The Time Stone Series of American Heroes

Benjamin Franklin

Inventor, Writer, Printer, Statesman, Politician, Peacemaker, Scientist

SUPPLEMENT TO THE NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION PROGRAM
Meet the Amazing Ben Franklin

A Trip through Time

Sam pushed open the massive wooden door of the rambling, three-story house. "Professor Max?"

"Come in!" a deep, cheerful voice rang out. "Come in and warm yourselves."

Sam and his friend Isabel stepped inside the home. They walked down a long hallway to a large workshop filled with strange-looking plants and rocks, old maps on the wall and all kinds of funny contraptions. Over a wooden table, stood a tall man with white hair, wearing a long patchwork coat. It was the famous scientist and inventor, Professor Max McDougal. In his hand was a glass flask filled with a creamy liquid. As he held the container over a flame, it began to change color. Dark red for hot, yellow for warm, green for cool and dark blue for freezing. If you paint your house with it, it will change colors with the seasons--or sometimes in a single day."

The professor's eyes twinkled as he looked over at Isabel. Her cheeks were rosy from the brisk wind outside. "You look like a cherry ice cube, young lady, "I feel like one," she said, her teeth still chattering. She walked over to an old-fashioned iron stove and gratefully held her hands up to it. A wood fire crackled within, warming the whole room.

Remarkable Rock

As Sam pulled off his coat, he saw a pair of odd-looking spectacles on the table. Each round lens was split across the middle. "What are these, Professor?"

"They're bifocals--very special glasses. The top half allows people with poor eyesight to see faraway objects more clearly, while the bottom half helps them to read books, letters and all kinds of writing more easily. They were dreamed up by a remarkable fellow named Benjamin Franklin--he was an inventor, a scientist, a writer, a statesman, a diplomat and one of America's Founding Fathers, as well."

"Gosh," Isabel said, "how did anyone have time to do all that?"

Prof. McDougal chuckled. "Well, I could tell you, but instead ... how would like to see for yourself?"

"See for ourselves?" asked Isabel. "Are we going somewhere?"

"Well, actually, you don't need to go anywhere."

The professor walked over to a table at one end of the large room and pointed to a fist-sized stone. It was rough and bumpy all over except for one side, which was pitch black, perfectly flat, and shiny as a mirror.

"This rock is my latest discovery. I found it in Russia close to where a giant meteorite once hit the Earth. It's a very special stone, able to reach back into the past and make it real in the present."

Sam peered intently at the stone. "It looks like any old rock."

Prof. McDougal smiled. "Oh, it's more than that, as you'll soon see. But we must get started. It's time you met Ben Franklin."

The professor placed the Time Stone flat on his palm and said: "The summer of 1715, please."
with Professor Max and Friends

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around in amazement. "Where are we?"
"Why you're right where you were. In my house," said the professor.
"But …"
"I know, Sam. It looks like we've gone somewhere, but we haven't. You're now in the magical world of the Time Stone. It's able to recreate any moment in the life of anyone who's ever lived--like stepping into a movie. Things look real, but actually they're just illusions, created by my remarkable stone."

Big Splash
"Are you sure we haven't gone back in time, professor?" Isabel asked. "Because my mom gets upset if I'm late for dinner."
"Don't worry. You'll never be late with the Time Stone," said the professor. "Now, we're about to meet the hero of our story, young Ben Franklin. He was born in Boston on January 17, 1706 to Josiah and Abiah Franklin. Though Ben had 16 brothers and sisters, he would become the most famous of all the Franklins."

Prof. McDougal raised his arm and pointed. "If I'm not mistaken, there he is up ahead."
Sam and Isabel turned to look at Ben Franklin, a sturdy boy, about nine years old, who was running up and down the field with a kite in his hand. Soon the kite was flying high above him.
After a few minutes, Ben's hair hung damply against his forehead in the humid summer air. He walked to the side of the pond where Isabel was standing.
"Doesn't he see me, Professor?"
"Oh, no. Only we can see everything--through the magic of the Time Stone."
Isabel watched as Ben fastened the kite string to a stake. Then he threw off his pants and shirt and dove in. Some of the water splashed on the girl.
"Hey, Professor, if this is just an illusion, then how come I'm getting wet?"
"Look closer, Isabel. Those were phantom drops. They only appear real."
And sure enough, when she looked down, her pants were dry as ever.
Ben swam around in the cool water for a few minutes. Then he paddled back to the bank and stared up at his kite, still tossing and turning in the wind. After a moment, he untied it from the stake and waded back into the water.
"What's he doing, Professor?" Sam asked. "You can't fly a kite in the water."
"Can't you? We'll soon see."
Ben called to a friend, who was playing nearby, and gestured for him to bring his clothes to the other side of the pond. He then lay back in the water, the kite fluttering in the air above him. A gust of wind caught it and soon Ben was being dragged across the pond. Within minutes he had been pulled clear over to the other side.
"Cool!"
"I want to try that!"
The professor laughed. "Yes, that's Ben. He's always trying to find new ways to do things."
Professor Max pulled the Time Stone from his pocket and held it clasped in his hand. The orange rays flashed and within seconds the three were once more in his workshop.

