Benjamin Franklin
In Search of a Better World

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, a non-profit organization supported by a lead grant of $4 million from The Pew Charitable Trusts, was established to mark the 300-year anniversary of Benjamin Franklin’s birth (1706-2006) with a celebration dedicated to educating the public about Franklin’s enduring legacy and inspiring renewed appreciation of the values he embodied. The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary was founded in 2000 by a consortium of five Philadelphia cultural institutions: the American Philosophical Society, The Franklin Institute, The Library Company of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the University of Pennsylvania. In addition, an Act of Congress in 2002 created the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Commission, a panel of fifteen outstanding Americans chosen to study and recommend programs to celebrate Franklin’s 300th birthday. The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary can be found online at www.benfranklin300.org.
Hello, dear friends!

When I was a little critter, I was rescued from the thorny underbrush by my new best friend, young Ben Franklin. Oh, what did he see in so lowly a creature as me? I was just a tiny squirrel with no prospects! “But Skuggs,” Franklin said to me, “even the smallest of creatures can do great things. Greatness is all around you. Step out into the world and you will find it.”

And so Ben invited me to join him on an extraordinary journey. We have curious minds and sturdy shoes, but we need some traveling companions. Won’t you share our adventures?

Come along, dear friends—off we go!

Benjamin Franklin loved to read and learn throughout his life. As a boy, he enjoyed literature, philosophy, the Bible, and more—and yet he attended school for just two years! When he was twelve, he became an apprentice printer—that is, a printer-in-training—to his older brother James. Ben made the most of the long, hard days in the printing shop. He practiced writing by copying from newspapers and other books and kept himself fit by swimming, always mindful of self-improvement and his future plans.

The early days in the Franklin family home were hardly easy. Just imagine them all—Ben’s father Josiah and mother Abiah, his ten brothers and sisters, and young Ben—living in a twenty-square-foot wooden house on Milk Street in Boston. But Ben was not bothered. After a long day spent working in brother James’s printing shop, he often slipped away and burrowed himself in books all night. If you come close, you’ll see some of Ben’s favorite books, but be careful—don’t press your paws on the glass! Look for me lying nearby.

Franklin was a warmhearted man who delighted in the company of friends. He found them in all sorts of places—even on the forest floor! Franklin was especially fond of small, furry creatures like squirrels, or “skuggs” as they were called in his day. He once sent a “fine large grey Squirrel” all the way from Philadelphia to London as a gift for his friend Georgiana Shipley.

Alas, the first skugg escaped from his cage and was devoured by a dog. Franklin, feeling sad for Georgiana’s loss, asked his wife Deborah to send Georgiana a second skugg. In a letter of thanks, Georgiana reported that her new friend grew “fat and lively” and enjoyed “as much liberty as even a North American can desire.”

Benjamin Franklin wrote words of wisdom that mean as much today as they did long ago. As you visit Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World, look for the phrases in the exhibition that match the phrases in this book. Then fill in the blanks with Ben’s famous words!

“Being ________ is not so much a Shame, as being unwilling to ________.”

Draw here!

Here is a drawing of a family like Benjamin Franklin’s. Draw a picture of your family in the white box on the left.

AMES

QUEST

Young Ben was an eager reader. How many of his favorite books can you count?

Write the author and title of your favorite book.

Describe your special place to curl up with a good book.

Fill in the blanks

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“Being ________ is not so much a Shame, as being unwilling to ________.”
Ben arrived in Philadelphia at the age of seventeen and right away worked to establish himself as a printer. He opened his own shop on Market Street, where he and his wife Deborah also sold stationery and dry goods. Over the next twenty-five years, the printing business made Ben a wealthy man. But for Ben, printing was about more than money; it gave people with different ideas a way to share their opinions with one another. By the end of his long life, Franklin was a very famous man who had done many great things—but of all his accomplishments, he most wished to be remembered as “B. Franklin, Printer.”
 Zap! This eighteenth-century scientific stuff is electrifying! Who would have guessed that a little glass tube could make such a big spark? Zouch! I think my fur is making an electrical charge as it rubs against the glass. Look for me in front of the wooden machine...I wonder what might happen if I turned the crank?

**Useful Knowledge**

Ben’s endless curiosity and wish for a better world made him perfectly suited to be a scientist. Always aiming to make life both easier and safer, he looked for ways to improve everyday things using scientific knowledge. Ben also exchanged ideas with scientists in Europe, helping to bring about major advances in the study of electricity. By the time the American Revolutionary War broke out, Franklin was respected and admired around the world for his scientific achievements. This international fame helped Franklin in his role as one of America’s first international diplomats.

“What signifies knowing the _______, if you know not the _______ of Things.”

**FILL IN THE BLANKS**

Across
1. Rubbing wool or fur on this instrument made an electric spark.
5. Franklin introduced this word to describe material that transmits electricity.

Down
2. This protective device kept homes from catching fire during thunderstorms.
3. These rang from inside homes when thunderclouds brought electrical charges near.
4. This first battery used metal and glass to capture and store electricity.

