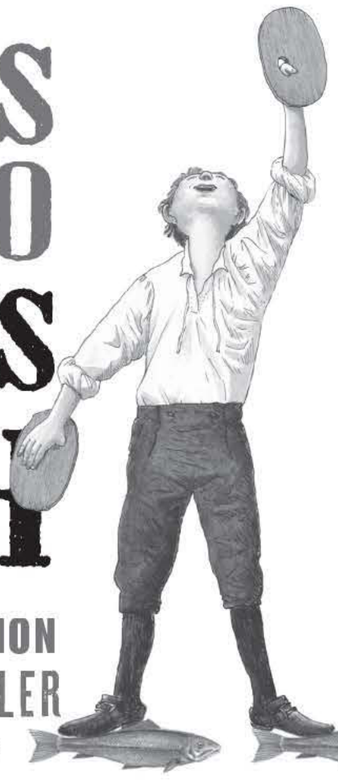
AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO BEN FRANKLIN'S BIG SPLASH



THE MOSTLY TRUE STORY OF HIS FIRST INVENTION

BARB ROSENSTOCK ILLUSTRATED BY S. D. SCHINDLER

INTRODUCTION

Author Barb Rosenstock focuses on a single event in the life of eleven-year-old Ben Franklin to introduce third- and fourth-grade students to one of our nation's Founding Fathers. It all begins with the simple fact that young Ben liked to swim—something your students will easily understand and identify with. S. D. Schindler's friendly illustrations add a familiarity that strengthens the connection between today's readers and the young Ben Franklin.

It is through this perspective that Rosenstock reveals the boy's curiosity, his persistence, intelligence, and his resilient nature—all characteristics that would serve Franklin well in his very active adult life. With fact-rich and useful pages that follow the narrative, your students will learn the many ways Benjamin Franklin participated in and shaped the life of our country. Paired with the activities in this classroom guide, your class will explore the spectrum of Franklin's interests and the breadth of his contributions.

This classroom guide is organized by broad curriculum areas, covering: Language Arts—Reading, Writing, Vocabulary, Speaking and Listening; Social Studies—History, Philosophy; Science; Research; Cooperative Learning; Art; Critical Thinking.

Ben Franklin's Big Splash also connects to Common Core State Standards. Broadly it addresses Anchor Standard 10, "Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently." In its use of Ben Franklin's own language, the book encourages third- and fourth-graders to tackle more difficult texts. You'll find grade-specific CCSS for grade four listed after each activity.

BEFORE READING

Read the title and subtitle aloud to your class. Engage in a discussion of why the author uses the phrase "mostly true" in the subtitle.

Follow up this discussion by having your students keep track of the details in the narration that may not be fact, but rather reasonably assumed actions. When you've completed the book, have the class review the paragraph in the author's note that begins: "Franklin never wrote about exactly how the fins were made." Here, Barb Rosenstock explains how she imagined some of the missing details.

RI 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.8

With Common Core State Standards correlations

LANGUAGE ARTS: VOCABULARY

Barb Rosenstock uses colorful language in her narration of the story of Benjamin Franklin's first invention. Here's a list of words that might be brand-new to your students: saucy, sloshed, speculated, squawk, sprinted. As they read the book, students should add any new words they encounter to this list.

Have each of your students find the word in the book and define it by its context. Then they should look the word up in a dictionary to learn its fullest meaning(s). Last, they should illustrate the definition on an index card.

