Our Hero, Benjamin Franklin
Lesson Plan

Grade Level: K-5  Curriculum Focus: U.S. History  Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Student Objectives

- Understand the contributions of individuals from various backgrounds who have influenced the history of the United States.
- Understand the characteristics of leadership.

Materials

- Discovery School video on unitedstreaming: Heroes of American History
  Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

  Selected clips that support this lesson plan:
  - Benjamin Franklin

- Print and online resources about Ben Franklin
- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Old magazines
- Felt-tipped pens, colored pencils, crayons
- Butcher paper or tag board

Procedures

1. Ask each of your students to research and write a paragraph about one of Benjamin Franklin’s many accomplishments. Provide appropriate print and online resources, and remind students to include important dates for the accomplishment. Here are some key events and ideas that they can focus on:

   - Franklin’s success as a printer and author (Poor Richard’s Almanac)
   - His success as a public servant (started a fire department and a public library, reorganized the mail service, raised money to build a hospital, founded a school which later became a university)
   - His role as an inventor and scientist (experiments with electricity, his invention of the lightning rod)
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• His role in politics (diplomat, coauthor of the Declaration of Independence, revolutionary)

2. If possible, make sure that each student chooses a different aspect of Franklin’s life. You may want students to work in pairs.

3. When their paragraphs are complete, ask students to create an illustration or collage depicting the events described in the paragraph they have written. These illustrations and collages may incorporate quotes and symbols. The students should also add the appropriate date or dates for the events or accomplishments they have written about. Students can use scissors, construction paper, old magazines, felt-tipped pens, colored pencils, and crayons to create those scenes. (Encourage students’ creativity, suggesting some different artistic techniques.)

4. When their paragraphs and illustrations or collages are complete, ask your students to use the tag board or butcher paper to assemble them all into a giant Benjamin Franklin timeline. You can then ask each student to read his or her paragraph aloud and invite other classes to come view the timeline.

Discussion Questions

1. Benjamin Franklin is famous for inventing great things like the lightning rod and the fire department. How have his inventions improved our country? What recent inventions have improved your way of life?

2. Benjamin Franklin did so many different jobs during his lifetime. He was a writer, a politician, and an inventor, among other things. Can you think of people alive today who do more than one job? Who are they? What would make it hard to be good at so many different things?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

• 3 points: Student’s paragraph is organized and well written, and includes a clear description of Ben Franklin’s accomplishment; the collage or illustration includes several direct references to the accomplishment, as well as the dates of important events.

• 2 points: Student’s paragraph is somewhat organized and contains few grammatical errors, and includes a satisfactory description of Ben Franklin’s accomplishment; the collage or illustration includes some direct references to the accomplishment, as well as the dates of important events.

• 1 point: Student’s paragraph is unorganized and contains several grammatical errors, and includes a weak description of Ben Franklin’s accomplishment; the collage or illustration includes few or no references to the accomplishment, and does not include dates of important events.

Vocabulary

apprentice
Definition: One who is learning a trade or art by practical experience under skilled workers.
Context: When Benjamin Franklin was 12 years old, he was sent to work as a printer’s apprentice with his older brother James.

**diplomat**
*Definition:* One employed or skilled in diplomacy, the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations.
*Context:* Benjamin Franklin was now a diplomat, and he set sail for England to talk to the lawmakers about the problems with the English government.

**treason**
*Definition:* The offense of attempting by overt acts to overthrow the government.
*Context:* If the English had captured Benjamin Franklin seeking the help of the French, he would have been tried for treason and probably hanged.

**Academic Standards**

**Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**
McREL’s Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit [http://www.mcrel.org/](http://www.mcrel.org/).
This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- **History – K-4 History:** Understands the folklore and other cultural contributions from various regions of the United States and how they helped to form a national heritage.
- **History – U.S. History:** Understands how political, religious, and social institutions emerged in the English colonies.
- **Civics:** Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy.
- **Visual Arts –** Understands and applies media techniques and processes related to the visual arts

**The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**
NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to [http://www.socialstudies.org](http://www.socialstudies.org)
This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- **Time, Continuity, and Change**
- **Civic Ideals and Practices**
Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the DiscoverySchool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- [http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html](http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html)