Fun with Fans
Isabel looked around in surprise. "Wow! Talk about quick changes!"
"I wish it were summer, so we could take the kite down to the lake," Sam said, looking out a window.
"Well, don't let the season stop you from having fun," the professor replied.
And with that he clapped his hands three times. The children stared, astonished, as wood panels, high up on the walls, slid open. Great mechanical arms zoomed out with enormous fans attached. They began to churn the air at different speeds.
"What are the fans for, Professor?" Isabel asked, her long hair twirling about her face.
"They create my own private wind tunnel--very useful for experiments. Now you and Sam can try something very like Ben's kite trick."
Prof. McDougal pulled out two small paper kites from a cabinet and handed one to each child. They looked like the one Ben had flown. "Have you ever had a kite race?"
Sam started untangling the string. "How do you race a kite?"
"By using your imagination," the professor said. He pulled out a velvet bag from the drawer of his desk. "Go ahead, Isabel."
The girl reached in and took out a small Roman chariot. Sam quickly followed, choosing a pint-sized dune buggy. Prof. McDougal showed them how to tie the toys to the ends of the kite strings.
"Now, as the fans blow your kites across the room, your racers will be pulled with them. I've tied a second string to each, so you can guide them."
"One, two, three…go!" The children set their vehicles on the floor and were soon laughing as they tried to steer them. One gust from the fans lifted the dune buggy nearly off the ground. Isabel's chariot took a sharp turn and headed under the professor's desk. As they ran to catch up with them, Isabel tripped over Sam, and they both fell to the floor giggling.
Prof. McDougal sat back in his armchair and joined in the laughter. After a few minutes, he clapped his hands three times, the fans stopped and the mechanism--
Young Apprentice

When the light reappeared, the children found themselves in an old-fashioned workshop. In the middle stood a tall machine with levers and movable parts. A small table had been pushed under a window through which the sun was weakly shining. Next to it was an odd, slanted desk divided into rows of small compartments.

Sam peered inside. “Hey, they have the letters of the alphabet here, all made of metal. What are these things for, Professor?”

“You’re in the print shop owned by Mr. James Franklin, and those are some of the tools of his trade.”

“I get it,” said Isabel. “People used to put the letters in rows, spelling out words backwards. Then they’d stack the rows atop each other, cover them with ink and press paper against them to make newspapers and books.”

“No kidding, brainiac. We learned that in Mr. Swayle’s class last week.”

“Well, you didn’t remember, Sam, until I said it.”

Silence DoGood

A small mouse jumped up onto the printing table and stood still for a moment sniffing the air. The boy reached forward to grab it, but to his astonishment his hand passed right through the tiny creature.

“Hey, did you see that, Professor?”

“Of course, Sam. Remember, everything you see here is an illusion created by the Time Stone.”

Suddenly, the mouse darted off the table onto the floor, taking flight through a hole in the wall. Sam bent down to look through the hole, but Isabel grabbed him. “Look!”

A young man had entered the room. Some 5 feet 10 inches tall, he was strongly built and looked about 17 years old. It was Ben. He carried a glass of water in one hand and a biscuit in the other. Sitting down at the table, he pulled out a piece of paper. Then dipping a quill pen into a jar of ink, he began to write.

“What is he working on, Professor?”

“Another humorous letter, Isabel, for The New-England Courant, the newspaper his brother publishes. When he first started writing, Ben used the name Silence DoGood, so James wouldn’t know the letters were his. But eventually his brother did find out.”

“But why would James mind?”

“He is very strict and thinks Ben should only do his work as an apprentice and nothing else. But people like Ben’s clever writings and talk about them. Now the brothers have started to argue a lot. James feels all the attention is making Ben too proud, while Ben believes his brother treats him unfairly.”

Just then, a man walked into the room. “Ah,” the professor said, “that is James.”

The three friends watched as the older Franklin walked swiftly across the room. He spoke sharply to Ben, who immediately stood up, pointing to his lunch.

“What’s the matter, Professor?” Sam asked.

“James wants Ben to eat with the other apprentices. He thinks this is another example of his thinking he’s better than everybody else. But Ben eats alone because he wants to use the time to read and write.”

The Brothers Quarrel

James reached over and grabbed the paper from the table, crumbled it up and threw it on the floor. Ben stood up and angrily began to protest. Without another word, James struck him across the face. Isabel was stand-
continued from previous page

ing right next to Ben and flinched. The young man’s hands clenched into fists, but he kept them by his sides. James looked at him for a moment, then turned on his heels and stalked out of the room.

Ben’s cheek had turned crimson from the blow, and he rubbed it with his hand. He looked as angry as his brother. After a moment he picked up the paper and carefully smoothed it out, before folding it again and sticking it in his pocket. Then he picked up some pamphlets from the table and walked out of the room.

“I can’t believe James hit him,” Sam said indignantly. “If I were Ben, I wouldn’t let him get away with that.”

The professor looked grave. “Ben knows James can pretty much do anything he wants. Apprentices don’t have many rights. But Ben will never forget his brother’s treatment of him. For the rest of his life he will resist anybody in authority who acts unfairly toward others.”

Prof. McDougal pulled out his amazing stone. “As we’re about to see, this fight with James will lead Ben to make the most important decision of his life. Time Stone, take us to October 1723.”

Fresh Start in Philadelphia

When the darkness lifted, Sam and Isabel stood with the professor on a road overlooking docks on a large river. The waterway was crowded with boats. Around them was a bustling city.

A wagon rumbled by Isabel, pulled by two chestnut-colored horses. “Where are we, Professor?”

“Why, Philadelphia, birthplace of the United States. And, if I’m not mistaken, that boat coming down the river is carrying Ben Franklin.”

Isabel followed his gaze. Way off in the distance was a small craft filled with people, but they were too tiny to pick out. “How can you tell? They’re too far away to see.”

