

4-B Hiram Powers (1805–1873)

Benjamin Franklin, 1862



4-B 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.

The Art

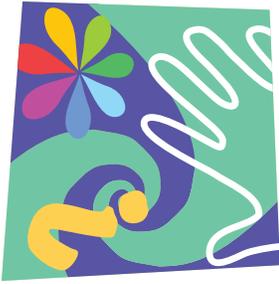
This larger-than-life sized sculpture of Benjamin Franklin was made in 1862 by Hiram Powers, a famous American sculptor of that time. Powers was very familiar with a carved bust of Franklin by a French sculptor named Jean-Antoine Houdon, as well as a painting of Franklin by Scottish artist David Martin, both done during Franklin's lifetime. Powers drew inspiration from these works of art to create the details he needed to sculpt the head, the most important part of the statue. Powers sent for actual clothing worn by Franklin, which he copied in his sculpture. The clothing gave him clear ideas of how thick to make the outer coat and the thin cotton stockings that wrinkle at the ankles. Franklin is standing in a relaxed and thoughtful position with one leg slightly bent, an elbow resting on a tree stump, and his hand on his chin.

The Artist

At the age of 30, Powers had gained popularity as a sculptor by creating a lifelike bust of President Andrew Jackson. He was especially famous for being able to make marble look like skin. His sculpture of 1843 called *The Greek Slave* made him famous all over the world. Powers moved to Italy where he set up his own studio. In Italy, there were plenty of good helpers and the models he needed for sculpting. He used the same type of Italian marble to sculpt the Franklin statue that he used for the full-length sculpture of Thomas Jefferson, which he made about the same time. The Franklin statue stands in the Senate of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., in the same spot where it was placed after it was delivered to the building in 1862.

The Historical Perspective

When the United States of America was created, Franklin was one of the most important people of his day. In 1858, U.S. government officials felt such an important person in American history should be honored by one of the most talented sculptors of their day. Some thought Powers should have sculpted Franklin in robes worn by the ancient Greeks or Romans rather than in 18th-century garments, but Powers disagreed. By having Franklin rest an elbow on a tree trunk struck by lightning, Powers also was able to show Franklin's contribution to science, expressed in his famous book *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* of 1751.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at this sculpture—see the accuracy of the sculpted objects, the textures, the size of the face, hands, feet, and other features. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the artwork.

Describing



- ✓ Look at this statue. What do you see?
- ✓ How do you think the statue feels to touch? Children might say smooth, hard, cold, etc.
- ✓ Why would a sculptor want to make a statue of someone? Children might say the person is famous, loved, or helps us have kind thoughts when we see him or her.
- ✓ What would be the hardest thing about making a statue like this one? Children might say making it out of a block of stone, making it smooth to touch, creating an accurate face of someone people know, having it show feelings or thoughts, making the hair and eyes look real, etc.

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- The name of this artwork is *Benjamin Franklin*. Do you know why it is named that?
- Do you think it would be easier to make a statue of stone, wood, or clay? Why would one material be easier to use than either of the others? Which would last longer?
- How would you make a sculpture of stone?
- Since this lesson covers a stone sculpture, it's probably not necessary to discuss how many metal statues are formed, but it might come up. It is important that the children understand they are not chiseled from a piece of metal but are first made of clay that hardens. A form or mold is made and metal is poured into the form and later polished.
- How long do you think you could stay in the same position to pose for someone to make a statue of you? Let's try it.
- Are there other things you would like to tell me about this sculpture?

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

angle	pensive
chisel	ponder
display	pose
leader	sculpt
mallet	sculptor
marble	sculpture



Books

A Picture Book of Benjamin Franklin by David Adler (Holiday House, 1991)
Benjamin Franklin's work as an inventor and statesman are highlighted.

Benjamin Franklin by Ingri D'Aulaire (Tandem Library Books, 1950)
First-time readers meet one of America's most extraordinary historical figures.

