



LESSON 3:

Learning the Printing Trade

OVERVIEW

Benjamin Franklin was born January 17, 1706, to Josiah and Abiah Franklin. He was the ninth of eleven children residing in a small, wooden house on Milk Street in Boston. After attending Boston's South Grammar School for just two years, the young Benjamin Franklin's education was cut short when his father decided he should learn a trade. At twelve, Franklin was made an apprentice to his brother James, a printer, and labored in his shop over the next five years. The printing trade was both mentally and physically demanding, but Franklin learned it easily and well.

At seventeen, Franklin arrived in Philadelphia and right away began establishing himself as a printer. He opened his own printing shop on Market Street in 1730, where he and his wife Deborah also sold stationery and dry goods. For Franklin, the printing trade provided more than just an income: he used his press for various aims, from advocating the need for paper money to sharing common sense advice. His witty and wise writings in *Poor Richard's Almanack* and his broadcast of colonial happenings in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* helped make Franklin a prominent figure in Philadelphia.

By the end of his life, Franklin had succeeded in various careers. Of all his accomplishments, he most wished to be remembered as "B. Franklin, Printer."

This activity teaches language arts skills by introducing students to the 18th-century printing trade. Students use reading skills to perform cut-and-paste activities designed to simulate the task of hand-setting type.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Practice the general skills of the reading process in performing cut-and-paste activities.
- Gain a sense of how printers hand-set type to form words and sentences in the 18th century.

McREL STANDARDS

Language Arts

Standard 5. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

TIME

This lesson and activity require one class period. Preparations include photocopying handouts included in this lesson plan and visiting a website to learn about the 18th-century printing trade.

MATERIALS

- Computer with Internet access
- "Printing Cut-and-Paste Activities" (attached)
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Glue

LESSON AND ACTIVITY

1. Discuss the production of printed materials today and in the colonies. Ask the students to name printed materials (e.g., books, newspapers, magazines) that they read at home and in the classroom. Then ask them to share their understanding of how those materials are printed (e.g., computer printers, photocopy machines, typewriters).

2. Explain that in the 18th-century reading materials were printed in a very different way than they are printed today. Visit these websites to learn about the printing trade in colonial America and share your knowledge with the class.

- www.history.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradepri.cfm
- www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Autumn01/Ohsandahs.cfm

Your discussion of the 18th-century printing trade should teach students the following vocabulary and concepts:

Vocabulary

- printer
- printing shop
- type
- press

Concepts

- the printing process
- hand-setting type
- pulling the press
- time and effort the printing trade demanded
- importance of printing to people in colonial America who had few reading materials

3. Cut-and-Paste Activities

Introduce the activities by saying that students will get the feel of hand-setting type the way it was done by Benjamin Franklin and other 18th-century printers. Distribute handouts to students and review the instructions for the activities.

4. When all are finished, you may encourage the students to share their work with the class.

ASSESSMENT

Students are assessed on the quality of their class participation and on their completion of the cut-and-paste activities.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Turn your classroom into a printing shop with potato stamps! You will need:

- Potatoes (one potato makes two stamps)
- One small kitchen knife
- Cutting board
- Newspaper
- Construction paper
- Tempera paints

Make the potato stamps beforehand. Cut each potato in half. Use a marking pen to draw shapes on the flat, cut surfaces of the potato. Carve away the potato surrounding the shape so that the shape protrudes about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

When you are ready to do the activity in the classroom, lay down newspaper to protect surfaces. Instruct students on using the stamps: the potato stamp is dipped in paint and then pressed onto construction paper. Students' "print jobs" may be displayed in the classroom.

Printing Cut-and-Paste Activities

Oh, no! Benjamin Franklin dropped his type! Now it is scattered all over the floor of his printing shop. Can you put the letters back in order?

DIRECTIONS: Cut out the letters on this page. Put them back in order to form the alphabet. Paste the letters on the next page to make a case of type for Benjamin Franklin.

Ff

Mm

Oo

Rr

Gg

Uu

Tt

Aa

Zz

Ee

Qq

Hh

Ll

Xx

Cc

Vv

Nn

Kk

Pp

Ii

Jj

Bb

Dd

Ss

Ww

Yy

Printing Cut-and-Paste Activities

DIRECTIONS: Cut out the words at the bottom of the page. Put them in order to form a sentence. Paste them on the squares below.
Read the sentence aloud.

--	--	--	--	--

printer

Franklin

was

Benjamin

a

Printing Cut-and-Paste Activities

Oh, no! Benjamin Franklin dropped his type! Now it is scattered all over the floor of his printing shop. Can you put the letters back in order?

DIRECTIONS: Cut out the letters on this page. Put them in order to form a sentence about Benjamin Franklin. Paste the letters on the next page to make a page ready for printing.

E N M N B A I J

R L K A N N F I D W N O E

A I R N T I P G N

P H S O N O K R M T E A

R E S T E T N I

H I P L A A H H D I E L P .

Printing Cut-and-Paste Activities (continued)