Special Glasses

The professor reached into his pocket. He pulled out the most extraordinary spectacles the girl had ever seen. Two tiny telescopes seemed to poke out of each lens. “Try my binoculars. They’ll allow you to see faraway objects much better.”

Isabel giggled as she slipped the stems of the special glasses over her ears. “They look so funny.”

A huge blurred face loomed in front of her. “Eeeww, Sam, your face looks like a giant pumpkin!”

“Well, you look like an alien with those things sticking out of your eyes.”

The professor turned Isabel towards the river. “They only work when you look at distant objects. Now focus on the rowboat.”

Isabel picked out the familiar figure of young Franklin pulling hard at one of the oars as the vessel approached the dock.

“I see him! I see him!”

“Hey, let me try them.” Isabel handed the fantastic spectacles to Sam. But as the craft moved closer, they were both able to see Ben with their own eyes.

An Amusing Sight

Isabel laughed as Franklin scrambled out of the boat. The young man looked bedraggled after his long journey from Boston. His clothes were dirty and rumpled, and his pockets were stuffed with extra shirts and stockings. A shirt-sleeve hung out of one pocket.

“What happened to him, Professor?”

“Ben knew he would never be happy working for his brother, so he left the print shop. Unfortunately, James made sure no one else would hire him in Boston. With few other options Ben has come to Philadelphia. He is only 17 years old, but he’s ready to make a new life for himself.”

The three followed behind Franklin as he walked down the street. He stopped at a shop and bought three large bread rolls. His pockets were filled with his belongings, so he carried a roll under each arm while he ate the third one.

As he passed a house, a pleasant-looking girl, about his own age, saw him and laughed at his funny appearance.

The professor smiled. “Ben doesn’t know it yet, but that girl will soon be a very important person in his life. Her name is Deborah Read; and, in time, she will become his wife.”

Sam looked at Ben’s rumpled, travel-stained clothes. “But Professor, he doesn’t even have a job now—or a place to live. What’s he’s going to do?”

“Ben is a smart, hardworking young man. It won’t be long before he will find jobs with various printers. In a few years he’ll have saved enough to open his own print shop—and to start a family.”

Prof. McDougal paused. “Now, it’s time we returned to my workshop. We have so much more to see.”

Introducing Poor Richard

He pulled out the Time Stone. Instantly, the busy Philadelphia street disappeared, and the three were back in the professor’s house. Sam took a step back and immediately fell over the armrest of the sofa.

“Sorry, my boy. You never know where you’re going to end up with the Time Stone.”

Isabel had a troubled look on her face. "Professor, did Ben ever see his family again?”

“Oh, yes. Eventually, he went back to Boston for a visit and even made up with James. But once he married Deborah, the couple became busy raising their own family. They had two sons: William, the older one, and Francis. Sadly, Francis, died of smallpox when he was only four years old. Ben never got over losing the little boy. Later, when his daughter Sarah was born, he was overjoyed. He and his wife nicknamed her Sally, and they both loved her dearly.” continued on next page
Ben recorded the phases of the moon. Poor Richard's Almanack...Who's Richard?

"Poor Richard, 1733. An Almanack...Who's Richard?

"Oh, just another name Ben invented for himself. You see, as the years passed, he began writing about all kinds of subjects. He started publishing his Almanack in 1732. It offered charts of the moon's phases, humor and wise sayings like..."

"'A penny saved is a penny earned,'" said Sam.

The professor laughed: "'That's right. Or 'When the well's dry, we know the worth of water' and 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.'"

"Ben was a wonderful man who always looked for ways to help his fellow citizens. He published a newspaper and started the first hospital in Philadelphia. He founded America's first subscription library—open to all who paid a membership fee. He even served as Deputy Postmaster General for the colonies.

"Most importantly, he saved many lives by...but perhaps it's best for you to see for yourselves. Isabel, it's time to go to January 1743."

The Firefighter

The girl jumped up and grabbed hold of the Time Stone. The orange rays shot out from the rock. When the darkness lifted, the first thing they saw was..."Fire!" Isabel cried.

"Look! That house is on fire!"

And sure enough, a large, two-story home had appeared before them. People were milling about, shouting to each other in confusion. A group of men ran up carrying leather buckets and began filling them from a well. A gust of wind blew a cloud of ash and sparks from the home. Suddenly, Isabel caught sight of a familiar figure. She ran to the side of the house.

"Sam! Professor! There's Ben!"

As they hurried after her, they saw Franklin. He looked to be in his late 30s now, his light brown hair hanging about his shoulders. He was organizing a group of men into a human chain. First a bucket was dipped into the well and then quickly handed down the line until it was poured on the flames. It was followed by another and another.

As the bucket brigade worked, another group of men ran into the house. They soon came out carrying chairs and parts of a bed.

Professor Max gestured towards them. "Philadelphians didn't have the large fire engines that we have now. Sometimes houses burned too quickly to save them, so people tried to salvage their most valuable furniture and..."

"Look out!" Sam cried.

"Flames had burst from a window on the side of the house. But already Ben had seen them and directed several men to pour water on the blaze. Finally, the last flames were doused. One side of the home was badly charred. But it still stood tall."

Proud Achievement

Ben turned away from the house and shook hands with the other men. Sam saw that his face was damp with perspiration, but a small smile lit his face.

"Ben saved the house, didn't he, Professor?"