Answer Key: Across 1. glass tube  5. conductor  Down  2. lightning rod  3. lightning bells  4. Leyden jar
Imagine helping Ben prepare for his trip to France. What supplies did the Continental army need for fighting battles with the British? Write a shopping list of ten things that Ben must bring back from France.

Benjamin Franklin loved writing letters. He sent them to everyone he knew—family, friends, scientists, and politicians—from everywhere he lived—Boston, Philadelphia, London, and Paris. Ben spent almost thirty years living overseas—first in London and then in Paris—far from his family and his American friends. Ben carried this desk with him wherever he went, always ready to send or receive another letter.

Dear Friends,

As you desire to know my whereabouts, I now let you know that I sit close by. Just look for Ben’s special traveling desk, and you’ll find me sitting with a pen in my paw and a letter on my lap.

Your most humble obedient servant,
Skuggs

Benjamin Franklin did more with mail than sending and receiving letters. As deputy postmaster, he improved the colonial postal system. Design your own stamp in honor of Postmaster Franklin’s 300th birthday.

The Continental Congress sent Ben to Paris with a thirty-eight-page list of everything the Americans needed to fight the war with Britain. It took some time, but Ben finally convinced the King of France to send these supplies, which were loaded onto a boat bound for America. But somehow the British discovered the plan and sent a gunboat to sink the ship! So Ben begged the French King to replace the lost goods. The second ship made its way to America, and the Continental Army received the much-needed military goods. In the end, Ben’s hard work helped make history.

Now that the fight for independence is in full swing, the American soldiers are in desperate need of supplies. Ben is getting ready to go to France and ask King Louis XVI for help. Meanwhile, you can find me double-checking the order for supplies that the Continental Congress gave us—we can’t forget a single thing!

Benjamin Franklin traveled to both London and Paris. Write a letter to him telling him about a trip that you’ve taken.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Supplies List

Imagine helping Ben prepare for his trip to France. What supplies did the Continental army need for fighting battles with the British? Write a shopping list of ten things that Ben must bring back from France.

1. _______________________
2. _______________________
3. _______________________
4. _______________________
5. _______________________
6. _______________________
7. _______________________ 
8. _______________________ 
9. _______________________ 
10. _______________________
Benjamin Franklin’s role in founding the United States began long before the Revolutionary War. In 1754, he thought of the first plan for uniting the colonies, and soon after sailed to London to represent the colonists’ interests to the British government. He helped write the Declaration of Independence, which officially broke American ties with Britain, and then traveled to France to secure military aid that enabled the American army to defeat the British. Finally, after helping to write the U.S. Constitution, Ben became the only person to sign five of the founding documents of the United States: the Albany Plan of Union, the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Amity, the Treaty of Paris, and the U.S. Constitution.

Ben loved telling stories. By the time he started writing his life story in 1771, he had scores of stories to tell. Ben began his Autobiography as a letter to his son, recounting his life’s journey from a 16-year-old apprentice to one of the colonies’ premiere citizens. He passed on his own means to success—a desire for self-improvement, a belief in virtue, and an endless curiosity. Ben wished most for others to find the same happiness and success he had found. Three hundred years after his birth, his Autobiography continues to be read worldwide. Do you think Ben fulfilled his wish?

“Think about the stories you would like to tell. It’s never too soon to get started on your own autobiography! Write the first paragraph of your life story.”

**ALBANY**
**CONSTITUTION**
**DECLARATION**
**DOCUMENTS**
**FOUNDDING FATHER**
**INDEPENDENCE**
**REVOLUTIONARY WAR**
**TREATY**
**UNITE**

**World Famous**

Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography has been translated into over twenty-five languages. Below you’ll see the title—The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin—in some of those languages. Can you match each title with the language it appears in? Write the letter of the language on the line by the correct title.

- a. French
- b. Chinese
- c. Swedish
- d. Spanish
- e. German
- f. Korean
- g. Italian
- h. Russian

- 1. Fulankelin zi zhuan
- 2. Vita di Beniamino Franklin scritta da sè medesimo
- 3. Mémoires de la vie privée de Benjamin Franklin
- 4. Benjamin Franklin’s Jugendjahre
- 5. P’uraengk’ullin chasojon
- 6. A vtobiografia
- 7. Benjamin Franklin’s Enskildta Lefwerne
- 8. Vida Del Dr. Benjamin Franklin

**World Stage**

Many years have passed since we began our journey together in Boston, and Ben and I are growing old. My fur is flecked with white, and Ben’s hair is streaked with silver. We both wear double spectacles to see clearly and rest on canes to move about. But though our bodies are worn, our spirits are bright.

Can you spot me in my diplomat’s dress? Look for an unfinished painting that shows Ben and his American friends finishing an extraordinary mission.

**At-Home Activity**

“Think about the stories you would like to tell. It’s never too soon to get started on your own autobiography! Write the first paragraph of your life story.”

“World Stage”

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**Fill in the Blanks**

“There never was a good _____, or a bad ________.”