Benjamin Franklin: An Illustrated Character Sketch

Middle School Lesson Plan (KS Civics /Government Indicator 1.2K4)
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Objective: The student will examine the life of Benjamin Franklin and identify contributions that he made to improve the lifestyle of early colonist through his personal and political activities.

This activity will take 4-5 45 minute class periods.

Introduction: Ask students to share what they know about Benjamin Franklin.

Procedures:
1) Demonstrate to students how to make a 3 column chart using a blank sheet of notebook paper. Label the top of the chart Benjamin Franklin. The first column should be labeled, Personal Life, the second column should be labeled Science and Inventions, and the third column should be labeled Political Activities.
2) Students should watch a biographical movie about the life of Ben Franklin. During the video/DVD students should put notes on their chart in the appropriate columns. (Excellent videos are available from the History Channel or from other academic sources.)
3) Following the video have adolescent books about Benjamin Franklin, as well as, copies of primary source documents written or published by Franklin. These documents might include letters written to friends or family and copies of Poor Richard’s Almanac. Students should peruse these materials to further complete their 3 column charts.
4) Provide a large piece of white paper to each student (8 1/2 x 15) Across the top of the paper students should put a the heading “Benjamin Franklin, an Illustrated Character Sketch.”
5) Students should draw or trace a full body picture of Franklin. They should use black ink.
6) In the blank area surrounding the outline of Franklin students should draw and label at least 10 important artifacts such as inventions, documents or accomplishments relating to Franklin’s life. Each artifact should be colored, labeled and then have a straight black line linking it to some part of Franklin. For example the student might draw a pair of bifocals and then link them to Franklin’s
eyes with a label indicating that he invented bifocals to make it easier to read fine print.

7) Students should then pair/share their Franklin posters with another student in the class. Posters will then be collected by the teacher for evaluation.