

Ben and Me : Lesson Plan, Activities

Author: [Robert Lawson](#)
Illustrator: Robert Lawson
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Publisher: Little Brown
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Recommended for: [Grades 4-6](#)
Classification: Fiction
Genre: [Fanciful Biography](#)

Story Summary: In this very fanciful biography, the author creates a highly imaginative treatment of Benjamin Franklin, giving the reader another perspective on biography . A startling manuscript is discovered in which a mouse has "taken pen to paw" to reveal that **he, Amos, is largely responsible for Ben Franklin's achievements.** In Amos' version of history, he, not Ben, is responsible for most of the inventions, discoveries, and political successes attributed to Ben Franklin. *Amos tells "the true stories" of the invention of the Franklin Stove, of Ben's publishing endeavors, of the discovery of electricity, and of Ben's experiences at the French Court. According to Amos, even the Declaration of Independence was written by a mouse!* [View activities list](#) for this Bookfolio.

Read-aloud Recommendation: Chapter 6, pages 39-48

Class Discussion Points:

Amos takes up residence in Ben Franklin's stocking cap.

- 1) What was the invention that was discussed in this book? Who told it? What were the details about the invention?

Amos helps Ben design a Franklin stove. Heats room more efficiently and heats the room warmer. Franklin stove was in the middle of the room instead of on a fireplace; all the heat stayed in the stove. BF realizes that Amos is a good guy to have around and makes a special place in the stocking cap to live.

- 2) How was BF involved with the discovery of electricity?

Ben did experiments with electricity with machines and even put on a "shocking" exhibition in Philadelphia (where he accidentally shocked some important people), and then sent Amos up in a kite in a thunderstorm to see if lightning was, in fact, electricity (it is).

- 3) What was the incident that happened with the Farmers Almanac? Who is responsible for the incident? What would you have done in this situation?

Amos changes something in the Poor Richards Farmers Almanac which messes up something that the sailors are thinking. Everyone is mad at BF because they think he messed it up. Why did Amos change Poor Richards name to Amos? Poor Richard is a made up name and Amos is the only name Amos knew how to spell.

4) What were Ben's experiences at the French Court?

Ben was very popular in France, until the end of the book when Amos led an army of mice to rescue some other mice held captive under the Queen's throne. When Ben showed up at a 4th of July party honoring America and a bunch of mice came running out from his cap and pockets and the Queen fainted, Ben wasn't so popular anymore, and it was time to go home to America.

5) What was Amos' viewpoint about who wrote the Declaration of Independence, according to Amos? Who really wrote it?

Amos was reciting something written by Red, a mouse that traveled in Thomas Jefferson's saddlebag, that had to do with declaring freedom for mice, and when Ben heard it he thought it was perfect for the Declaration of Independence. So even though Ben and Thomas Jefferson got the credit, it was really Red and Amos who wrote the Declaration of Independence!

Events and Quotes for the book *BEN and ME* by Robert Lawson

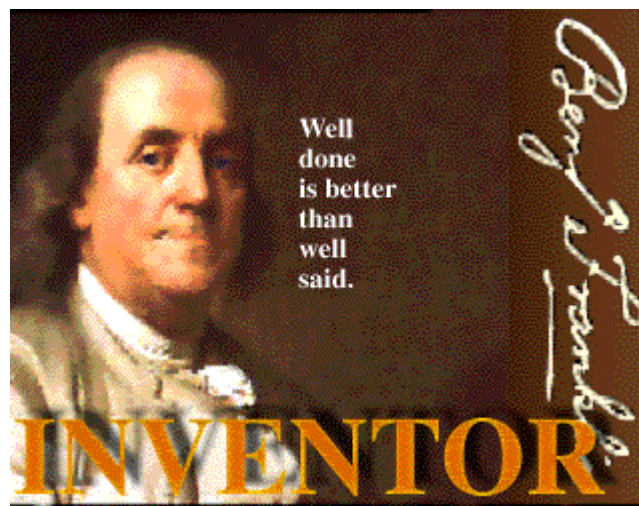
Below you will find 15 quotes or events in random order. Do you know the right sequence? **CLUES**

