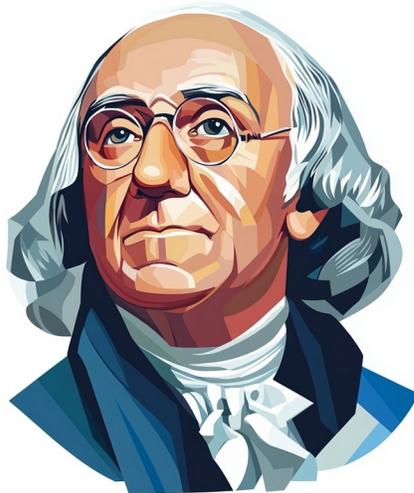


Ben and Me



By

Robert Lawson

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

Ben and Me

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two chapters of *Ben and Me* and is comprised of the following different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include friendship and loyalty, Benjamin Franklin, colonial America, American Revolution, mice, innovation and creativity.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

Ever wonder where inventors get their ideas? As it turns out, the great inventor Benjamin Franklin got his best ideas from a mouse named Amos! Funny, interesting, and wise, this classic tale has been a favorite for generations. Once you've met Amos and read his account, you'll never think of Ben Franklin – or American history – in quite the same way. [Summary courtesy of the publisher]

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found online at such sites as the following: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_and_Me

The remarkable life of old Ben Franklin is related with wit, warmth and wisdom by Amosa mouse who has a way with words. Ages 8-12. (Publishers Weekly)

Author Biography

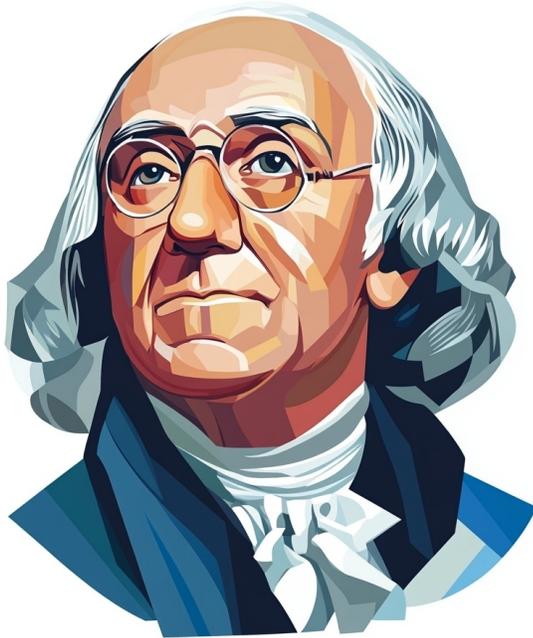
Robert Lawson

Robert Lawson (October 4, 1892 – May 27, 1957) was an American writer and illustrator of children's books. Born in New York City, Lawson spent his early life in Montclair, New Jersey. Following high school, he studied art for three years under illustrator Howard Giles (an advocate of dynamic symmetry as conceived by Jay Hambidge) at the *New York School of Fine and Applied Art* (now *Parsons School of Design*), marrying fellow artist and illustrator Marie Abrams in 1922. His career as an illustrator began in 1914, when his illustration for a poem about the invasion of Belgium was published in *Harper's Weekly*.

He went on to publish in other magazines, including the *Ladies Home Journal*, *Everybody's Magazine*, *Century Magazine*, *Vogue*, and *Designer*. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)



Ben and Me



By Robert Lawson

Name:

Ben and Me

By Robert Lawson
Forward - Chapter 1



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist in *Ben and Me* is a young mouse who befriends one of the most esteemed men of American history – Benjamin Franklin. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

severity	patriot	prosperous	vestry
disreputable	draught	delirious	intimacy

1. After spending days in the desert without water the explorer became quite _____.
2. The _____ from the open window caused his papers to blow all over the room.
3. Having such uncaring parents, he was not used to expressions of such _____.
4. The _____ of the judge's penalty caught everyone by surprise.
5. The _____ was a small brick building attached to Old Christ Church.
6. Nathan Hale is a famous American _____.
7. The person charged with the assault was known by many to be a _____ person.
8. Cheryl's parents became quite _____ from buying and selling homes.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. To what two organizations was the manuscript sent to determine if it was written by a mouse in Early America?

