

The life of benjamin franklin cultural studies essay



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Kayleigh Nava February 22, 2013 English 11, per. 2 Mrs. Martin The Life of Benjamin Franklin Benjamin Franklin was a man who wore many hats in his lifetime. He was a husband, father, author, publisher, inventor, scientist, diplomat, and a Founding Father of America. Benjamin grew up in a very big and religious family. He made a name for himself that we will never forget. Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was born in his family home on Milk Street. The family home was located right next to the Old South Church. Benjamin's father was Josiah Franklin. His mother's name was Abiah Folger. Josiah Franklin was born in Northamptonshire, England on December 23, 1657. He was the Son of Thomas Franklin and Jane White. Thomas was a blacksmith and a farmer. Josiah was the Franklin's ninth child and also their last child. Josiah had a total of two wives. His first wife was Anne Child. Josiah and Anne were married in Ecton, England. In 1682, Josiah, Anne, and their three children at that time moved from Northamptonshire, England to the city of Boston (Franklin 55). In Ecton, Josiah was a fabric dyer but when they had come to New England, there was no demand for one. Josiah then became a candle and soap maker. Anne and Josiah had a total of seven children. Anne died in Boston, while she was in childbirth for her seventh child on July 9, 1689. The names of their children in order are: Elizabeth Franklin, Samuel Franklin, Hannah Franklin, Josiah Franklin, Anne Franklin, Joseph Franklin I, and Joseph Franklin II. Joseph Franklin I dies within the first week he was born. She left Josiah a widower with children. Later on in Boston, Josiah met Abiah Folger. Abiah was born in Nantucket, Massachusetts on August 15, 1667. She was the daughter of Peter Folger and Marry Morrill. Her father was a miller and a school teacher. Peter was one of the first settlers in the Boston area (Franklin <https://assignbuster.com/the-life-of-benjamin-franklin-cultural-studies-essay/>

56). Her mother used to be a former servant. Abiah was a prominent colonial lady of that time. Josiah and Abiah were married in the Old South Church (Brands 14). Josiah and Abiah had ten children together. Josiah and Abiah's children were: John Franklin, Peter Franklin, Mary Franklin, James Franklin, Sarah Franklin, Ebenezer Franklin, Thomas Franklin, Benjamin Franklin, Lydia Franklin, and Jane Franklin. (Isaacson 15). Josiah was fifty-one and Abiah was thirty-nine when Benjamin was born. Benjamin was the fifteenth child and final son for Josiah. Josiah had a goal that Benjamin would grow to become a minister in the city of Boston. Josiah and Abiah were both very religious Puritans. Because of that, Benjamin grew up in a very religious atmosphere. It was a high honor at the time of one of your sons grew up to become a minister. In the Puritan area of Boston, the ministers were highly respected individuals. Josiah often referred to Benjamin as the "tithe of his sons." With this goal in his mind, Josiah sent Benjamin to the South Grammar School to learn how to read and write. This School would later be called the Boston Latin School. He left at the age of ten because his family could not afford the school. The next school he attended, was George Brownell's English School. He left that school in 1716 because the price of the tuition was too high for his family. Benjamin was at the top of his class in both of the schools that he attended. But Benjamin was not very good in math, especially compared to his reading and writing skills. Even though his family had high hopes for Benjamin to become a minister, his family could not afford the schooling that it would require. Through his love and interest in reading, Benjamin was able to teach himself the skills of writing. After he left school, Benjamin began to work with his father making soap and candles. Benjamin would cut the wicks and fill the mold for the candles. He would clean up the shop and run the

errands that need to be done for his father (Franklin 61). Benjamin never enjoyed business that his father was involved in. He actually despised it. Benjamin's father traveled with him to show Benjamin other crafts he could get into. But Benjamin did not find in interest in any of them. At this point in his life, Benjamin was interested in learning more about the sea (Isaacson 21). Josiah taught Benjamin the value and how important it is to read and write. Benjamin always went to his father for advice, even when he grew later in life. When Benjamin was at the age of twelve, he began an apprenticeship at a print shop (Brands 21). The owner in charge of the shop was James. James was Benjamin's half-brother. Benjamin began to thoroughly enjoy his time working at the print shop. James' newspaper was called the New England Courant. This was the second newspaper that was founded in America. His work allowed him to explore his love of reading and writing even more. But his brother would never publish any of Benjamin's works. This did not discourage Benjamin from writing things for the paper. Benjamin started to write essays under a pen name. Benjamin was sixteen at this time. That name was " Mrs. Silence Dogwood" (Fisher 91). He would leave his writings under the door mat of the print shop at night. James would find these letters when he would go to open the print shop in the mornings. James and his friends enjoyed the writings so much, James decided to publish them into his newspaper. The letters were described as funny and imaginative. They soon became a favorite thing for all the people who read them in the newspaper. When Benjamin's secret finally came out about being " Mrs. Silence Dogwood," James was furious! James was not appreciative of how Benjamin had gone behind his back and tricked him into publishing Benjamin's writings in his paper. This event put a strain on

