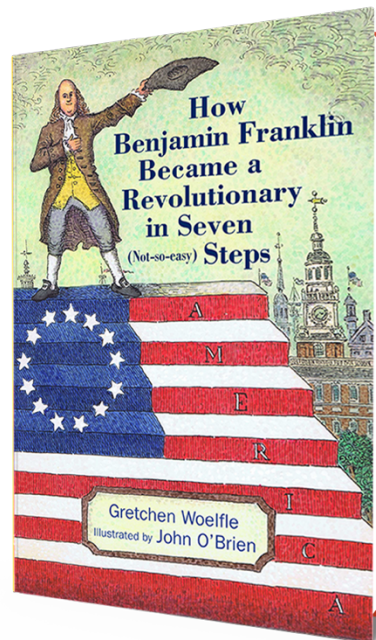


DISCUSSION GUIDE

HOW BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BECAME A REVOLUTIONARY IN SEVEN (NOT-SO-EASY) STEPS

Written by Gretchen Woelfle
Illustrated by John O'Brien

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Famous founding father Benjamin Franklin was a proud subject of the British Empire—until he wasn't. It took nearly seventy years and seven not-so-easy steps to turn Benjamin Franklin from a loyal British subject to a British traitor—and a fired-up American revolutionary.

In this whimsical narrative, young readers learn how Franklin came to be a rebel, beginning with his childhood lesson in street smarts. Franklin is a defiant boy who runs away from his apprenticeship, and while he becomes a deep thinker, a brilliant scientist, and a persuasive writer when he grows up, he never loses that spark. As a community leader who tries his best to promote peace and unity both between the colonies and with Great Britain, he becomes more and more convinced that independence for the American colonies is the way forward.

PRAISE FOR *HOW BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BECAME A REVOLUTIONARY IN SEVEN (NOT-SO-EASY) STEPS*

★ "Woelfle's dynamic approach results in a personal, probing portrait of the Founding Father. A superb tribute to a foresighted patriot in peace and war." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"Gretchen Woelfle's delightful book weaves a tapestry of wisdom from Benjamin Franklin's extraordinary and multifaceted life, a life that prepared him for his ultimate challenge as the revolutionary leader and Founding Father. Her seven steps are a roadmap for young readers to

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build the 'milestones' in their own lives for a successful future, maybe even a revolutionary one." – *Mark Barbour, executive director and curator, International Printing Museum*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author Gretchen Woelfle describes Benjamin Franklin's progress as "not-so-easy". What challenges did he face, and how did he address them?
2. Was Franklin justified in running away from his apprenticeship? What would you do in his situation?
3. Franklin chose to become a printer. How did he use his trade to expand his achievements and his reputation?
4. What purposes did the Junto serve for Franklin? What other activities did it lead him to?
5. Franklin explored many scientific fields, but chose to focus on the study of electricity. What character traits contributed to his success as a scientist?
6. Why did Franklin propose a General Union of the British Colonies on the Continent? What was his opinion of his plan later in his life?
7. Why did Franklin go to England? Did he succeed? What did he like about England? What did he dislike?
8. Every chapter in the book begins with a quote from Franklin and ends with a lesson he learned. Explain how the information in the chapters relates to the beginning quotes.
9. Several quotes in the book are taken from Franklin's autobiography. As he looked back on his life, he explained how he changed his opinions and recognized his mistakes. Look for several examples of his change of heart.
10. Franklin had a wonderful sense of humor and wit. John O'Brien's illustrations often express that wit throughout the book. Can you find examples throughout the book where this is demonstrated?

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11. Several of Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's sayings are illustrated by O'Brien on pages 24-25. Try illustrating one or more of those sayings in your own way.
12. What did you learn from the back matter that isn't covered in the text of the book? Were you surprised by anything you read there? Did it change your opinion of Franklin?

FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Slavery was legal in all the colonies in 1776. However, the American Revolution and the American patriots' claim that "all men are created equal", led seven northern states to consider abolishing slavery. Find out those states that accomplished this.
2. Franklin is known as a Founding Father of the United States. How was his life different from other famous Founding Fathers? How was it similar?
3. Franklin invented many things to make life safer, more efficient, or more comfortable. What modern invention do you think he would love best and why – telephones, airplanes, eBooks, the internet, or.....?
4. Think of something that is important to you: a hobby, a sport, a friendship, a close relative – something that brings you joy. Make a list of "steps" to describe how this grew to be important.

Further Reading

Now & Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin by Gene Baretta

Electric Ben: The Amazing Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin by Robert Byrd

Ben Franklin's Almanac: Being A True Account of the Good Gentleman's Life by Candace Fleming

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Franklin

Poor Richard's Almanack by Benjamin Franklin

Becoming Ben Franklin: How A Candle-maker's Son Helped Light the Flame of Liberty by Russell Freedman

Mesmerized: How Ben Franklin Solved A Mystery That Baffled All by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Iacopo Bruno

Ben Franklin's Big Splash: The Mostly True Story of His First Invention by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by S.D. Schindler

Ben Franklin: His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z by Alan Schroeder, illustrated by John O'Brien

Also visit www.pbs.org/benfranklin/index.html for additional information