

# BOOK STUDY C



## Ben and Me

### Skills

Vocabulary

Reading Comprehension

Critical Thinking Skills

Fact and Opinion

Character Sketch

*Ben and Me*  
*An Astonishing Life of*  
*Benjamin Franklin By*  
*His Good Mouse Amos*  
by Robert Lawson  
Published by Little Brown  
and Company

Readability level:  
4th grade

## Introducing *Benjamin Franklin*

### Spark:

If available hold up a pair of glasses and ask your student, “Do you know who invented these glasses? The same person who invented the glasses also invented a special kind of stove and the rocking chair. Do you know who it is?” Allow time for student’s guesses. “His name was Benjamin Franklin.”

### Note:

This story travels through major events in Benjamin Franklin’s life as told by his mouse friend, Amos. The forward of the book begins the fictional story claiming to be a document found in a Colonial home. Amos tells of Benjamin Franklin’s inventions and discoveries as if they were first thought of by the mouse. It is written using language your student may not be familiar with in his reading.

In the back of the book you will find a glossary of terms, a timeline of Benjamin Franklin’s life, a list of some of his famous sayings, a map of his travels, and a short biography of the author.

Introduce the book to your student. Point out the elements in the back of the book. Explain each word in the glossary and give examples for your student if possible.

## Summary

Amos was the first born of a large mouse family. In order to help his family, he decided to go out on his own. In his search for food and a new place to live, he happened upon the home of Benjamin Franklin, a famous man at the time. The night they met was wet and cold. While Ben complained about the weather, Amos was quick to tell him that if he would move his stove to the center of the room it would make the room warmer. This is how the Franklin stove was invented. When Ben tried to take credit for the invention, Amos made a deal with him that provided for himself and his family in return for Amos’ advice to Ben.

Amos describes many of their adventures such as a time when Ben went swimming and lost his clothes to a frisky dog. Another time Amos corrected ‘mistakes’ he found in Ben’s

*Poor Richard's Almanac*. Sailors depended on the almanac's Tide Table which helped them know when to dock their ships. Due to the 'errors' Amos moved the type before Ben printed it. The almanac was printed with an incorrect Tide Table! Sailors were furious until Ben convinced them it was a 'hoax!'

Amos and Ben learned about electricity together although Amos wasn't always pleased with the methods. On one occasion, Amos moved cords and other equipment before Ben's demonstration of electricity. In spite of this, the changes made the demonstration more effective.

Among their most famous adventures was the time they invented the lightning rod. It all came about because Amos' loved to fly in Ben's kite. Ben attached a tiny platform to the kite which enabled Amos to soar into the clouds. One day while flying Amos fell asleep and was awakened by a thunderstorm. Unable to get down, he rode out the storm as Ben used the kite to experiment with lightning! Amos was quite unhappy, and it caused a rift in their friendship. But through the experiment, Ben was able to direct lightning to a rod, and this rod was used to prevent lightning from striking and burning down wooden buildings.

When Ben met with Thomas Jefferson, Amos met his mouse, Red. Red was a great speaker and leader of mice, and Amos was impressed with him. Soon, Ben and Amos went to France to seek support for the American Revolution. Later Red arrived when Thomas Jefferson became the first Ambassador to France.

While in France, Ben enjoyed going to parties and getting much attention for his fame and inventions. Amos had more serious things in mind after he met Madame Brillon's mouse, Sophia. Sophia's husband had gone to America and their children were being held captive in France. Amos promised Sophia he would rescue the children and take them all to America. To keep this promise, Amos needed help to battle the white mice of the Palace Guard. He found mice to help him, and Red was willing to gather mice to fight as well. During the battle, the Swedes and Russian mice helped Amos, while Red joined in with slum mice and sewer rats. The children were rescued and all were safe.

When it was time for Ben to return to America he was sad to leave France. Amos assured him he would be met with great fanfare at his return. Ben and Amos were met with cannons firing, firearm salutes, and floats and bands in

a parade. Sophia and her children were reunited with her husband.