"Yes, indeed, and his fire brigade will go on to preserve many others. In Philadelphia houses often burned to the ground because there was no one to put them out. But in 1736 Ben changed all that when he started the city's first volunteer fire company. Soon other companies were formed all over Philadelphia. Ben will accomplish much in his life, but few things will make him prouder than knowing he helped protect so many people from fires."

Keeping Us Warm

The professor held up the Time Stone and the children soon found themselves standing by the large bay windows at the back of his workshop. The white-haired scientist took a red fire hat from one of his bookshelves and dropped it on the head of a grinning Sam.

"Hey, Isabel, look! I'm the new fire chief."

Prof. McDougal glanced at the girl, who had walked over to his box-shaped open stove.

"Speaking of fire, I hope you're feeling warmer now, Isabel."

"Yes, thank you. I'm glad you had your stove burning when we came in. It was so cold outside."

Clever Design

The professor laughed: "That's one more thing you can thank Ben for."

"What do you mean?"

Prof. McDougal pointed at the stove. "For centuries, homes were heated by fireplaces. But most of the heat went up the chimney instead of into the room. So Ben invented this..."
continued from previous page

special cast-iron stove, which traps the heat within its sides, warming the whole room. Even better, it needs less wood than a fireplace. In time people all over the colonies owned a Franklin stove."

"Neat. I bet Ben became rich," said Sam.

Prof. McDougal smiled and shook his head. "No. He refused to take money for his ideas. Ben believed his inventions should be shared with everyone, and he was determined to learn everything about it."

Prof. McDougal paused and held out the Time Stone. "It's one reason he's holding onto the ribbon. Electricity can run down the wet string, but it can't pass through dry silk, so Ben hopes that will protect him."

Sam and Isabel watched as dark angry clouds raced across the sky. But nothing happened to the kite. Ben shook his head in disappointment.

**Dangerous Experiment**

Range rays flashed from the rock. The walls of the professor's house disappeared and the children were soon standing by a small shed in an open field. Above them, ominous clouds were gathering. Already, Isabel saw drops falling around them.

"What are we doing here?"

The professor pointed through the rain. "Look."

Sam and Isabel turned and saw Franklin standing with a young man out in the middle of the field. Isabel looked at the dark clouds overhead. In the distance jagged bolts of lightning lit up the sky. She knew the storm was only an illusion and so couldn't hurt her, but still she felt uneasy.

"Isn't it dangerous for Ben and his son to fly a kite in a thunderstorm, Professor?"

"Yes, it certainly is. The best place to be is safely at home. Ben and his son know how risky it is, so let's hope they won't stay for long."

Sam and Isabel watched as Franklin picked up a kite he'd made from a silk handkerchief and pieces of wood. A piece of metal wire stuck out from the frame. Ben handed the kite to his son William, who grabbed hold of a silk ribbon that was knotted to the end of a long string. A metal key hung from the knot where the ribbon and string were joined.

The young man began to race back and forth across the field until the kite climbed high into the sky. Then the two men headed back to shelter under the roof of a shed. Ben took the kite string from William and held tightly to the silk ribbon, saying, "Why are they trying to fly the kite in the rain?"

"It's not the rain they're concerned about, Sam. Ben wants to prove that lightning is electricity, and now he's figured out how to do that. Electricity is attracted to metal. Ben believes those thunderclouds are charged with electricity that bursts out as bolts of lightning. If he is right, then when one of those clouds passes over his kite, an electric charge should hit the kite, run down the wet string to the key and create a spark."

"Doesn't he have to worry about the lightning hitting him?"

"Yes, Isabel, he does. That's one reason he's holding onto the ribbon. Electricity can run down the wet string, but it can't pass through dry silk, so Ben hopes that will protect him."

"Ouch! Be careful, Sam!"

"Oh, sorry. But did you see it, Professor? Did you see it? Ben was right: lightning is electricity!"

"Yes, Sam, Ben was right. His kite experiment will become famous around the world. Because of his work -- and that of others -- scientists will find new ways to create and store electricity. The rest, as they say, is history."

Isabel tugged his coat sleeve. "Can we try the kite experiment?"

"Absolutely not! It is very dangerous. Ben might have
1706—Born on January 17 to Josiah and Abiah Franklin on Milk Street in Boston, MA.

1718—Young Ben becomes an apprentice to his older brother James, a Boston printer.

1728—Franklin opens his own print shop in partnership with Hugh Meredith. He would later publish a newspaper, The Pennsylvania Gazette.

1732—Franklin publishes the first issue of Poor Richard’s Almanack.

1741—Invents his Franklin Stove, which allows homes to be warmed much more efficiently and inexpensively than traditional fireplaces.

1752—With the help of his son, William, Franklin conducts his famous kite experiment in a Pennsylvania field as storm clouds pass overhead.

1754—At the Albany (NY) Congress Ben Franklin joins other representatives of the colonies to plan a joint defense should war break out with France. Franklin proposes creating a colonial union giving the Americans greater self-government under the British crown. Though the individual colonies do not accept Franklin’s “Albany Plan,” years later it will prove invaluable to the colonists, as they organize themselves to fight the British during the American Revolution.
1761—Franklin creates a remarkable musical instrument, the Armonica, which is made up of a series of glass bowls of different sizes placed one inside of the other. A spindle turns the bowls, while the musician runs his hands over them producing notes of great beauty.

1776—As a delegate to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Franklin would play a critical role in the debate over whether the American Colonies should separate themselves from Great Britain. On July 4, the delegates would agree on the final language for the Declaration of Independence which would argue the Americans’ case to the world that they be “free and independent.”