RL 4.4; RF 4.4

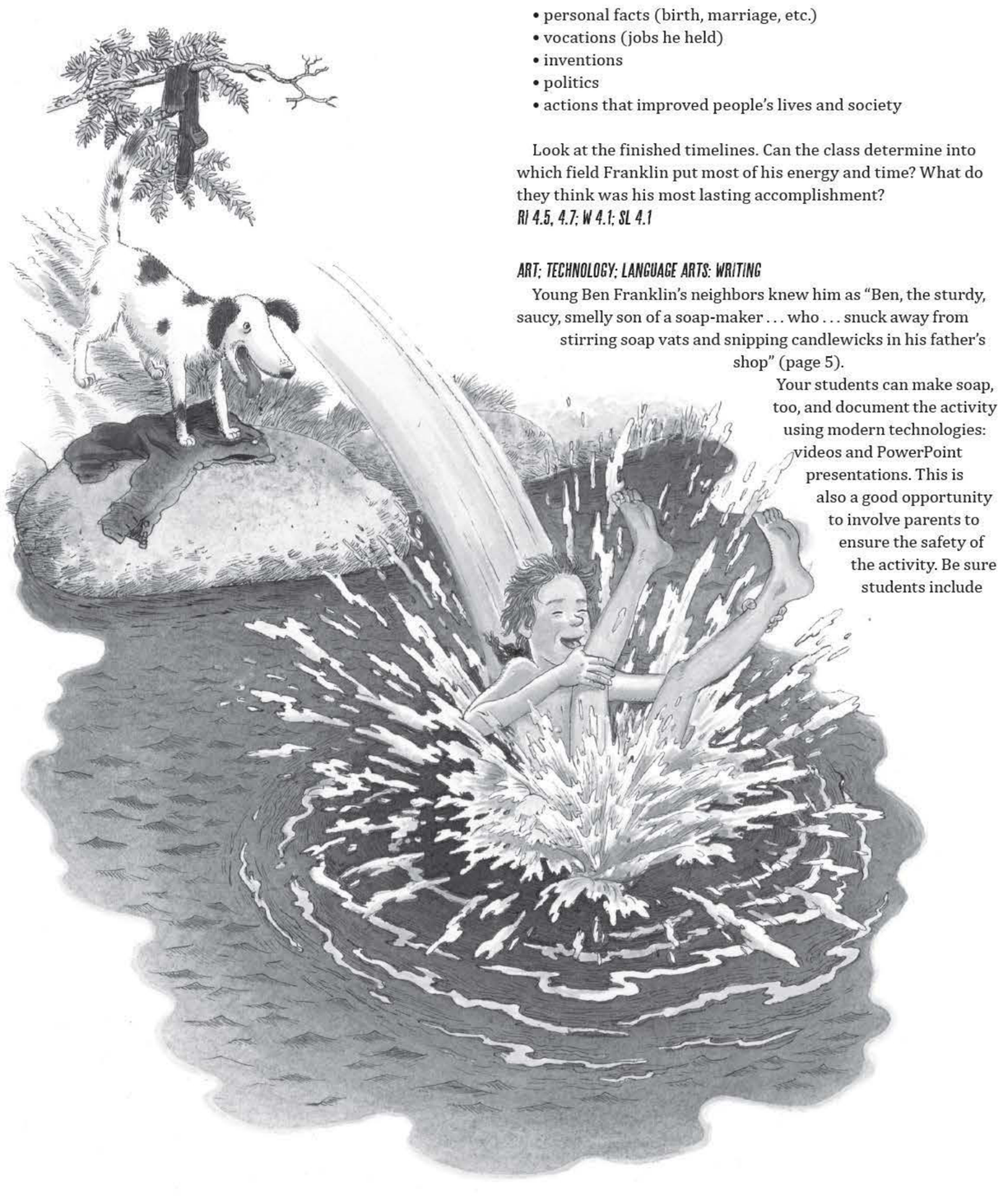
LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING; VOCABULARY; SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Barb Rosenstock uses many words that begin with the letter S in her narration of this episode in Benjamin Franklin's life. For example, on the two-page spread where we see young Ben enjoying a swim in the Charles River, she writes:

"He STOOD on his hands and shot his feet into the air. He SLIPPED like an otter and SLOSHED like a turtle—SQUIRTING, SPURTING, and SPOUTING." (page 8)

Each student should write a short paragraph about one of his or her favorite forms of recreation, such as hiking, participating in a sport, playing video games, or reading—whatever it may be. They should select a letter of the alphabet and include as many words as they can that begin with that letter in the paragraph. Almost all consonants will work, but some letters are easier than others. You can encourage them to use B, L, M, N, P, R, S, and T.

