Benjamin Franklin: Was He or Wasn’t He?

Grades: 2-5th

Objective: to activate prior knowledge of Benjamin Franklin, clear up any misconceptions about him, and begin inquiry into his life.

Materials: prepare note cards or sticky-notes with the following (one on each card).

Printer, Inventor, Writer, Slave Owner, Postmaster, Abolitionist, Pretended to be a woman, Politician, Scientist, Diplomat, Father, Statesman, Signed the Declaration of Independence, Helped write the US Constitution, American, Englishman, Musician, Swimmer, Newspaper Publisher, and Candle Maker

Fire Fighter, Librarian, Insurance Salesman, Vegetarian

President of the United States, Invented Electricity, Doctor, Teacher, Bricklayer

Create a poster with two sections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He Was</th>
<th>He Wasn’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Students should also have access to dictionaries or on-line dictionaries.

Procedure: seat students in groups of four. Give each group 4 or 5 job cards. Tell the students that for each card they must do three things.

First, they must make sure they understand and can explain what the card says. (students should use dictionaries when needed)
Second, as a group they should decide if Benjamin Franklin was or wasn’t what it says on each card.

Third, they must come up with some rational for thinking that.

Next, each group presents what they came up with to the whole class. The emphasis should be on their thinking not if they are right or wrong. They should put the note card on the correct section of the poster.

Leave the poster up and as students find facts that support or disprove if Benjamin Franklin was or wasn’t something they can write CONFERMED on each note card.

Resources:  www.teachingfranklin.org

“The Life of Benjamin Franklin” by Yona Zeldis McDonough

“Inventing America; The Life of Benjamin Franklin” by Mark Essig