

**K-PREP**  
**Sample Items**  
**2012**

**Reading Grade 6**

*Read these paired passages about Benjamin Franklin, a famous American. Then answer the questions that follow.*

## **The Life of Benjamin Franklin**



### **The Early Years**

- 1 Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706, the tenth son of seventeen children. Like many early American settlers, Benjamin Franklin's father, Josiah Franklin, was a Puritan who fled English religious persecution. Benjamin Franklin's mother, Abiah Folger, came from a respectable Boston family. Young Benjamin's parents made soap and candles for a living.
- 2 Everyone could tell that young Benjamin was very intelligent. His parents wanted him to become a clergyman. However, studying for the clergy required years of schooling, and his parents could only afford to send him to school for two years. Going to work for his parents, Benjamin discovered that he did not enjoy the business of making candles. He wanted to work on a ship, but his father objected to that idea.
- 3 In 1717, Benjamin became an apprentice to his older brother James, who was a printer. Printing in 1717 was different than it is today. Individual letters had to be arranged in place in large metal plates, a boring and difficult task. But young Benjamin loved to read and write, and he was happier with his brother than he was at home.

- 4 When Benjamin was 15, his brother started his own newspaper, *The New England Courant*. Benjamin began to write for the paper using false names. One author he invented, Silence Dogood, was a widow who often argued for the rights of women. She was very popular, but Benjamin's brother was angry when he found out that Mrs. Dogood was really his little brother.
- 5 During his time at his brother's printing shop, Benjamin taught himself to be very disciplined. He became a vegetarian and kept himself on a strict budget, which left him with extra money to buy books. However, his relationship with his brother James got worse and worse. James was jailed briefly for his political writing, and the teenaged Benjamin ran the newspaper while his brother was in jail. When James was freed, he was furious that his brother, who had proved he could run the paper successfully, was wanting to leave. The situation became so unbearable that Benjamin left Boston.
- 6 Running away from an apprenticeship was illegal, and Benjamin had little money when he arrived in Philadelphia in 1723—just enough to buy a few rolls of bread. A local girl about his age, Deborah Read, saw him eating his rolls in the street and thought he looked very silly.
- 7 Benjamin got a job in the printing business not long after arriving in Philadelphia. He made a good name for himself. The governor of the area, Sir William Keith, took an interest in the young man and sent government printing work to him. Sir Keith also offered to help pay for Benjamin to set up his own printing business if Benjamin would go to England to buy necessary machinery. So Benjamin sailed to England in 1725. But when he got there, he found out that Sir Keith had lied to him, and there would be no money for the printing equipment. Benjamin made his own way in London, working in a printing company. He got the nickname "the water American" for his habit of drinking only water with his meals. He saved money and, in 1726, returned to Philadelphia.
- 8 Benjamin's attentive habits helped him to overcome the obstacles he met. He went from working for other printers to having his own print shop. In 1729, he bought a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. He resumed his old habit of writing articles under different names, so that nobody knew that many of the writers for the newspaper were Benjamin Franklin in disguise. During this same time, Benjamin invented the political cartoon. These cartoons used symbols for ideas and opinions which, if had written them in words, could have caused the British government to arrest Benjamin and close down his newspaper. His newspaper became the most successful of the papers in the British colonies in North America.
- 9 Ever since arriving in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin had been close with Deborah Read—the girl who thought he looked silly eating rolls in the street. Benjamin had rented a room in her father's house. Before Benjamin left for England, he and Deborah

fell in love. In 1730, they were married. In addition to Benjamin's newspaper, the young couple had their own stores in which they sold soap, cloth, books, and many other products.

- 10 This was the life of Benjamin Franklin up to the age of 24. His habits and accomplishments during this early period set the stage for his adventures later on as an author, inventor, scientist, diplomat, and one of the key philosophical and political figures in the founding of the United States of America.

## **Memoir—Benjamin Franklin**

(fictionalized adaptation )

- 1 As a boy, my interests were many. I loved reading and writing. I became fascinated with the idea of adding discipline and order to my life. I carefully regulated my finances, my uses of time, and even my eating habits.
- 2 I spent a great deal of time in my early years in the printing trade. While I worked for my brother, I learned how to set up and use the printing press. I will always remember all those hours I spent bent over picking up the small, metal letters arranging them meticulously. I loved working with words in any fashion. I became increasingly intrigued with the power they held.
- 3 I disapproved of what the English rulers were trying to force all us colonists to do. Others felt the same as I, but we would be punished severely if we tried to speak out. I was desperate to share my feelings, my words, with anyone who might listen. I took a chance. I decided that no one would suspect me if I never used my own name. I went even further to protect myself by creating a woman to voice my distaste for the ills of government and politics and society in general. I created Silence Dogood, a widowed lady. Through her, I was able to print all the things I felt were wrong with the government and society as a whole. I was just a boy then, afraid for my safety. Now, as a grown adult, I am more able to own my voice and speak my words.
- 4 During my time spent as my brother's apprentice, he and I were constantly at odds with one another. He had to spend some time in prison. While he was away, I was left in charge of the printing business. In fact, I often wonder if he expected his business to fail in my charge. Because I was able to keep it going and because of my hidden fame with Silence Dogood, I think he may have been jealous. When he returned home, our bickering became even more pronounced. Finally, I could bear it no longer. I left Boston even though I knew I was avoiding my responsibility in the apprenticeship.

- 5 When I reached Philadelphia, I could not help but worry that I had made the wrong decision. I had not a shilling to my name. A young lady caught my eye. I felt instantly attracted to her. She was beautiful, but she seemed to regard me with some disdain. I had no recourse but to turn away and pretend I never saw her.
  
- 6 Reality struck! If I wanted to eat, I had to find work. Displeased as I was with him, I had to thank my brother for giving me the opportunity to apprentice with him. Because of my work in his printing shop, I was able to find work in another. Although I was wonderfully skillful, I was too gullible. I innocently believed an important man who offered me the opportunity to set up my own printing shop. He said he would buy the equipment I needed. All I had to do was travel to London to make the purchase. I never doubted his sincerity. When I arrived in London, I realized quickly what a dolt I had been. There was no money sent to buy anything. I had been duped. Tricked as I was, I learned a very important lesson that I would carry with me forever: To succeed, I must rely on my own talents and instincts. I was master of myself.

1

In “Memoir—Benjamin Franklin,” Franklin briefly tells about seeing a young woman after arriving in Philadelphia. “The Life of Benjamin Franklin” tells about the couple’s first meeting in a different way. Explain one way the two presentations are different. Use details from both passages in your explanation.



2

The second passage is subtitled “fictionalized adaptation.” Explain how the author of the fictionalized adaptation used actual events from “The Life of Benjamin Franklin” to give the impression that it was written by Franklin himself. Include specific examples from both passages to support your response.

# Reading

A large rectangular box with a thick black border, containing 25 horizontal lines for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the box. The first line is slightly indented from the left margin.