This project will require students to use synonyms and to be flexible in their writing. Make sure their repetitive initial consonants include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They may need to restructure sentences in order to include a word with their letter of choice.



Then divide the class into small writing groups. Students in the group should evaluate each other's work and suggest changes. Each student should then edit and revise his or her paragraph before presenting it aloud to the entire class.

RI 4.4; W 4.3, 4.4, 4.5; RF 4.3, 4.4; SL 4.1, 4.4

LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING; VOCABULARY; READING; COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Divide the students into close-reading groups of four or five. Each group should tackle the excerpt from Ben Franklin's 1773 letter written to a fellow scientist. (You'll find the letter on the spread immediately before the timeline.) The children should discuss the meaning of each unfamiliar word, each phrase, and each sentence. Then as a group, they should rewrite Franklin's letter in contemporary English.

They should do the same for the heading on the page, discussing the meaning and translating the words to convey the meaning in contemporary English.

On page 3, your students will find another quote from Ben Franklin, this one about swimming. The group should translate this into a tweet.

RI 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.8; RF 4.4; W 4.3, 4.4, 4.5; SL 4.1, 4.4

SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY; LANGUAGE ARTS: READING; CRITICAL THINKING

Focus your students on the two-page timeline of Benjamin Franklin's life at the end of *Ben Franklin's Big Splash*. The events listed underscore the fact that Franklin was involved in many fields of endeavor—from writing to inventing, from improving life for citizens to participating in politics.

Each student should recreate the timeline in a way that identifies his many contributions and divides them into broad categories. They can use any visual key they wish, even if it's simply using different colors or creating icons to represent the different kinds of events.

They should be sure to identify:

- personal facts (birth, marriage, etc.)
- vocations (jobs he held)
- inventions
- politics
- actions that improved people's lives and society

Look at the finished timelines. Can the class determine into which field Franklin put most of his energy and time? What do they think was his most lasting accomplishment?

RI 4.5, 4.7; W 4.1; SL 4.1

ART; TECHNOLOGY; LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING

Young Ben Franklin's neighbors knew him as "Ben, the sturdy, saucy, smelly son of a soap-maker . . . who . . . snuck away from stirring soap vats and snipping candlewicks in his father's shop" (page 5).

Your students can make soap, too, and document the activity using modern technologies: videos and PowerPoint presentations. This is also a good opportunity to involve parents to ensure the safety of the activity. Be sure students include an introduction, the materials used, the procedure, and the result in their presentations. Finished projects should be presented to the entire class.

These websites offer different, simple soap-making methods:

- pbs.org/parents/crafts-for-kids/handmade-soaps/
- ehow.com/how_4770688_easiest-homemade-soap-kids.html

W 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8; SL 4.4, 4.5

LANGUAGE ARTS: READING, WRITING, VOCABULARY; SPEAKING AND LISTENING; RESEARCH

Benjamin Franklin often wrote and published articles, letters, and books using pseudonyms. Richard Saunders was the most famous of these pen names. *Poor Richard's Almanack* was attributed to him. Each year, a new edition of the Almanack was published, with updated information and many new bits of wisdom, advice, and philosophy.

Some of Franklin's pithy statements remain popular today because of their timeless wisdom and catchy phrasing. Here are a dozen quotations from *Poor Richard's Almanack* to share with your class. Present them to your students and open discussions about their meanings.

