Benjamin Franklin Document Based Questions

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7th Grade

Curriculum Objectives: 1. Primary and secondary sources are used to examine events from multiple perspectives and to present and defend a position.

Materials Needed: Student DBQ Documents

Preview Activity: Brainstorm as a group: What do we already know about Benjamin Franklin?

Directions
For Part A, read each document carefully and answer the question or questions after each document. Then read the directions for Part B and write your essay.

For Part B, use your answers from Part A, information from the documents, and your knowledge of social studies to write a well organized essay. In the essay you should answer the following overarching question:

How did Benjamin Franklin’s background shape life in the United States during his life and today?

Part A:
Document #1
MAKING THE MOST OF HIS 84 YEARS
1706: Jan. 17. Born in Boston, the youngest son of Josiah and Abiah (Folger) Franklin.
1717: Reads Plutarch, Defoe and Cotton Mather
1718: Apprentice printer to his brother James.
1722: Becomes a vegetarian (in part he is motivated by a distaste for flesh, but also because he can save money to buy books)
1723: Leaves apprenticeship, goes to Philadelphia to work as a printer.
1725: Publishes his first pamphlet: “A Dissertation upon Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain”
1729: Purchases The Pennsylvania Gazette.
1730: Elected official printer for Pennsylvania.
Takes a common-law wife, Deborah Read.
1731: Draws up the Library Company's articles of association.
1733: Publishes first edition of Poor Richard's Almanac.
1737: Appointed postmaster of Philadelphia.
1747: Writes “The Plain Truth,” in which the first political cartoon is published in America.
Helps found the Philadelphia Contributionship for Insuring of Houses from Loss Against Fire.
1749: Founds University of Pennsylvania.
1752: Conducts kite experiment
1753: Receives honorary degrees from Harvard and Yale.
1757-62: In England as agent for Pennsylvania Assembly, Massachusetts, Georgia and New Jersey.
1774: Deborah Read, his wife of 44 years, dies.
1775: Elected postmaster general of the Colonies.
1776: Helps draft the Declaration of Independence.
Arrives in Paris on Dec. 21 as one of the commissioners of Congress to the French Court.
1778: Signs French Alliance.
1783-84: Invents bifocals.
1790: Dies in Philadelphia on April 17 at the age of 84. About 20,000 mourners attend his funeral at Philadelphia’s Christ Church

Source: [http://www.delawareonline.com](http://www.delawareonline.com)

a. What were Franklin’s accomplishments?

b. Why would Benjamin Franklin be considered a Renaissance man?

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**Document #2**

Without freedom of thought there can be no such thing as wisdom and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech. - *Benjamin Franklin, 1722*

a. What does this quote by Franklin mean?

Source: [http://www.newspeakdictionary.com](http://www.newspeakdictionary.com)
Why did the United States government choose to honor Benjamin Franklin by putting his image on their money?
a. Why did Benjamin Franklin use the pseudonym “Richard Saunders” when writing Poor Richards Almanac?
a. What document does this represent?

b. What did a signature on this document represent?

Source: [www.shmoop.com/constitution](http://www.shmoop.com/constitution)