Then and Now: The Inventions of Benjamin Franklin

Grade: 2

Standard: Compare technologies from earlier times and today, and identify the impact of invention on historical change. (Minnesota History Standard I.A.3)

Objective: Students will be able to name two inventions by Benjamin Franklin. Students will compare and contrast two of Benjamin Franklin’s inventions with their modern day form(s).

Skills Addressed: compare/contrast

Materials:
- Now & Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin by Gene Barretta
- Chart paper/dry erase board
- Marker/dry erase marker
- Writing utensil for each student
- T-chart (attached) – one per student
- Venn Diagram (attached) – one per student
- Artifacts
  - Swimming fins
  - Newspaper political cartoon page
  - Broom
  - Fireman’s hat
  - Kit with a key
  - Long arm
  - Bifocals
  - Box or symbol of the United States Postal Service
  - Public library card
  - Other inventions from Benjamin Franklin (many listed in Now and Ben; others listed online)

Instruction:

1. Show students artifacts and have them verbally share what they think all the items have in common.

2. Review whom Benjamin Franklin was (a man who lived a long time ago – before your grandparents or great-grandparents. He helped to create the government of the United States and was also a musician, printer, writer, and scientist.)

3. Read the story Now & Ben.
   a. On the modern day pages (pages 3-4) stop and have students guess which inventions came from Benjamin Franklin.
b. As you read the story have students make a t-chart of the inventions (answer key attached) with the original invention on the left and the modern invention on the right.
c. Discuss the question on the last page, “Will his contributions help to form the future?”

4. Show the artifacts again. Ask students what all the artifacts have in common (they were all invented by Benjamin Franklin).
5. Have students share the inventions addressed in the book from their t-chart and make a group list on a piece of chart paper or white board.

Evaluation:

6. As a large group, compare one of Benjamin Franklin’s inventions with its modern counterpart using a Venn Diagram (i.e. swimming flippers were originally made of wood and cloth straps but are now made of one piece of rubber). Do this either on chart paper or the white board.

7. Hand out Venn Diagram page (attached) and have students choose another of Benjamin Franklin’s inventions (aside from the class example) and contrast it with its modern counterpart.
8. If you so desire you can have students partner share their completed Venn Diagrams before handing them into the teacher.

Lesson Extension Ideas:
1. Bring in old gaming systems or telephones and have students try to figure out how to operate the system. They could then complete a Venn Diagram comparing the older model with a newer model.
2. Discuss the scientific process and have students think of a new invention and create it.