When Ben's birthday drew near, Amos found the perfect gift for him: a new fur hat. Amos had always lived in Ben's hat but was ready to rest from all the adventure. So Ben put on his new hat and Amos was able to enjoy his retirement in the old one.



## Vocabulary

Find the word in its context. Reread the sentences before and after the word. Do you understand the meaning of the word? Look up the word in the dictionary and write a clear, simple definition, and use it in a sentence.

1. ludicrous – (chapter titled, “Swimming”)
2. bedraggled – (chapter titled, “Swimming”)
3. cumbered – (chapter titled, “Electricity”)
4. rascalion - (chapter titled, “At Court”)
5. cudgel – (chapter titled, “The Battle of Versailles”)

Complete the sentences with the correct vocabulary word. OR Write your own sentences using the vocabulary word.

6. After going fishing, I was \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The room was \_\_\_\_\_ with books and papers.
8. The clown acted so funny it became \_\_\_\_\_.
9. During the play, a sailor used a \_\_\_\_\_ in the battle.
10. My uncle can act like a \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes.

1. foolish, unreasonable, or out of place to the point of being amusing - Ben looked ludicrous after romping with the dog
2. dirty and disorderly in appearance - After the long day helping his father, John felt bedraggled and was ready for a bath.
3. to be cluttered; hampered - The football players were cumbered by all the gear.
4. one who is playfully mischievous - The town was suspicious when the rascalion came to town.
5. a big stick - carried the cudgel with him as he entered the jungle.
6. bedraggled
7. cumbered
8. ludicrous
9. cudgel
10. rascalion

## Discussion Questions

Find and read the sentences from the book that help you determine the answer to each question. Prepare to discuss these questions with your teacher or group.

1. What does the author tell us about this story in the foreword?  
How do we know it is not true?
2. Chapter titled, “I, Amos”  
Explain how Amos came to live with Ben.
3. Chapter titled, “We Invent the Franklin Stove”  
What was unique about the Franklin stove?
4. Chapter titled, “The Bargain”  
Describe the bargain Ben and Amos agreed on.
5. Chapter titled, “Swimming”  
How did Ben lose his clothes while swimming?
6. Chapter titled, “We Do Some Printing”  
Explain why the sailors were unhappy with Ben.
7. Chapter titled, “Electricity”  
How did Amos help Ben with his electricity demonstration?

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1. **The author claims that the story was found in an old house and that he only edited it. We know it is fiction because a mouse cannot write such a document.**
  2. **Amos was the first born from a large mouse family. In order to help his family, he decided to go out on his own. He smelled cheese in a house and went in to find out it was the home of Ben Franklin.**
  3. **The Franklin stove was a wood stove that stood in away from the wall so the heat could come from all sides.**
  4. **Ben promised to feed Amos’ family twice a week and provide a home for Amos. Amos promised to give Ben advice and help in all of his activities.**
  5. **A dog stole Ben’s clothes while he was swimming.**
  6. **Amos moved the type before Ben could print his *Poor Richard’s Almanac* so the tides were incorrect. Sailors depended on it to help know when to dock their ships.**
  7. **Amos moved the cords and other equipment before Ben’s demonstration. This made the demonstration more effective.**

8. Chapter titled, "The Lightning Rod"  
What did Ben and Amos learn about electricity in these chapters?
9. Chapter titled, "That Kite"  
Explain why Amos was so angry with Ben about the kite.
10. Chapter titled, "War!"  
Describe Thomas Jefferson's mouse Red.
11. Chapter titled, "La Belle France"  
Why did Ben and Amos go to France?
12. Chapter titled, "At Court"  
How did Ben spend most of his time while in France?
13. Chapter titled, "Plans"  
Who did Amos meet and what did he promise her?
14. Chapter titled, "The Battle of Versailles"  
Describe the Battle of Versailles.
15. Chapter titled, "Home"  
Describe the welcome for Ben and Amos when they came home.
16. Chapter titled, "Happy Birthday"  
Why did Amos buy Ben a new hat?
17. Optional: Enrichment

