printing partnerships in other cities. By 1749 he retired from business and started concentrating on science, experiments, and inventions. This was nothing new to Franklin. In 1743, he had already invented a heat-efficient stove — called the Franklin stove — to help warm houses efficiently. As the stove was invented to help improve society, he refused to take out a patent.

Among Franklin's other inventions are swim fins, the glass armonica (a musical instrument) and bifocals.

In the early 1750's he turned to the study of electricity. His observations, including his kite experiment which verified the nature of electricity and lightning brought Franklin international fame.

The Political Scene

Politics became more of an active interest for Franklin in the 1750s. In 1757, he went to England to represent Pennsylvania in its fight with the descendants of the Penn family over who should represent the Colony. He remained in England to 1775, as a Colonial representative not only of Pennsylvania, but of Georgia, New Jersey and Massachusetts as well.

Early in his time abroad, Franklin considered himself a loyal Englishman. England had many of the amenities that America lacked. The country also had fine thinkers, theater, witty conversation — things in short supply in America. He kept asking Deborah to come visit him in England. He had thoughts of staying there permanently, but she was afraid of traveling by ship.

Stamp Act

In 1765, Franklin was caught by surprise by America's overwhelming opposition to the Stamp Act. His testimony before Parliament helped persuade the members to repeal the law. He started wondering if America should break free of England. Franklin, though he had many friends in England, was growing sick of the corruption he saw all around him in politics and royal circles. Franklin, who had proposed a plan for united colonies in 1754, now would earnestly start working toward that goal.

Franklin's big break with England occurred in the "Hutchinson Affair." Thomas Hutchinson was an English-appointed governor of Massachusetts. Although he pretended to take the side of the people of Massachusetts in their complaints against England, he was actually still working for the King. Franklin got a hold of some letters in which Hutchinson called for "an abridgment of what are called English

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Liberties" in America. He sent the letters to America where much of the population was outraged. After leaking the letters Franklin was called to Whitehall, the English Foreign Ministry, where he was condemned in public.

A New Nation

Franklin came home. He started working actively for Independence. He naturally thought his son William, now the Royal governor of New Jersey, would agree with his views. William did not. William remained a Loyal Englishman. This caused a rift between father and son which was never healed.

Franklin was elected to the Second Continental Congress and worked on a committee of five that helped to draft the Declaration of Independence. Though much of the writing is Thomas Jefferson's, much of the contribution is Franklin's. In 1776 Franklin signed the Declaration, and afterward sailed to France as an ambassador to the Court of Louis XVI.

Franklin in France

The French loved Franklin. He was the man who had tamed lightning, the humble American who dressed like a backwoodsman but was a match for any wit in the world. He spoke French, though stutteringly. He was a favorite of the ladies. Several years earlier his wife Deborah had died, and Benjamin was now a notorious flirt. In part via Franklin's popularity, the government of France signed a Treaty of Alliance with the Americans in 1778. Franklin also helped secure loans and persuade the French they were doing the right thing. Franklin was on hand to sign the Treaty of Paris in 1783, after the Americans had won the Revolution.

Now a man in his late seventies, Franklin returned to America. He became President of the Executive Council of Pennsylvania. He served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and signed the Constitution. One of his last public acts was writing an anti-slavery treatise in 1789.

Franklin died on April 17, 1790 at the age of 84. Twenty thousand people attended the funeral of the man who was called, "the harmonious human multitude."

Name _____ Answer Key _____

Activity 1 – Look and Think

Look carefully at the reproduction of Hiram Powers' marble statue of *Benjamin Franklin*. Then answer these questions about the statue.

1. The tricorne or three-cornered hat that Franklin wears was popular during his lifetime. Put a dot on each of the three corners of Franklin's hat.
2. Compare Benjamin Franklin's suit, hat and hairstyle to those of modern businessmen. How are they alike and different? Fill in this chart to compare Franklin's clothes and hair to that of modern businessmen.

	Today's business suits	Franklin's suit
coat	Few small buttons, extends just below hips, open lapels	Longer, extends below knees, many large buttons
legs/shoes	Straight pant legs, loose, ankle length, shoes are slip-ons or have shoelaces	Tight pant legs extend to just below knees, knee-length stockings, silver buckled shoes
hat	Smaller, soft brim	Large brim turned up into 3 points
vest	Often not worn, usually smaller than Franklin's	Long, to mid-thigh, many buttons
hair	Varies, usually shorter than Franklin's	Shoulder-length, loose curls



Hiram Powers, *Benjamin Franklin*



3. Hiram Powers reminds us that Franklin experimented with electricity. Draw a red line on the line in the tree trunk that looks like it might have been struck by lightning.
4. Find the main line that runs throughout this sculpture. Trace this line with a thick blue line extending from Franklin's nose, through the centerline of his vest and down his left leg and foot (closest to the tree stump).
5. In a sculpture the space around and between its main parts is called *negative space* and is usually very important in its artistic design. One negative space is between Franklin's two legs. Find another important negative space in this sculpture. Color these negative spaces green.
6. Circle the foot that bears most of Franklin's weight.
7. What details show the texture or feel of Franklin's clothes? wrinkles or folds
8. What does the hand on Franklin's chin suggest about him? He's thoughtful.
9. When Hiram Powers made this statue of Benjamin Franklin, some art critics thought he should show Franklin wearing a Roman toga rather than clothes like he had actually worn. During the century statues of United States leaders were often depicted in the clothing of the first democracies, ancient classical Greece and Rome.
 - a. By showing Franklin in his own clothes, rather than that of ancient Greece, what does Hiram Powers suggest about Franklin? He was a man of his times, dealing with contemporary ideas. Answers may vary.
 - b. Explain why you would prefer to see early United States leaders portrayed in modern or classical Grecian/Roman clothing. Answers will vary



Name _____

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Neck/shirt		
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vest		
hair		



Hiram Powers, *Benjamin Franklin*

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