



ART & CULTURE

LITERATURE & LANGUAGE ARTS

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

HISTORY & SOCIAL STUDIES

▶ ALL LESSON PLANS ▶ ALL SUBJECT CATEGORIES ▶ ALL WEB SITES

▶ OPEN PRINTABLE VERSION

GRADES 6-8



Hiram Powers (1805–1873), [Benjamin Franklin](#), 1862. Marble, height 97 1/2 in., width 34 7/8 in., depth 21 5/8 in. (247.7 x 88.6 x 54.9 cm.). U.S. Senate Collection.

Subject Areas

Art and Culture

Visual Arts

History and Social Studies

U.S. History - Colonial America and the New Nation

Time Required

3 class periods

Skills

to come

Additional Student/Teacher Resources

[Picturing America Resource Book](#)
[PicturingAmerica: 4b. Hiram Powers, Benjamin Franklin, 1862](#)

Activity Worksheets

[Look and Think worksheet](#)

[Look and Think answer key](#)

[biography of Franklin](#)

[Worksheets and directions for](#)

Benjamin Franklin's Many "Hats"

[Ben Franklin](#), a signer of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution was also a philanthropist, a community leader, patriot, and Founding Father. This lesson plan exemplifies all our new country fought for in the Revolutionary War: individualism, democracy, community, patriotism, scientific inquiry and invention, and the rights of "We the People."

Subject Areas

Art & Culture: Visual Arts

History and Social Studies: U.S. History — Colonial America and the New Nation

Time Required

3-4 classroom periods

Skills

Analyzing Images; Analyzing primary and secondary sources; Drawing inferences and conclusions

Other Teacher/Student resources in left sidebar.

[Standards Alignment links.](#)

Guiding Questions:

- What were Franklin's many roles during the founding period of the United States?
- What character traits helped make Franklin such a versatile and accomplished man?
- What artistic movements and styles influenced Hiram Powers?

Learning Objectives:

Students completing this lesson should be able to:

- Have a solid understanding of Benjamin Franklin's life, philosophy, and accomplishments.
- Understand an artist's process of creating and executing a work of art.

"Since our Time is reduced to a Standard, and the Bullion of the Day minted out into Hours, the *Industrious* know how to employ every Piece of Time to a real Advantage in their different Professions: And he that is prodigal of his Hours, is, in Effect, a Squanderer of Money."

—Benjamin Franklin, [Poor Richard Improved, 1751](#)

Introduction

[Ben Franklin](#), a signer of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution was also a philanthropist, a community leader, patriot, and Founding Father. This lesson plan exemplifies all our new country fought for in the Revolutionary War: individualism, democracy, community, patriotism, scientific inquiry and invention, and the rights of "We the People."

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[creating hats](#)**Author(s)**

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Special Features

Picturing America

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Background Information for the Teacher

"Franklin, elder statesman of the Revolution and oldest signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, sat on the committee that drafted the Declaration, attended the Constitutional Convention, and distinguished himself as a diplomat. But he was a self-made man and self-educated intellectual colossus whose interests far transcended politics. He won international renown as a printer, publisher, author, philosopher, scientist, inventor, and philanthropist. On both sides of the Atlantic, he mingled with the social elite, [whom he impressed with his sagacity, wit, and zest for life.](#)"

These EDSITEment Lesson Plans relate to Benjamin Franklin's role as a founding father of the United States:

- [The Constitutional Convention: What the Founding Fathers Said](#)
- [The Constitutional Convention of 1787](#)

[Thinkfinity](#) and [EDSITEment](#) have a wealth of resources about Franklin in his many different "hats" or roles. These include:

- [300 Years of Benjamin Franklin](#)
- [Benjamin Franklin—An Extraordinary Life. An Electric Mind](#)
- [Benjamin Franklin—Postmaster General](#)
- [Benjamin Franklin Inventor](#)
- [The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary](#)
- [National Park Service—Signers of the Constitution](#)
- [PicturingAmerica: 4b. Hiram Powers. Benjamin Franklin, 1862](#)
- [Podcast: Walter Isaacson explores Benjamin Franklin's legacy](#)
- [The first edition of Poor Richard's Almanack was published in 1733](#)

