Objective: To learn the geography and early development of Rome through the lens of the well known, historical figure Benjamin Franklin. This lesson is conducted over a period of 2-3 days (50 minute class periods).

California Standard 6.7
Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious and social structures during the development of Rome.

Anticipatory Set:
Read aloud the children’s book “Ben and Me” by Robert Lawson (5 min)

Discuss:
What did you learn about Benjamin Franklin after hearing this story?
What did you already know about Ben Franklin?

Sample responses:

*He “invented” electricity.*
*He flew a kite with a key.*
*He created the US Postal Service.*
*He created public libraries.*

Provide additional facts they may not know:

*Did you know he also created the desks with the side table that you’re sitting in right now?*
*Did you know he created daylight saving’s time?*
*Did you know that he invented bifocals?*

Lead into Roman History:

All throughout history, individuals like Benjamin Franklin and entire civilizations like the Romans, Greeks and Etruscans were daring and creative in their thinking.

Today we will learn about how the Romans created many useful systems, buildings and artwork that enhanced their lives.
Begin Lesson:

Read Chapter 32 “Geography and the Early Development in Rome” in small groups.

Discuss:
After reading, students will share out 2 -3 accomplishments made in Ancient Roman times. If they were ideas derived from other cultures, they will identify what cultures the Romans were influenced by.

Sample responses:

_People during ancient times were very skilled._
_They were influenced by their neighbors’ ideas._

_They learned engineering_
_(the arch came from the Etruscans and was later used by Romans)_

_(the cuniculus was a long underground trench for irrigation, also from the Etruscans)_

_Romans became great builders._
_They were engineers – they understood the science of making buildings_

_The Greeks were amazing architects_
_They built marble temples for their Gods._
_(ie: the Parthenon used elegant powerful columns)_
_Romans used Greek designs and used concrete to build stadiums like the Coliseum._

Now, let’s go back to our familiar inventor and thinker, Benjamin Franklin.

Project:
Imagine you were to fly a kite on a piece of land during 700 BCE to 476 CE.
What would you see around you? Describe the geography and land formations.
What are the buildings like? Describe their features and architecture.
What would the people be doing? What jobs would they have?
Now, design your kite. There must be four sections in your kite. The sections are to be labeled: Geography, Buildings, Writing and Art.

Each section must list achievements of the Romans, and how the achievement originated (did it come from another group of people? If so, whom?) You may include pictures on your kite.

Extension Activity / Written Response:

Imagine you are Benjamin Franklin, the inventor, during the Rise of the Roman Republic. What kinds of inventions do you think would be helpful during this time? Remember, the kinds of things Romans enjoyed: gladiator fighting, painting, sculpture and pottery. They also believed in Greek mythology and God’s and Goddesses. What would you invent to help make ancient Roman society better?

Write a 2 – 3 paragraph reflection on this topic.