3. Why did the author believe that this document was more trustworthy than those written by later scholars?

4. According to Amos, who deserved most of the credit for Benjamin Franklin's success and fame?

5. What led Amos to leave home and go out on his own?

6. Although Amos recognized Benjamin Franklin immediately because he was so famous, he really doesn't say how this was possible. How do you think it was possible that a mouse would recognize Franklin?

Language Activities



A. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is, *In fact we were quite poor – as poor as church-mice*. What two things are being compared in this example?

--	--

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) the sound of a mouse nibbling on a piece of cheese

b) a dog scratching himself

B. Benjamin Franklin

Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three fascinating facts about this great man. The facts can pertain to his personal life or accomplishments.



1.	
2.	
3.	

C. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first chapter of our story.

Word	Anagram	Clue
life		A raspy tool.
friend		One who searches.
straw		Skin growths.
least		Stories.
parents		Snares.
candle		Speared.
streets		Breeds of dogs.

Now find three additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams and see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

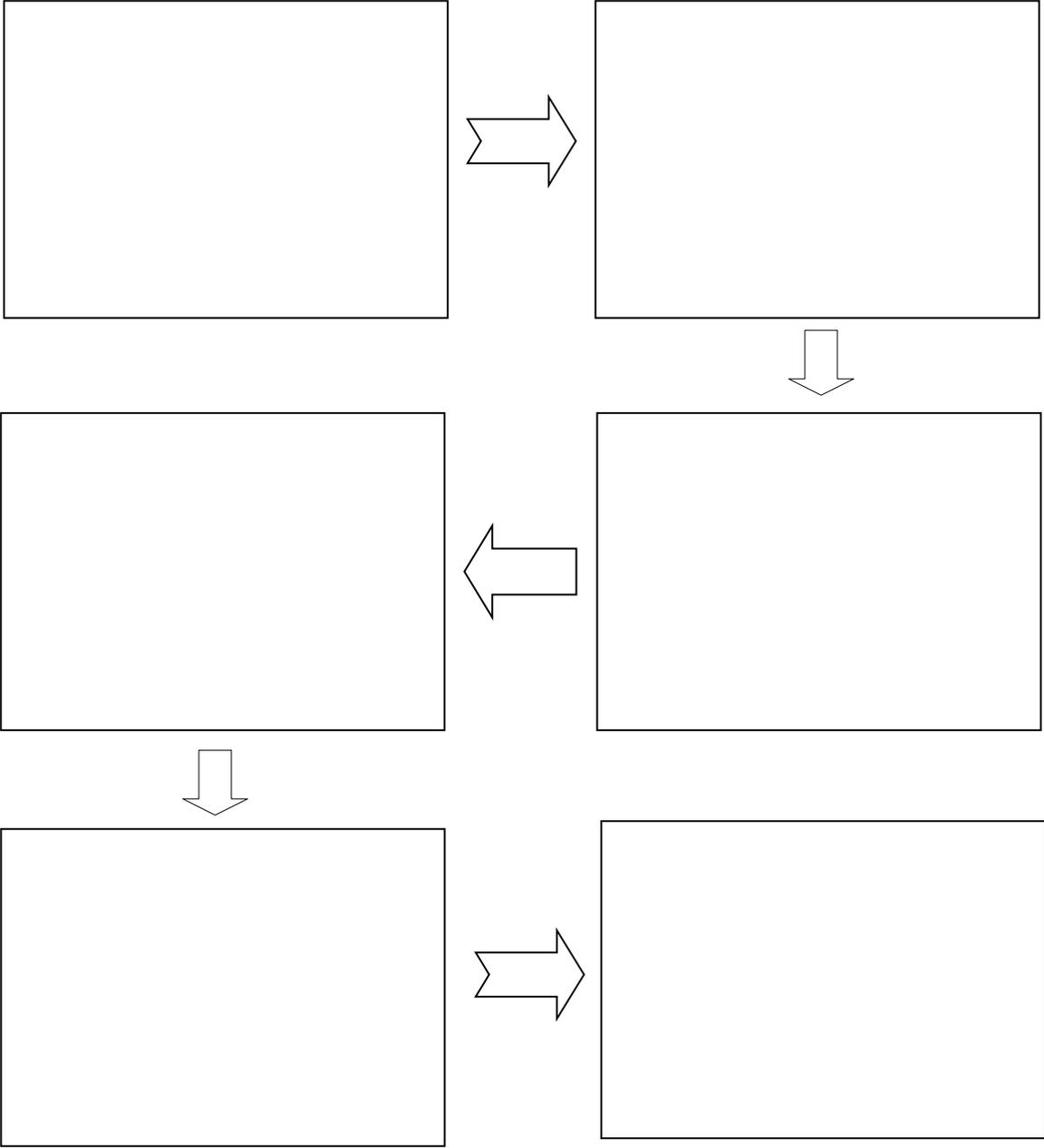
D. What's in a Name?