Sculptor — Hiram Powers (1805-1873)

In 1858 Congress commissioned one of America's most respected artists, Hiram Powers, to create statues of [Benjamin Franklin](#) and [Thomas Jefferson](#) for the Capitol. Although born in Vermont, Powers' studio was in Florence, Italy, where he had ready access to skilled assistants, inspirational Classical art, and models — important resources that were in short supply in his homeland at that time. Learn more about Powers and his statue of Benjamin Franklin at the United States [Senate Web site](#) and [Picturing America's Educators Resource Book, image 4b.](#)

Neoclassical Art style

When Powers created his larger-than-life sculpture of Franklin, democratic leaders were often depicted in the [Neoclassical style](#), which was based on Classical Roman and Greek art. Powers sculpted busts of [George Washington](#) and [Andrew Jackson](#) draped in Classical togas in this accepted Neoclassical style. But despite criticism, he chose to sculpt his statues of Franklin and Jefferson realistically in clothing they would have worn in the 1700's.

Hiram Powers' *Benjamin Franklin*

Although Powers depicted Franklin in contemporary clothes, much about the statue reminds us of ancient Greek and Roman sculptures. Like Classical art, it's carved of white marble and Franklin stands in a traditional [contrapposto](#) pose with most of his weight resting on one foot and the opposite leg bent. This creates a gentle curve extending through the midline of the figure. Folds in his coat and the vertical gash in

the tree stump echo the curve of this center line, giving the sculpture unity. Franklin also rests one arm on the tree trunk. Roman sculptures that were modeled after original Greek works in bronze often included a support such as a tree trunk or shield to keep the fragile piece of marble stable.

Portraits can reveal personality and details about a person and their life as well as how artists feel and think about their subject. By resting Franklin's chin in his hand and showing a downward gaze, Powers suggests that Franklin is a thinker. The jagged line that scars the tree trunk represents a lightning strike and reminds us that Franklin's experiments with electricity made him an international celebrity and a respected scientist. Franklin's acceptance into Europe's scientific community eventually helped open doors of European courts to him as an American statesman.

Franklin wears the plain clothes of an 18th-century American citizen rather than the frilly European court dress of his day. Powers chose this type of dress very carefully, even having Franklin's actual garments sent to him in Italy so that he could copy them in detail. The artist wanted to use fashion to reinforce the concept that all citizens are equal before the law in a democracy. He also was careful to show how these garments would actually behave. The creases in the coat suggest its weight, while wrinkles in Franklin's hose show their texture and the way they would sag during wear. Franklin's hair also hangs in long loose curls in the manner of the 18th century.

These EDSITEment lesson plans also deal with portraits that reveal character:

- [I've Just Seen a Face: Portraits](#)
- [Portrait of a Hero](#)
- [What Portraits Reveal](#)

Preparing to Teach This Lesson Plan

Students may learn about Benjamin Franklin and his roles or "hats" by completing and discussing the [Look and Think worksheets](#). These will help them observe, analyze, and appreciate the many aspects of Powers' statue of Franklin. After reading the reproducible [biography of Franklin](#), students may create hats illustrating some of the many roles that Franklin played in his life—statesman, politician, scientist, father, community activist, printer, publisher, writer, and inventor. [Worksheets and directions for creating hats](#) are included.

Make copies of the: Look and Think worksheet, Benjamin Franklin biography, Directions for The Many Hats of Ben Franklin. *See note in Activity 3. Materials needed: Colored markers and copy or drawing paper, Optional paper hat-making supplies such as scissors, glue, colored papers.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1. [Look and Think](#)

Activity 2. [Read Benjamin Franklin Biography](#)

Activity 3. [Design One of Benjamin Franklin's "Hats"](#)

Extension the Lesson Plan. [Make a Paper Hat](#)

Activity 1. Look and Think

Observation: Have students carefully observe [Hiram Powers' Benjamin Franklin](#). They may complete the [Look and Think worksheet](#) to guide them in their analysis of this work of art. In this worksheet students compare Franklin's dress to today's clothing as well as to that worn in ancient Greece and Rome.