1776—"We must all hang together, or assuredly we will all hang separately.” Though some question whether Franklin actually said these words, they certainly reflect his belief that the colonists must stand united in their rebellion against the British government.

1776—Franklin and the other colonial representatives sign the Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776.

1784—As he grew older, Franklin had difficulty seeing objects that were either too close or too far away. He invented bifocals using two types of glass in each round frame. By staring through the top half, he could see distant objects well, while the bottom half enabled him to see those that were near.

1787—Franklin serves as a delegate at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. A constitution for the new United States is formally signed by the delegates on September 17, 1787. Two years later the U.S. Constitution officially takes effect, becoming a model for those used by many countries around the world.
been killed and so might anybody. The best place to be during a storm is inside.”

Lucy Richards

Prof. McDougal held out the glowing Time Stone and within seconds instead of thunderclouds and lightning, Isabel saw the familiar wood-beamed ceiling of the professor’s comfortable workshop.

“Yes, Ben’s experiments would help change the world,” said Prof. McDougal. “Later he would invent the lightning rod, a long, thin piece of metal attached to the outside of a home. With Ben’s invention the lightning hits the rod, instead of the house, and runs safely into the ground.”

“Oh, I’ve seen those,” Sam said. “We’ve got one next to our chimney.”

“That’s right. In fact, most homes have them, now. There used to be many house fires because of lightning strikes, but Ben’s invention made them very rare.”

The Paxton Boys

Now, Prof. McDougal said, “I’m afraid I have a sad story to tell you.” He pointed to a small sofa. Sam and Isabel plopped down on it and waited for him to begin.

“In 1763,” he said, “some native tribes of the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley attacked a series of English forts from Detroit to western Pennsylvania, killing many people. The tribesmen were angry because settlers were moving onto the lands where they had always hunted. They were afraid they would no longer have a place to live.”

Isabel frowned. “I’d be upset, too, but they shouldn’t have killed people.”

“No, my dear, but I’m afraid that some of the settlers also treated the native tribes—or Indians as they called them—very badly. And now even worse was about to happen.”

“What could be worse than that?” asked Sam.

“Well, while soldiers searched for the warriors who had attacked the settlers, a mob of men, some from the town of Paxton, PA, took the law into their own hands. These ‘Paxton Boys,’ as they were called, traveled through the countryside until they found a small group of Indians who hadn’t hurt anybody—and killed them.”

“Why didn’t somebody stop them?”

“Unfortunately, towns didn’t have the same kinds of police forces that we have today. Besides, by then, the Paxton mob had grown to include hundreds of armed, violent men. It would have taken a small army to stop them.”

“Couldn’t anyone do anything?”

“Yes, one person …”

“Ben Franklin!” Sam cried, bouncing off the sofa.

Cry for Justice

“That’s right. Ben was outraged by the killings. First he wrote a pamphlet—a kind of public letter—to the people of Philadelphia. He told them it was wrong to blame all Indians for something that just a few had done. Only the ones who had killed the settlers deserved to be brought to justice.

Franklin made it clear he thought the Paxtons were cowards and murderers, and no one should help them.”

“Did that stop the Paxton Boys?” asked Isabel.

“I’m afraid not. That is when Ben realized he would have to do more himself to stop the mob.”

Isabel’s eyes widened. “How did he do that, Professor?”

“I think it’s better if we go see. Time Stone, take us to February 1764.”

The magic stone pulsed. When a dim light reappeared, Sam and Isabel saw they were in a house once more. But it wasn’t the professor’s. Everything seemed strange and unfamiliar.

Isabel looked at a clock ticking against the wall; its hands pointed to midnight. The front door shook as it was pounded from the outside. Isabel was standing by a stairway and gave a start as Ben Franklin hurried past her, carrying a candle. He looked older now. His hair was grayer and thinner, and he wore spectacles.

Ben opened the door and saw three men, their faces anxious.

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American Heroes: Benjamin Franklin

Franklin and his son William attempt their famous kite experiment.

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Facing Down a Mob

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and tense, standing in front of him. He bowed them into the house.

**Governor’s Plea**

“That’s John Penn, the governor of Pennsylvania,” the professor said, gesturing to the man who was dressed more finely than the others.

Sam frowned. “He looks scared.”

“He is. The Paxtons have marched to within eight miles of Philadelphia. The mob has heard some tribespeople have taken refuge within the city and have threatened to kill them—and anyone sheltering them.”

“But why has the governor come to Ben?” asked Isabel.

“Because he is the man who can best organize a defense of the city. In fact, 1000 men have already promised to join Ben in protecting Philadelphia if the Paxtons attack. Still, the governor is terrified now that the mob is so near. He’s hoping Ben can do more.”

The children watched as Franklin put his candle on the table and pulled out a map of Philadelphia. The governor spoke rapidly. He pointed to a place called Germantown, just outside of the city. Then, with hands outstretched, he pleaded with Franklin for help.

“What is he asking Ben to do, Professor?” Isabel asked.

“Governor Penn wants him to go to Germantown and meet the leaders of the mob. He’s hoping Ben can persuade them not to enter the city.”

“Why should Ben have to go meet those dangerous men? Why doesn’t the governor go himself?”

“I don’t know, Isabel. Perhaps he thought that Ben would do a better job. He’s already one of the most famous and respected men in the colonies. If anyone can make a mob listen to reason, it’s Ben Franklin. Now shall we see what happens when Ben confronts the Paxtons?”