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8. They learned that lightning is electricity and how to capture it with rods.
  9. Ben altered the kite so that Amos was trapped in it.
  10. Red had red hair, was a great speech maker, and leader of other mice.
  11. Ben and Amos went to France to try to get money to help in the American Revolution.
  12. Ben spent time at parties and dinners while in France. He was famous and enjoyed the attention.
  13. Amos met Madame Brillon's mouse, Sophia. He promised to rescue Sophia's children and take them all to America to be with her husband.
  14. In the battle, Amos fought the mice Palace Guards with the Swedes and Russians. Red came to help with the slum and sewer rats. They rescued the children safely.
  15. There were cannon and firearms salutes, floats, bands and a parade for Ben.
  16. Amos was tired of all the adventures with Ben and wanted to stay in his old fur hat, so he bought Ben a new one

## Activities

Choose two or three activities to complete your Book Study.

1. In this story, most people have a mouse friend who helps them. If you could have an animal friend to talk to, describe this friend and how he/she would help you.
2. Using the pages entitled *Benjamin Franklin's Life*, make a timeline. Share your timeline with someone reading each entry.
3. Choose one or two of the sayings from *Poor Richard's Almanac* and illustrate them. Write the saying on the paper.
4. Fact and Opinion: A **fact** tells something that is true. An **opinion** is a judgment. In Chapter Three we find out Ben Franklin invented the Franklin stove. That is a fact in the story and in history. The Franklin stove was an improvement over other stoves is an opinion.

Read each sentence below and determine if it is a fact or an opinion:

		<u>Fact</u>	<u>Opinion</u>
4. Fact and Opinion			
a. fact	a. Ben Franklin printed a book entitled <i>Poor Richard's Almanac</i> .	_____	_____
b. opinion	b. <i>Poor Richard's Almanac</i> was an excellent book.	_____	_____
c. opinion	c. Kite flying is a fun and relaxing sport.	_____	_____
d. fact	d. Ben used a kite to help him learn about electricity.	_____	_____
e. opinion	e. France is a nice place for a vacation.	_____	_____
f. fact	f. Ben went to France to help the Colonies win the Revolutionary War.	_____	_____
5. Examples: swim fins, long arm device, bifocal glasses, political cartoons	5. Go online or to a library and find several other inventions by Ben Franklin.		
	6. Write a story about how Amos may have helped Ben come up with these inventions.		

## Character Sketch

A character sketch is a colorful description of a person. A good character sketch will give not only the person's physical description, but also tell of situations which display his character traits. Look below at the list of character traits and the list of different situations showing those traits. Match the character trait to the best situation. After matching, complete the chart on the next page.

### Character Trait

1. loyal
2. intelligent
3. kind
4. practical
5. Optional: Enrichment
6. Optional: Enrichment