Amos's parents named all of their 26 children beginning with a different letter of the alphabet. What names would you have given these mice children for the following letters?

E		U	
F		V	
G		W	

E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in this section. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



F. 5 Ws and an H.

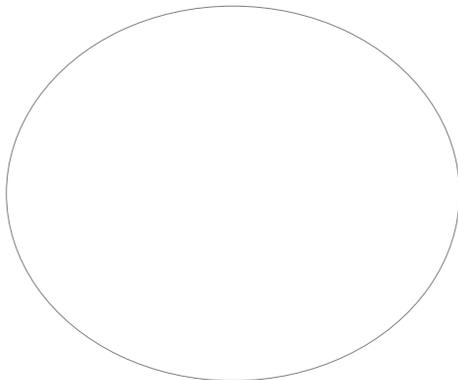
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



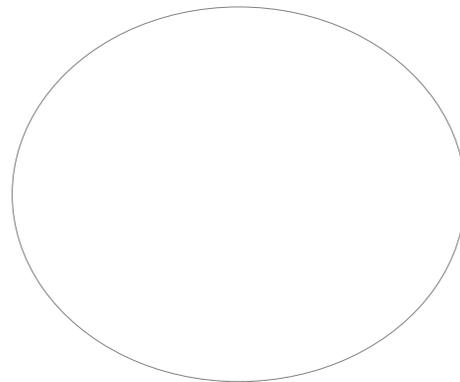
WHO?



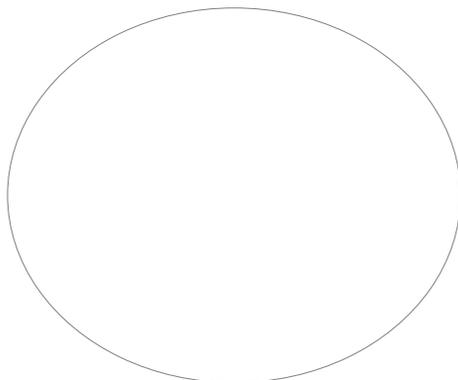
WHAT?



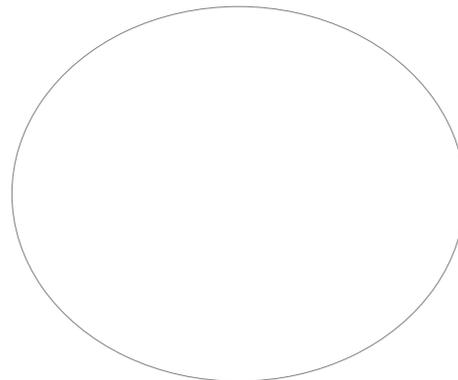
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

Extension Activities

A. Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene - or the entire novel. Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6

B. A Poem Even Amos Would Enjoy

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and humorous. The following quatrain is actually the first four lines of a poem written by Benjamin Franklin called ***Equivocation***.

*SOME have learn't many tricks of sly evasion,
Instead of truth they use equivocation,
And eke it out with mental reservation,
Which, to good men, is an abomination.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - A - A**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, ABAB, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The topic should have something to do with the themes established in the foreward and first chapter of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem on a subject of your choice. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____