Class discussion: Use either activities in the [Picturing America Educators Resource Book, 4b](#), or the [Look and Think worksheet](#) as a springboard for a class discussion of the art. (See the [answer key for the Look and Think worksheet](#).)

- **Lines:** Point out the similarity between the central line in the sculpture, the lightning-strike line, and lines in the coat. This repetition of line creates unity within the sculpture.

- **Contrapposto:** Have students stand in a contrapposto pose as the figure does in the sculpture by resting most of their weight on one foot. They should note how this causes one hip to shift upwards and creates a curve through the body.
- **Negative space:** Help student locate and describe the negative space in and around the sculpture.
- **Symbolism:** Discuss how Powers suggested Franklin's personality and achievements through the pose, clothing, and tree stump.
- **Neoclassicism:** Invite students to compare and contrast Powers' neoclassical busts of [Washington](#) and [Jackson](#) on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Web site, an EDSITEment-reviewed site, with that of Powers' *Franklin*. They may also read an essay describing Neoclassicism on the Met's site.

Neoclassical art and architecture refer to the timeless, Classical sculptures, buildings, and dress of ancient Greece and Rome. Because these were early democracies, this art style remained popular for government buildings and art in the United States well into the 20th century.

Encourage students to explain why they do or do not think that Franklin should be depicted wearing a toga.

Activity 2. Read a Benjamin Franklin Biography

Have students read the [biography of Ben Franklin](#) provided in the lesson. Because the biography is a bit long, you may want to stop and pause after each section and summarize what you have read in one or two sentences. This helps students pare down information and remember key ideas.

Activity 3. Design One of Benjamin Franklin's "Hats"

- **Visualize:** After students have read the biography for understanding, have them then choose ONE hat from the examples on [The Many Hats of Ben Franklin worksheet](#). Students should choose a hat that exemplifies how they feel Benjamin Franklin contributed to our country. Students will follow the directions provided by writing Ben Franklin's name at the top of their chosen hat. Underneath the hat, they should write how this hat demonstrates Ben Franklin's duties/contributions to our country when he was "wearing" it. Students can then decorate their hat with symbols that illustrate this.
 - Set out enough copies of the 8 full-page-size hat templates on the last pages of the "Franklin Hats" handout so that each student may choose one of the hat pages; or just print the first page of the handout and encourage students to draw their own hats on a separate sheet of paper.
- **Create:** Students may create a larger colored drawing of their hat.
- **Display:** Display the students' hats together to show how many "hats" Franklin had.

Extending the Lesson—Make a Paper Hat

Students may actually make paper hats that symbolize Benjamin Franklin's "hats" or roles. These hats may be as simple as large tissue paper sheets set on a student's head and fastened around the brow with a masking tape headband or folded paper hats as pictured on a number of Internet sites. Students may attach found and cut-paper objects to their hats to represent the role that they are symbolizing. Encourage students to describe and write about the symbolism in their hats. See [Make an Artrageous Hat](#), [Paper Hat](#), or [How to Make Paper Hats](#).

Related EDSITEment Lesson Plans

- [300 Years of Benjamin Franklin \(EDSITEment feature\)](http://edsitement.neh.gov/monthly_feature.asp?id=102)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/monthly_feature.asp?id=102
- [The Constitutional Convention: What the Founding Fathers Said](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=402)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=402
- [The Constitutional Convention of 1787](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=726)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=726
- [Follow the Leader: Line in the Visual Arts, Lesson Four of the Curriculum Unit: Everything in Its Right Place: An Introduction to Composition in Painting](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=638)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=638
- [I've Just Seen a Face: Portraits](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=270)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=270
- [Jefferson vs. Franklin: Renaissance Men](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=413)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=413