“Yes, sir!”

**Fearless Leader**

Once more the glowing Time Stone transformed their surroundings. Sam and Isabel saw that they were now standing on a strip of farmland at the edge of a small town. All about them were hundreds of men in dirty coats and moccasins, their faces unshaven. Some were cooking over small fires. All seemed to be carrying rifles and tomahawks. Isabel stepped quickly around several men who stood talking together.

“Professor, are those the Paxtons? They look so scary.”

“Yes, but come along now. They were walking along a muddy street into town, passing houses made of stone and wood on either side.

“Where are we going?”

“Up ahead to the market square—that’s where the leaders of the Paxtons are.” The professor pointed to a street where some men stood talking together. Isabel saw they were dressed like the others in the field. But now another small group approached. At its head was Benjamin Franklin.

“Governor Penn has sent several leading citizens from Philadelphia to join Ben for this meeting with the Paxtons,” the professor explained.

**Grim Warning**

After a brief greeting, Franklin and the leaders of both groups walked to a nearby tavern. Once inside, they sat down. Isabel, following quickly behind, glanced at Ben. She had never seen him look so stern. As he began to speak, one of the Paxton leaders interrupted, gesturing angrily.

Ben simply looked at the man for a moment. Then, speaking forcefully, he made a sweeping motion with his arm toward Philadelphia.

“What’s going on, Professor?” Sam asked.

“Ben is telling the Paxton leaders that if they try to enter the city with their mob, then they will be met by 1000 armed men who will use every means to stop them.”

“Good for Ben,” Isabel said.

“I wouldn’t let those Paxtons take one step into Philadelphia.”

The two groups talked back and forth for some time. Finally, Franklin stood up to leave, his fellow Philadelphians joining him. As the group walked out of the tavern, Sam saw that Ben still looked stern, but less grim than before. The boy glanced back at the Paxton leaders. They were arguing with each other.

“Will there still be a fight, Professor?”

“No, Sam. Like any mob, the Paxtons aren’t interested in getting hurt themselves. Now that Ben and the other Philadelphians have stood up to them, they’ll soon go home.”

“But Professor, isn’t anybody going to punish the Paxtons for the terrible things they’ve done?”

“I’m afraid not, Isabel. It’s Governor Penn’s job to do that, but he will refuse.”

Isabel frowned. “I can’t believe he’s allowed to be governor. He’s afraid to do anything.

**Goooorrnnn’ P Pleeaaasssee W WWaarrrrnniiinnnggg**

As the Paxton Boys’ incident showed, conflicts between white settlers and native peoples in America often turned violent. Today, conflicts still occur between different races and peoples. Find an article in the newspaper about one of these conflicts. Who is involved? What started the fight? How does this compare to the conflicts in Ben’s time?

Governor Penn refused to punish the Paxton Boys for their crimes. Why? Do you think this was the correct decision? Look for articles about our governor in today’s paper. What issue is being discussed? Do you agree or disagree with the governor’s position? Why?

If it weren’t for Ben, I bet Governor Penn would have let the Paxtons do whatever they wanted.”

“Hopefully not, Isabel. But you’re right; Ben’s courage and leadership helped turn away the mob. Neither the tribespeople nor Philadelphia will have anything more to fear from the Paxtons.”

Prof. McDougal pulled a watch out of his pocket. “My goodness, it’s getting late. We have to keep moving or we won’t finish today.”

continued on next page
A meeting of colonists with tribal leaders.

continued from previous page

He held out the Time Stone. It glowed and flashed and suddenly they were all back in his large workroom.

“We still have a lot to see,” said the professor, “but you must be hungry. Would you like something to eat first?”

“I’m starving!” said Sam.

“Me, too,” Isabel agreed.

The professor opened a large round container. “Then perhaps you would like to try one of my boomeringue cookies?”

With that he picked up one of the flat, L-shaped cookies and tossed it in the air. It flew in a great loop, before returning right back into his hand.

“Wow,” Sam said. “What are they for, professor?”

“What are they for? Why to have fun—and to eat! Ben was always thinking of clever ways to amuse himself and so should you. It’s a delightful way to learn all kinds of interesting things.”

Sam reached into the container and grabbed a cookie. Then he threw it in the air and watched it sail in front of the bay windows before circling back and landing softly in his mouth. Isabel tried next and soon the children were both tossing the boomeringues, each jumping in front of the other to catch them before they hit the floor.

The professor smiled as they darted around the room. “All right, now, it’s time to visit Ben during a most important time in his life—and in America’s history.”

He pointed to an old map on the wall. Sam looked at it closely and made a surprising discovery. “What happened to the United States?”

“It didn’t exist in 1775 when this map was made.”

Prof. McDougal pointed to a large island. “That’s Great Britain.” Then moving his finger to the west, nearly 3500 miles away, he stopped on the east coast of North America. There, a group of territories was marked, “the American Colonies.”

“You see,” explained the professor, “those 13 colonies were then ruled by the British King. Over the years Franklin and many other colonists became angry with the king, who, they felt, treated them unfairly. Ben even traveled to Britain to plead the Americans’ cause. But though he tried and tried, the king and the British government refused to listen.

“It was a very difficult time for Ben. The arguments between the Americans and the British were becoming increasingly angry. There seemed to be nothing he could do to calm the situation. Even worse, while he was away, his wife Deborah became ill. Unfortunately, she died before he was able to return to America.”

