Background: At 17, Benjamin Franklin left his home in Boston to seek his fortune in Philadelphia. After several years, he owned his own printing shop and had gained a reputation as a hard worker and a successful businessman. Always eager to improve his city, Franklin introduced several new ideas in Philadelphia, including that of a lending library.

Vocabulary: Before you read the selection, find the meanings of the following words in a dictionary: render, commencing, manifested, utility.

Main Idea: Benjamin Franklin decides to start a public lending library in Philadelphia.

Selection: "At the time I establish'd myself in Pennsylvania, there was not a good bookseller's shop in any of the colonies to the southward of Boston. In New York and Philadelphia the printers were indeed stationers; they sold only paper, etc., almanacs, ballads, and a few common schoolbooks. Those who lov'd reading had to send for their books from England; the members of the club had each a few. We...hired a room to hold our club in. I propos'd that we should all of us bring our books to that room, where they would not only be ready to consult in our conferences, but become a common benefit, each of us being at liberty to borrow such as he wish'd to read at home. This was.....done, and for some time contented us."

"Finding the advantage of this little collection, I propos'd to
render the benefit from books more common by commencing a public subscription library. I drew a sketch of the plan and rules that would be necessary.....each subscriber engag'd to pay a certain sum down for the first purchase of books, and an annual contribution for increasing them......The library was opened one day in the week for lending to the subscribers.....The institution soon manifested its utility, and was imitated by other towns, and in other provinces.....Reading became fashionable....."

Multiple Choice Questions from the selection:

1. Why did Franklin feel a place to buy books was important?
   a. Printers sold books only in Boston.
   b. Books arrived in the colonies monthly.
   c. Most colonial cities were without bookshops.
   d. Colonists had to buy books from France.

2. How was the first library run?
   a. Subscribers paid for each book.
   b. Subscribers contributed money and then borrowed books free of charge.
   c. Subscribers could borrow five books.
   d. Anyone could borrow books.

Critical Thinking and Writing: Think of an idea and explain how you can better your community or neighborhood like Benjamin Franklin did.