- [Portrait of a Hero](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=262)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=262
- [The Statue of Liberty: Bringing the "New Colossus" to America](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=351)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=351
- [What Portraits Reveal](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=255)
http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=255

Selected EDSITEment Web Sites

- [The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary](http://www.benfranklin300.org/etc_websites.htm)
http://www.benfranklin300.org/etc_websites.htm
- [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](http://www.metmuseum.org)
http://www.metmuseum.org
 - [American Neoclassical Sculptors Abroad](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/amb1/hd_amb1.htm)
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/amb1/hd_amb1.htm
 - [Neoclassicism](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hi/hi_neoclassicism.htm)
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hi/hi_neoclassicism.htm
 - [Hiram Powers, Andrew Jackson bust\) - compare to Franklin](http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/american_paintings_and_sculpture/andrew_jackson_hiram_powers/objectview.aspx?collID=2&OID=20012153)
http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/american_paintings_and_sculpture/andrew_jackson_hiram_powers/objectview.aspx?collID=2&OID=20012153
 - [George Washington, Hiram Powers \(American, 1805-1873\)](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/wash/ho_1982.443.2.htm)
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/wash/ho_1982.443.2.htm
- [Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Library](http://www.benfranklin300.org/)
http://www.benfranklin300.org/
- [American Studies at the University of Virginia](http://xroads.virginia.edu/)
http://xroads.virginia.edu/
 - [Hiram Powers, Thomas Jefferson—The Capitol Project](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PIX/pix_hp.html)
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PIX/pix_hp.html
 - [Hiram Powers, Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PIX/jefftpowe.gif)
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PIX/jefftpowe.gif
 - [Benjamin Franklin—A Site Dedicated for Resources to Teaching Benjamin Franklin](https://www.harrisburg.psu.edu/teachingfranklin/bio.cfm)
https://www.harrisburg.psu.edu/teachingfranklin/bio.cfm
- [Internet Public Library](http://www.ipl.org)
http://www.ipl.org
 - [@rt junction](http://www.artjunction.org/)
http://www.artjunction.org/
 - [Make an ARTRAGEOUS HAT!](http://www.artjunction.org/hat.php)
http://www.artjunction.org/hat.php
 - [How to Make Paper hats](http://home.howstuffworks.com/paper-hats.htm/printable)
http://home.howstuffworks.com/paper-hats.htm/printable
 - [Paper Hat](http://www.laits.utexas.edu/hebrew/personal/toolbox/acm/hat/hat.html)
http://www.laits.utexas.edu/hebrew/personal/toolbox/acm/hat/hat.html
- [National Park Services—Signers of the Constitution](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/constitution/bio15.htm)
http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/constitution/bio15.htm
- [PicturingAmerica](http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/) http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/
 - [Hiram Powers, Benjamin Franklin, 18624b](http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/downloads/pdfs/Resource_Guide_Chapters/PictAmer_Resource_Book_Chapter_4B.pdf)
http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/downloads/pdfs/Resource_Guide_Chapters/PictAmer_Resource_Book_Chapter_4B.pdf
- [Podcast: Walter Isaacson explores Benjamin Franklin's legacy](http://invention.smithsonian.org/video/vid-popup.aspx?clip=1&id=455)
http://invention.smithsonian.org/video/vid-popup.aspx?clip=1&id=455
- [The first edition of Poor Richard's Almanac was published in 1733](http://www.readwritethink.org/calendar/calendar_day.asp?id=378)
http://www.readwritethink.org/calendar/calendar_day.asp?id=378
- [Smithsonian American Art Museum](http://americanart.si.edu/)
http://americanart.si.edu/
 - [Hiram Powers sculptures](http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/search/search_artworks1.cfm?StartRow=1&ConID=3864&format=short)
http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/search/search_artworks1.cfm?StartRow=1&ConID=3864&format=short

Standards Alignment

[View your state's standards](#)



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