### Situation

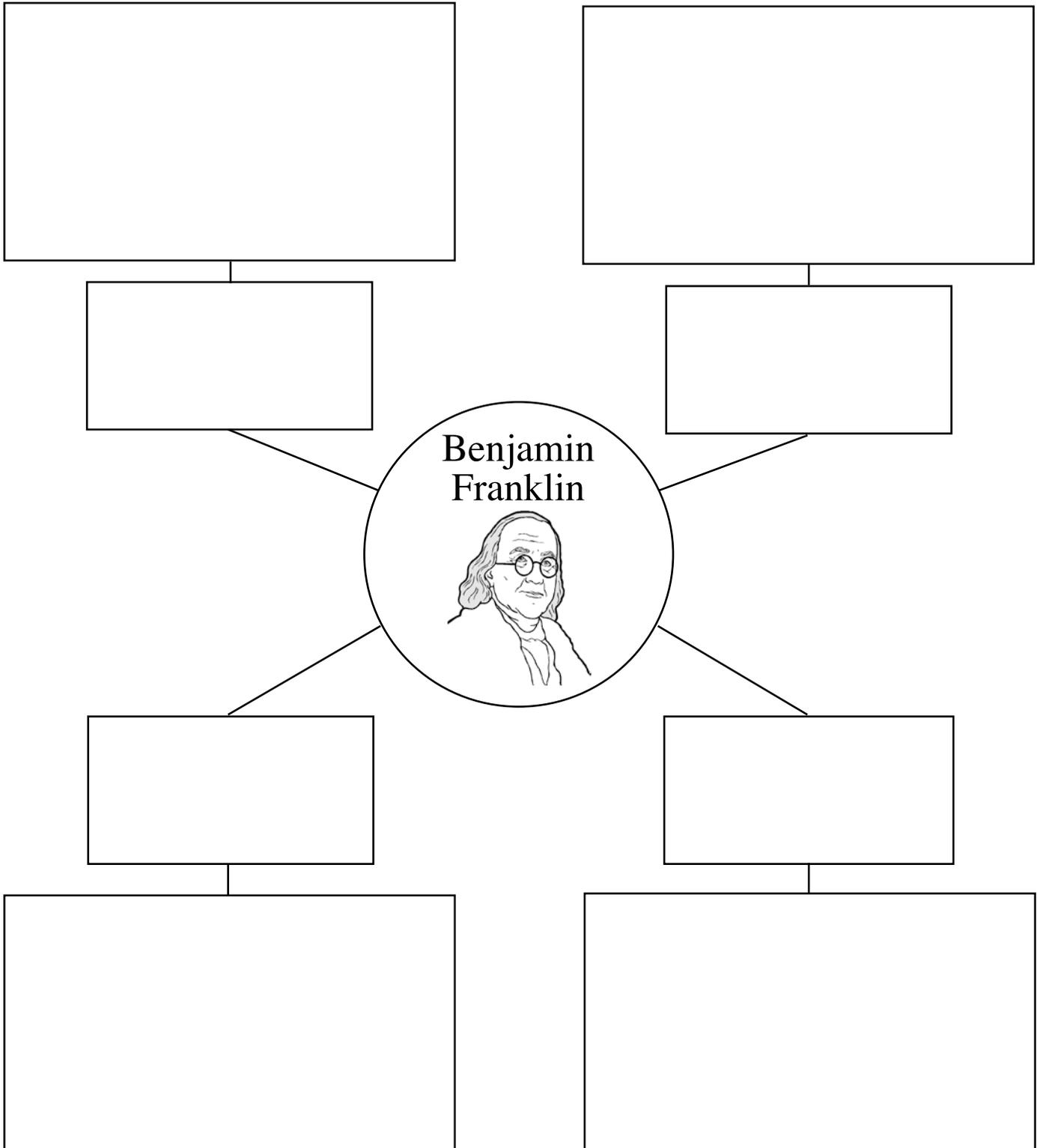
- Ben agreed to have food sent to Amos' family twice a week
- During the Revolutionary War, Ben went to France to help George Washington
- Ben used his knowledge of electricity to create lightning rods which saved homes from fire.
- Ben invented many items used today.

- 1. loyal - During the Revolutionary War, Ben went to France to help George Washington.**
- 2. intelligent - Ben invented many items used today.**
- 3. kind - Ben agreed to have food sent to Amos' family twice a week.**
- 4. practical - Ben used his knowledge of electricity to create lightning rods which saved homes from fire.**

Think of a main character in a movie, story, or play that has the traits of loyalty, obedience, kindness, and intelligence. Explain how your character exhibits these traits in the story. Be sure to give specific examples of each trait.

### Character Sketch Diagram

Use your *Student Activity Book* for this exercise. OR You may copy this page. Using the answers from the previous page, fill in the character traits in the small boxes. Write the matching situation in the large box.



I C.A.N. Assessment  
*Ben and Me* Book Study C



After the *Ben and Me* Book Study C is completed,  
check off each I C.A.N. objective with your teacher.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C**

I can **complete** my work.  
I can be **creative**.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**A**

I can be **accurate**.  
I can do my work with a good **attitude**.

\_\_\_\_\_

**N**

I can do my work **neatly**.