- Love your enemies, for they tell you your faults.
- A friend in need is a friend indeed!
- There are no gains without pains.
- Diligence is the mother of good luck.
- Work while it is called today for you know not how much you may be hindered tomorrow.
- The noblest question in the world is: What good may I do in it?
- Wink at small faults; remember thou hast great ones.
- Anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one.
- Humility makes great men twice honorable.
- Eat to live, and not live to eat.
- A slip of the foot you may soon recover, but a slip of the tongue you may never get over.
- Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Now it's time for the students to put together their own *Poor Richard's Almanack*. To begin, your students might want to read more of Poor Richard's advice. They can Google the Almanack and find further examples. They should also take a look at an actual almanac. They can find digitized pages from the 1756 Almanack at: archive.org/details/poorrichardsalm01frangoog.

They can also view pages of an original 1753 *Poor Richard's Almanack* at: gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/his341/pra53jan.htm.

Each student should write several bits of advice in the Poor Richard style. They should also gather bits of wisdom from their parents, other relatives, neighbors, etc. Then students should work in small groups to put pages together. Each group can decide how they want the type to look and if they want to add illustrations. Each group should contribute their pages to the Classroom Almanack.

The class as a whole should decide what the cover ought to look like. They can do a Google search for "Poor Richard's Almanack." Then click on the word "images" at the top of the page. There they can view images of the original almanacs.

RI 4.1, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10; W 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8; SL 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5

SCIENCE; SPEAKING AND LISTENING; COOPERATIVE LEARNING; LANGUAGE ARTS: READING

Reread with your students the two-page spread (pages 12–13) that shows Ben wondering why fish are speedy swimmers. Read the following two pages as well. Make a class list of the things he does and notices. For example:

- He speculates.
- He stares at the fish—their tails, their bellies, their noses.
- He realizes what he can't change about himself.
- He guesses that there might be something he can change.
- He designs and creates swim fins.
- He tests his fins in the river.

These are actually steps in the scientific method. Explain how what Ben did matches up with this process scientists use to discover and invent things.

- Identify a problem or question.
- Research it.
- Develop a hypothesis.
- Design the experiment or invention.
- Test the hypothesis using the experiment or invention.
- Analyze the results.
- Come to a conclusion.

Divide your students into "laboratory teams" of five or six. Each team should brainstorm ideas for inventions. They should begin by talking about a problem for which they want to find a solution. They can come up with devices that are simple or as complex as a Rube Goldberg machine, or they can imagine ways to use and adapt technology—their computers, smart phones, or tablets. They do not actually have to build or develop the invention, but they should make designs and write descriptions of their invention and how it will work.

Give the teams time to work. At the end of a two-week period, have each team present their invention to a panel of parents or of students from an older grade as inventors and entrepreneurs do on television's *Shark Tank*. The panel should decide which two or three inventions ought to get the "go-ahead."

W 4.2, 4.6, 4.7; SL 4.1, 4.4, 4.5

ART; RESEARCH

From the timeline in the book, we learn that Benjamin Franklin was named the Postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737; cut mail delivery time in half when he was deputy postmaster general of the British colonies in 1753; and invented an odometer to help measure postal routes in 1763. In fact, the first stamps authorized by Congress in 1847 were a five-cent stamp of Ben Franklin and a ten-cent stamp of George Washington. In honor of Benjamin Franklin's involvement with the postal service, each student should design a postage stamp highlighting an aspect of Franklin's life and work.

For inspiration, students can search online to find images of stamps that have honored other Americans. They can also look for images of Ben Franklin online.

- pinterest.com/delmad/presidents-us-post-stamps
- wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._presidents_on_U.S._postage_stamps
- stampcatalogue.org

W 4.3, 4.4 4.7, 4.8; SL 4.4, 4.5

RESEARCH; LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING; SPEAKING AND LISTENING

On the two pages immediately before the author's note, students can see some of Franklin's achievements.

Each should select one of these and research it in books and online. Students should write short reports on their findings and give brief presentations so all their classmates will have a greater knowledge about Franklin's contributions.

RI 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.9; W 4.2, 4.4, 4.7, 4.8; SL 4.1, 4.2, 4.4

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The complete Common Core State Standards are available at corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy.

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