-
1. _____ "Blurg!"
-
2. _____ WASTE NOT, WANT NOT
-
3. _____ FOOLS MAKE FEASTS AND WISE MEN EAT THEM
-
4. _____ "Along the bank came trotting a half-grown mongrel dog, seeking mischief, as is the usual habit of such brutes."
-
5. _____ THE CAT IN GLOVES CATCHES NO MICE
-
6. _____ "Are we mice or are we men?"
-
7. _____ "We were drawn to eating prayer books, and when those gave out we took to the Minister's sermons."
-
8. _____ "Safe in my glass jar I thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of Ben's terror as long as the storm raged."
-
9. _____ "A scene of the wildest confusion followed. The Queen and twenty-seven of her courtiers promptly fainted."
-
10. _____ "I have no time for mincing popinjays, /'m busy."
-
11. _____ "Just as the last grandchild finished her little speech and curtsy, we staggered in with THE HAT."
-
12. _____ THE LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS HIRE
-
13. _____ "My corrected arrangements seemed to leave several loose wires and copper plates with no place to go, so I just left

them in one of the chairs on the stage."

14. _____ "It was one of the happiest moments of my life when, at a brilliant triple wedding ceremony, these six young hearts became as three."

15. _____ "One of the rats, an old gray-bearded fellow, pointed glumly to the tops of the masts."



A list of Benjamin Franklin's inventions reveals a man of many talents and interests. It was the scientist in Ben that brought out the inventor. His natural curiosity about things and the way they work made him try to find ways to make them work better.

Ben had poor vision and needed glasses to read. He got tired of constantly taking them off and putting them back on, so he decided to figure out a way to make his glasses let him see both near and far. He had two pairs of spectacles cut in half and put half of each lens in a single frame. Today, we call them [bifocals](#).

For more information, visit [Benjamin Franklin: Father of the Bifocal](#).

Even though Ben is not famous for his study of bioscience, he was interested in how the human body works and looked for ways to help it work better. For example, Ben's older brother John suffered from kidney stones and Ben wanted to help him feel better. Ben developed a flexible urinary catheter that appears to have been the first one produced in America.

During Ben's lifetime, he made eight voyages across the Atlantic Ocean. These long

journeys gave him a lot of time to learn about ships and how they worked. As early as 1784, Franklin suggested following the Chinese model of dividing ships' holds into watertight compartments so that if a leak occurred in one compartment, the water would not spread throughout the hold and sink the ship.

Everyone knows the story of Ben's famous kite flight. Although he made important discoveries and advancements, Ben did not "invent" [electricity](#). He did, however, invent the [lightning rod](#) which protected buildings and ships from lightning damage.

In colonial America, most people warmed their homes by building a fire in a fireplace even though it was kind of dangerous and used a lot of wood. Ben figured that there had to be a better way. His invention of an iron furnace stove allowed people to warm their homes less dangerously and with less wood. The furnace stove that he invented is called a [Franklin stove](#). Interestingly enough, Ben also established the first fire company and the first fire insurance company in order to help people live more safely.

As postmaster, Ben had to figure out routes for delivering the mail. He went out riding in his carriage to measure the routes and needed a way to keep track of the distance. He invented a simple [odometer](#) and attached it to his carriage.

In his old age, Ben retired from business and public service and wanted to spend his time reading and studying. He found, however, that his old age had made it difficult for him to reach books from the high shelves. Even though he had many grandchildren to help him, he invented a tool called a long arm to reach the high books. The long arm was a long wooden pole with a grasping claw at the end.

Later, other famous inventors, like [Thomas A. Edison](#) and [Alexander Graham Bell](#), would follow in Ben's footsteps by trying to find ways to help people live better. [Today's curious thinkers](#) are keeping Ben's traditions alive by inventing new and improved ways to make things work.