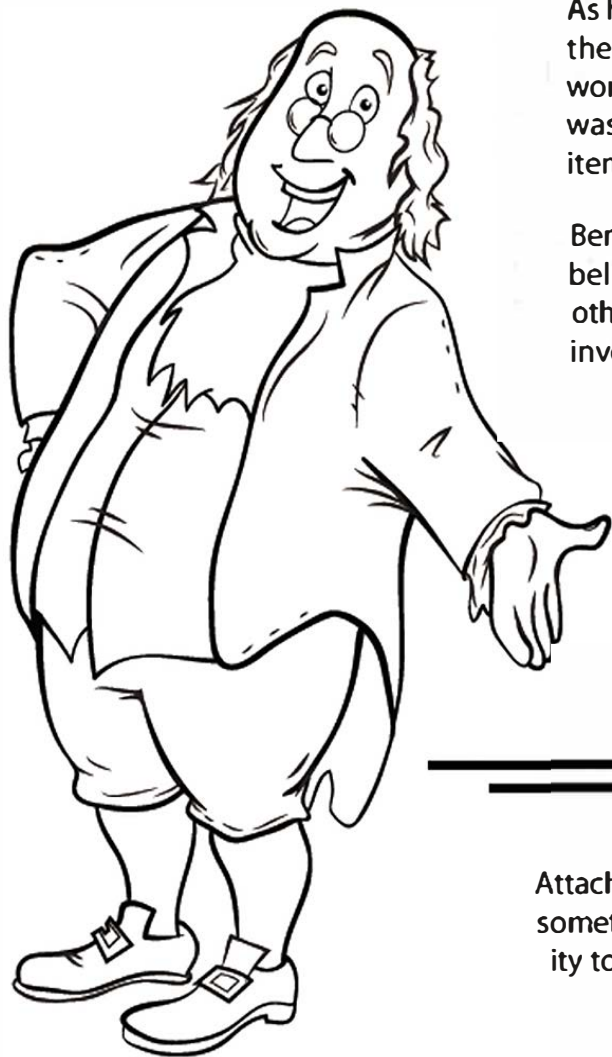


BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin was one of the first celebrities in America! He was known for many things. He was a politician, a writer, a composer, and was the first Postmaster General of the United States. However, he is probably best remembered for his work with electricity.

Ben Franklin was born in Boston in 1706. He only went to school for two years, but was a curious kid. As a teen, he worked in his brother's printing shop, but after a falling out with his brother he went to Philadelphia to start over, where he started his own print shop.

By the 1740s, he owned his own publishing company and a newspaper business, but found himself drawn to science and conducted experiments at home. As the years went by, he continued to dabble in science, as well as in politics and the arts. In 1752, he conducted his most famous experiment yet: one night during a storm, he grabbed his kite, tied a key to the end, attached it to a **Leyden jar*** and rushed outside**. The kite wasn't struck by lightning that he could see, but the Leyden jar held a charge. This proved for the very first time that lightning was an electrical process. This discovery helped him invent the lightning rod, a fixture that could be attached to the top of buildings to draw lightning to it instead of striking the building. At a time when most buildings were made of wood, this was a big deal and surely saved lives.



As he continued his studies, he began to lay the groundwork for the study of electricity. His notes and letters are the first to use words like "positive", "negative", "charge" and "discharge." Franklin was the first to notice that electricity can be passed from one item to another.

Benjamin Franklin never patented any of his inventions as he believed they were for the public good, and ideas that helped others should be shared freely. Would you have patented your inventions, or do you agree with him?

***Leyden jar** – A tool that was used in early electricity research, similar to a battery. A Leyden jar was a glass jar with a rod inside that could be charged with static electricity. The glass jar would then hold the charge.

****Don't try this at home!** Exposing yourself to lightning is often a one-way ticket to the emergency room. Ben Franklin is lucky he survived, especially at a time when little was known about the dangers of lightning.

Maddest Science He Conducted:

Attaching wires to paralyzed limbs of patients. Doctors today will sometimes stimulate muscles of paralyzed patients with electricity to prevent them from atrophying, or from getting too weak because they aren't being used.