Isabel was sitting in a big armchair, resting her chin on her fist, something she always did when she was concentrating.

“What did Ben do?”

“He sailed home. But on May 5, 1775, when his ship anchored, outside Philadelphia, he learned that two weeks earlier fighting had erupted between British soldiers and American colonists at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. Many men had died. Now war had officially begun. For the next year, as the fighting continued, Ben and representatives from all the colonies would meet in Philadelphia to decide America’s future.”

The professor looked at Sam, who quickly picked up the Time Stone. “Where to, sir?”

“July 2, 1776.”

on the eve of independence

When the darkness lifted, Sam and Isabel found themselves in a large room, surrounded by 50 or 60 men sitting in chairs or talking in small groups. One man sat at a desk at the front of the room. A long document lay before him. Sam peered over his shoulder and read the first line: “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America…” What is this, Professor?”

“What, the Declaration of Independence. Many Americans believe the colonies should break away from Great Britain and form their own nation. They hope other countries will help them if they explain all the ways Britain has treated them wrongly. Young Thomas Jefferson of Virginia was asked to write the Declaration.”

“What about Ben?” Isabel asked.

“Oh, he helped, which was a good thing because there were few people whose opinion Thomas Jefferson respected more than Ben Franklin’s. In fact,” the professor said pointing, “there they are.”

Isabel looked up and sure enough 70-year-old Ben was stretched out in a chair. His eyes were closed. He seemed asleep, as men talked and argued around him. Beside him was Thomas Jefferson, a tall, thin young man with sandy reddish hair. At the moment he looked very unhappy.

“Why is Jefferson upset, Professor?”

continued on next page
“He worked very hard on the Declaration, Isabel. But now that he’s finished, the other representatives keep changing more and more of it.”

As the debate continued, Isabel watched Ben. He still seemed to be asleep. When she pointed this out to the professor, he just laughed.

“Don’t you worry about Ben. He never believes in talking simply to hear his own voice. But when he does choose to speak, people listen carefully.”

Sam was getting bored, so he plopped down into one of the free chairs near Ben.

“Ouch!” he yelped, falling to the floor. “Gosh, I keep forgetting these are phantom chairs. They seem so real.”

Isabel barely heard him. She was watching intently as another speaker stood up to demand still more changes in the Declaration. She looked over at Thomas Jefferson. He had dropped his face in his hands.

Turning, she saw Ben Franklin’s eyes were now wide open. He watched Jefferson for a moment. Then he tapped him on the shoulder. Leaning over, Franklin began telling him a story. Soon the frown began to lift from Jefferson’s face. By the time Franklin had finished, the young man was smiling.

The professor laughed. “Good old Ben.”

“What did he say? What did he say?”

“Well, Isabel, he told Jefferson a story about a young man who once made a sign for his business. It had a picture of a hat and the words: ‘John Thompson, Hatter, makes and sells hats for ready money.’ Thompson asked his friends what they thought of his sign.

“Each person told the young man that it was too long. He kept cutting more and more words until finally all that was left was his name and a picture of the hat. His friends said that was all that was needed for people to know it was a hat shop.”

“What does that have to do with the Declaration of Independence, Professor?”

“Ben wanted Jefferson to understand that no matter how many changes were made in the Declaration, it would still carry a powerful message. And he was right. The delegates will approve it two days later on…”

“The Fourth of July!”

“Independence Day!”

“Exactly. Soon church bells will ring as the Declaration of Independence is read to cheering crowds throughout the colonies.”

“So, is that when the colonies became the United States of America?”

“Not quite yet, Isabel. They still must fight—and win—the war against the British. Only then can they be free. Since Great Britain is so strong, the Americans need other countries to support them. Once again, Ben Franklin will step forward on America’s behalf. But will he succeed yet again?”

Prof. McDougal took out the Time Stone. “Now, my friends, we are about to journey across the Atlantic Ocean, all the way to France, March 1778.”

Royal Welcome

The stone glowed brightly. When it faded again, the simple Philadelphia meetinghouse had been replaced by a magnificent palace.

“Wow!” Isabel gasped. All around her walls were adorned with golden ornaments and paintings. A crowd of people strolled down a wide, high-ceilinged hallway. Men wore satin coats and silk stockings, while the women were dressed in jewels and long, flowing gowns. Everyone had powdered wigs on their heads.

Sam was so dazzled by the sight that he walked straight into—and through—a massive table topped by a marble statue.

“Hey, Isabel, look at me,” he cried. His body seemed to have melted into the statue. Only his head and shoulders were visible. “I’m a ghost!”

“The way you run into things, you’re lucky it’s not real or you would be a ghost!” she said.

Suddenly she noticed that everyone along the corridor had stopped talking. They were watching a small group of men make their way up a wide stairway. All were richly dressed, except one, and he stood out for the plainness of his clothes. He wore no wig to cover his thinning hair. His spectacles lay perched on his nose, and his brown velvet suit made a stark contrast against the gorgeously colored clothing of the crowd.

It was Ben.

The spectators burst into applause. As the party continued down the hallway, Isabel saw women whisper to each other in admiration at Franklin’s dignity and simple attire.

“Why are they so happy to see him, Professor?” she asked.

“The French already respect Ben more than almost any other man—as a scientist, philosopher and fighter for freedom. But the longer he stays in France, the more people love him for his wisdom and charm.”

