

Benjamin Franklin | Lesson Plan

What is the American Dream?

Students will understand the meaning behind the term “American Dream” through the story of Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. Students will understand how America was different from the rest of the world during Benjamin Franklin’s time and why it was, and still is, considered the land of opportunity.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain what the American Dream is.
- Identify the differences between America and the rest of the world during Benjamin Franklin’s time.
- Examine how Benjamin Franklin’s life was altered by the American Dream.
- Identify the various types of behavior necessary to pursue the American Dream and have success.
- Identify Benjamin Franklin’s role in founding the United States of America.
- Evaluate how we know that the American Dream still exists in the U.S. today.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Self-rule:** A system in which every citizen is free to build their lives how they want.
- **Opportunity:** A favorable or advantageous circumstance or situation that allows someone to do something, achieve a goal, or make progress.
- **Monarch:** A ruler who holds a position of sovereign power over a nation. Monarchs can be kings or queens and typically inherit their position through a royal family line.
- **Noble:** A person of high social rank, often belonging to the aristocracy, and who historically held titles such as duke, duchess, lord, or lady.
- **Apprenticeship:** An arrangement in which someone learns a skill, trade, or profession from an experienced and skilled individual.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4

Academic Subject Areas: Biography, America, Historical Figures

What You’ll Need

- Video: *Benjamin Franklin: America’s First Great Inventor and Thinker* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Benjamin Franklin: America’s First Great Inventor and Thinker* (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)



Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Initiate a class discussion on the American Dream. Prompt students to think about in what context they may have heard it before. Encourage students to think of their own definition or example of the American Dream. Invite students to share examples aloud and brainstorm together.
2. Display a copy of the "Benjamin Franklin Worksheet" and pass out individual worksheets to students.
3. Instruct students to write their definition and example of the American Dream in the Warm-Up Activity. Teachers may need to model an example for students.
4. Once completed, invite students to share some responses aloud and compare similarities and differences with peers.
5. Invite students to share what they know about Benjamin Franklin, his achievements, and his role in founding the United States of America.
6. Read the rest of the worksheet as a class so students know what to listen for during the video.
7. Set the stage for the upcoming video by highlighting the theme of opportunity and determination. Encourage students to look for ways throughout the video of how America was different from the rest of the world during Benjamin Franklin's time.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video.
2. Assist students with completing the worksheet alongside the video, encouraging note-taking and active listening.
3. Pause throughout the video to allow students to answer questions. If necessary, model short answer responses, restate the question, and write a complete sentence.

Wrap-Up: (10-15 minutes)

1. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the worksheet independently.
2. Ask students to read their responses to the Making Connections section aloud.
3. Collect as formative assessment or discuss in class.
4. Conclude with an open-ended prompt for students to reflect on what they've learned about Benjamin Franklin and the American Dream:
 - Think about Benjamin Franklin's life and achievements. How did his story help you understand what the American Dream means? Share an example from his life that you found inspiring.
 - Imagine you are living in Benjamin Franklin's time. How do you think the opportunities available to people in America back then were different from those in other parts of the world? How are those opportunities similar or different from what we have today?
 - In what ways do you think the American Dream is still alive today?

- Can you think of someone you know or a story you've heard about someone achieving their American Dream? Describe their journey and what it means to you.
 - Reflect on your own experiences and your family's history. How has the idea of the American Dream influenced your life or the lives of your family members? Share a personal story or observation.
5. Encourage students to strive to be thankful for the country they live in and the endless opportunities and privileges they have as citizens of the USA.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video