Books continued on page 29

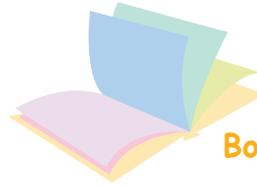


Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ play freeze dance to different types of music.
- ✓ visit a museum and look for different types of sculptures.
- ✓ create a book about what the world would be like if there wasn't electricity.



Books continued...

Benjamin Franklin (Rookie Biographies) by Wil Mara (Scholastic Library Publishing, 2006)

This biography of Benjamin Franklin notes his work as an inventor, printer, scientist, and statesman.

How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning by Rosalyn Schanzer (HarperCollins Publishers, 2002)

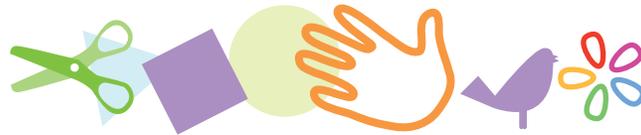
This book focuses on Benjamin Franklin's role as an inventor of whimsical gadgets and practical contraptions, with an emphasis on his experiment of flying a kite during a rainstorm.

Now & Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin by Gene Barretta (Henry Holt and Company, 2006)

Readers will learn about the inventions and inspiration of Benjamin Franklin and how they've stood the test of time.

The Story of Benjamin Franklin by Patricia Pingry (Ideals Publications, 2002)

This book provides a simple introduction to the multifaceted life of Benjamin Franklin.



Related Educational Experiences

✓ Ask how a sculpture is different from a painting. (You can see every side of a sculpture—the front, back, side, top, bottom; in a painting, you see only one side.) A sculpture is much more real because you can feel it and see it in so many ways. Demonstrate this by having three children stand on different sides of a sculpture and tell what they see—how many eyes, ears, and other features each of them can see to illustrate that even though they are all looking at the same object, none of them are seeing the same thing.

✓ Make a newspaper hat by unfolding three or four pages of a newspaper,

shaping it to a child's head, and wrapping the band with masking tape to make a hat band. Carefully roll the paper from the ends, crinkling the rim so it holds its shape. Bring the rim up to the cap on three sides and staple or tape it to make a three-cornered hat. As the sculpture is being discussed, bring a volunteer to the front of the room and place the hat on his or her head. Ask the child to pose like Franklin. Have all the children stand that way. Explain that this is how artists have made statues for thousands of years—with one leg slightly bent forward and the other straight. It is called *contrapposto*, a popular Roman and Greek stance.

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Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Educational Experiences continued...

- ✓ Have the children imitate Franklin's pose. Ask the children what they think of when someone is looking away, with hand resting on the chin. You can take pictures to compare the children's poses to the sculpture.
- ✓ Discuss the post Franklin is leaning on. What is it supposed to be made of? Explain that Franklin was famous for his scientific studies of lightning and electricity. Point out the long line that goes from the top of the tree post to the bottom. It is a sign that the tree was hit by lightning. The sculptor wanted to honor Franklin for his discovery of electricity as much as for his work in creating our government.
- ✓ Discuss electricity and how it is used: for lighting, to cook, to wash and sometimes dry clothes, to power radios and TVs, etc.
- ✓ If possible, take the children to see a full-size statue of a man or woman, or bring in a bust or statue for them to see. Stone statues would be ideal because the children can feel them and see how hard the material is. Talk about how big statues are that we see in a park—they usually are larger than real life. The statue of Franklin is 97 inches tall. An average man is 70 inches tall. Show them on a wall how tall 97 inches is and hold the picture

up so they can imagine the sculpture being that tall.

- ✓ Show children pictures of statues being made and demonstrate how a chisel and mallet are used to make them. Show a 25-pound cube of dried clay being shaped with a real mallet and chisel—without the sharp debris thrown off by stone. A mallet and sculpting chisel often can be borrowed from a university art department or local art supply store.
- ✓ Give each child a large piece of salt clay. Ask the children to sculpt something from the clay. Because the act of creating something in three dimensions is very different from painting, the children can appreciate that their "art" will look different from any angle from which it is viewed.

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "A Head Start on Picturing America" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.