Sam was still standing in the middle of the statue, his mouth hanging open at the spectacle before him. Prof. McDougal grabbed one of his arms and pulled him forward. “Come along, Sam.”

continued on next page
You, too, Isabel. We’re just in time to see Ben and his fellow American ambassadors meet the king of France.”

**Tears of Joy**
The children quickly followed the professor down a hallway. Royal guards threw open the huge doors leading into a magnificent bedchamber decorated in red and gold. Each wall was covered with elaborate decorations. In the center of the room a richly dressed young man turned as Franklin approached.

“That’s Louis XVI, the king of France,” said the professor.
An officer of the guard stepped forward to announce the ambassadors. Sam looked at Ben. The smile had left his face.

“What’s wrong with him, Professor?”

“Look closer. Look at his face.”

Sam saw tears welling up in the old man’s eyes. “What’s the matter? What happened?”

“Ben has been in France for more than a year, trying to persuade the French government to openly support America’s fight for independence,” whispered the professor. Now, finally, he’s succeeded. It is one of his greatest achievements. Those are tears of joy.”
Franklin took a step forward and bowed before the king, who spoke warmly of his friendship with America. Then Louis XVI asked Franklin and the other ministers to follow him. Together, they walked through a series of rooms and down another magnificent stairway until they reached a passageway leading to the great courtyard of the palace. A crowd of French nobles was waiting for a glimpse of the great Franklin. Now they broke out in cheers at the sight of him, and Sam saw Ben’s eyes fill again.

**The Homecoming**
“Yes,” the professor said, “France has agreed to support the American cause, and this will be a turning point. In 1781 the French army and navy will help the Americans defeat the British in a great battle at Yorktown, Virginia. Nearly two years later, the war will end. Ben Franklin will sign the peace treaty between the United States and Britain, which finally will recognize America’s independence. It will be one of the greatest moments of Ben’s life.”

“Yes, Isabel, and few men will have done more than Ben Franklin to make it happen. It will take several more years for him to finish his work, but at last he will be able to return home. So many people love him in France that there will be great sadness when he sails back to America. His friends know it will be the last time they will ever see him. He is too old to make the voyage again.”

She smiled and turned to watch as the ship’s sails fluttered in the wind. Finally, the vessel dropped anchor, and several people climbed into a small boat sent to ferry back the passengers.

Within minutes, the crowd began to roar as they recognized Franklin’s familiar figure in the approaching craft. Puffs of smoke appeared as cannons were shot off in celebration. Church bells began to ring throughout the city. As Franklin arrived at the pier, he was met by a group of distinguished citizens. They crowded around him shaking his hand, patting him on the back and laughing for joy.

Isabel looked up and was startled to see the professor wiping a tear from his eye.

“Don’t mind me, my dear. It’s just that people often take for...”
continued from previous page

granted the great men and women who serve their country— that is, until after they are gone. But that wasn’t true in Ben’s case. The people of Philadelphia, the people of America all knew how special he was.”

An American Hero
Professor McDougal pulled out the Time Stone. The harbor vanished, and the three were back in his workshop. Already the sun had gone down and the room was nearly dark. The professor turned on some lights.

“Yes, Ben had returned home, but there was still more for him to do. Now that the colonies had become the United States of America, they needed to make their own laws. And so distinguished citizens were chosen to help write …”

“… the Constitution!” Isabel cried.

“Exactly. In 1787 Ben was part of the group that helped create the laws that govern our nation. That was pretty amazing when you consider he was more than 80 years old.”

“Did he ever stop working?” Sam asked.

“No really. Till the last days of his life, he kept sharing his ideas on how to make America a better country.”

Professor McDougal paused.

“When he died on April 17, 1790, Ben Franklin was one of the most honored and beloved men in the world. Even now, more than 200 years later, streets, towns, museums and even schools are named after him. “His life still inspires millions of people today.”

The professor opened the drawer of his desk and pulled out two square pieces of plastic. They were completely black with no marks on them at all.

“Now I have something special for you, Sam and Isabel. These are holcards. I want each of you to take one and press it on your holocard. Simply hold it in your hand, and it will replay everything that the Time Stone showed you has been recorded atop the stone. The rock glowed and flashed. As Sam watched, a cascade of three-dimensional images streamed across the holocard: Ben swimming in the pond; Ben walking along a Philadelphia street with bread under his arms; Ben facing down the Paxton Boys.

“Cool!”

The professor smiled. “Now everything that the Time Stone showed you has been recorded onto your holocard. Simply hold it in your hand, and it will replay your journey with Ben Franklin.”

“Professor, can I try it now?”

“Of course, step right over here, Isabel.” The girl watched as Sam pressed the button.

“…”

The professor paused. “What for, Professor?”

“I don’t know why not, Sam.”

“Professor, let’s do it!” said Isabel, as she zipped up her jacket, “and we’ll ask the other kids in the neighborhood to come, so we can have races.”

“Of course, step right over here, Isabel.” The girl watched, a cascade of images flashing.

As Sam watched, a cascade of images flashed. The professor smiled. “Now everything that the Time Stone showed you has been recorded onto your holocard. Simply hold it in your hand, and it will replay your journey with Ben Franklin.”

“We’re still making plans and chattering excitedly as a smiling Prof. McDougal waved goodbye.”

R E S O U R C E S

Web Sites

The International celebration of Ben Franklin’s 300th birthday will run from January 2006 to January 2008. We recommend starting with the official web site for the Tercentenary: http://www.benfranklin300.com/

Books

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Franklin

The Papers of Benjamin Franklin (multiple volumes), ed. by Leonard W. Labaree