Benjamin's relationship with his brother. Their relationship never healed and there became a strain between the two brothers. Later on, James was thrown in jail because some of the writings that were published in his newspaper. The writings that were found were too critical to be published. There was no such thing as "free press" back then. While James was in jail, his paper began to be published under Benjamin's name. Once James came out of jail, the paper continued to be published under Benjamin's name. Since James had gone to jail, he lost the right for the newspaper to be published under his name. When Benjamin was seventeen, he escaped his apprenticeship by running away to New York. He was not able to find work in New York and headed towards Philadelphia. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1723, but still was not able to find work in print shops. Come to find out, James had sent word to the print shops that Benjamin had run away and to not hire him for any work. Benjamin ended up finding a companion in John Read. He started living with the Read family also. Benjamin started to have feelings for John's daughter, Deborah Read. Benjamin began to court Deborah. While in Philadelphia, Benjamin's interest in the printing shop began to increase even more. He decided to go to London to learn more about the print business. While in London, he continued to work in the print shop business. He also published his first pamphlet while he was in London. The name of the pamphlet was A Dissertation Upon Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain. In 1726, Benjamin came back to Philadelphia. Deborah Read had moved on and had gotten married while Benjamin was away in London. When he came back, Benjamin work an array of different jobs in Philadelphia. He worked as shop and book keeper to having a job as a currency cutter. Benjamin soon had a son out of wedlock. The child's name was William Franklin. Nothing is

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ever said about his mother. In 1727, Benjamin started a group that called themselves the " Junto" (Brands 19). This study group was for men. The group worked on social and self-improvement. In 1728, Benjamin established a new print shop with a business partner. He also published his second pamphlet. This one was called The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency. In the 1740s, Benjamin began to invent the Franklin Stove. In 1752, Benjamin became interested in electricity and attempted the famous kite and key experiment. In 1729, purchased the newspaper the Pennsylvania Gazette. Benjamin also became the official printer of Pennsylvania. Benjamin's newspaper became very successful and was easily the most popular newspaper at the time. He used tools that he learned while working in London to make it work smoothly. The newspaper printed the first political cartoon ever in the United States. In 1732, Benjamin began to publish the Poor Richard's Almanack. The Almanack was the very profitable like Benjamin's newspaper. It was published under the pen name of Richard Saunders. Richard was a poor man who need money to take care of his sickly wife. The Almanack was full of weather predications, recipes, a calendar, poems, sayings, and more. Ten thousand almanacks were printed each year that they ran. Benjamin published the Almanack for twenty-five years. Benjamin was can be credited for helping Philadelphia to get established. In 1731, Benjamin opened the first library in Philadelphia. He wanted to share his love of reading with other people. Until the 1850s, the library was the biggest in the United States. Benjamin also created the first fire company, police station, and the American Philosophical Society. The society supported many science and scholar pursuits. Benjamin also organized the Pennsylvania Militia, which he served on at the age of forty-two. Benjamin

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was also involved in raising money for Philadelphia to get a hospital. He also raised money to help pave and light the streets in Philadelphia. In 1751, Benjamin helped found the Academy of Philadelphia. In 1791, the name was changed to the University of Pennsylvania. On top of everything else he did, Benjamin also helped in making a colonial post system. In 1737, he became the post master of Philadelphia. In 1753, he became a joint postmaster general for the Colonies. In 1775, Benjamin was made the first ever postmaster general of the United States. This title gave him control over all the post offices in the area from Massachusetts to Georgia. The first postage stamp was released on July 1, 1847. The first two images on the postage stamps were pictures of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Deborah Read was Benjamin's true love. He first proposed to her Deborah when she was fifteen before he left for London. But her mother did not let her say yes. While Benjamin was in London, Deborah married John Rogers. John deserted her in 1725. In 1730, Deborah Read became Benjamin's common law wife. They could not have a true wedding because of the bigamy laws at the time. Deborah gave birth to Benjamin's second son Francis in 1732. Francis did not live a long life. He died at the age of four because of the small pox disease. In 1743, Benjamin's first and only daughter was born. Her name was Sarah. Sarah was the last child that Benjamin had. Sarah's nickname was Sally. Deborah ran a small general store out of Benjamin's print shop. She took care of her two children and William Franklin. She did not go with Benjamin when he was in Europe for business because she was afraid of the ocean. Deborah died in 1774 of a stroke. Benjamin was away in England when she died. They were married forty-four years. She was buried in at the Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia. Benjamin also played an important

part in politics. He was a foreign diplomat and a U. S. Ambassador to France. He was representative at the Pennsylvania Assembly. While in England, he represented Massachusetts, Georgia, and New Jersey. Benjamin was the last colonial governor of New Jersey. In 1785, Benjamin represented Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention." I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that " except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel" This Quote was Benjamin spoke about at the Constitutional Convention. Benjamin was the only Founding Father who was involved in and signed all four important documents that help make the U. S. what it is today. The documents are: The Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Paris, and the U. S. Constitution. After Deborah died, Benjamin was seventy-four and he proposed to Madame Helvetius, but she rejected him. Madame Helvetius was a widow and a owner of a salon. She was also very wealthy. Benjamin earned honorary degrees from Harvard, Yale, Oxford University, and the University of St. Andrews. He died at the home of his daughter Sarah on April 17, 1790. He was eighty-four when he passed away and moved on to a better place. He was buried in 1790 by his wife Deborah. It was estimated that around twenty thousand people attended Benjamin's funeral. After he died, Benjamin left money in his will to the cities of Boston and Philadelphia to help continue to prosper. Benjamin accomplished many achievements in his lifetime.

Benjamin is a very influential man. He had a huge part in the history of America. He was very successful. He was a good husband and father.