

Ben Franklin and His First Kite

What will Ben do with his kite?

Ten-year-old Benjamin Franklin was hard at work in his father's candle shop. He was cutting wicks. He carefully laid out each one. Ben stretched his arms and let out a yawn. Candles could be tall or short, fat or thin, and even different colors. But there was nothing fun about candles for Ben.



“When do you think we’ll be done today?” Ben asked his father.

“Soon enough,” his father answered. “Why? Do you have special plans?”

Ben’s father smiled. It was a rare day indeed when Ben did not have a plan in mind.

“Yes,” said Ben. “I want to try an experiment at the millpond.”

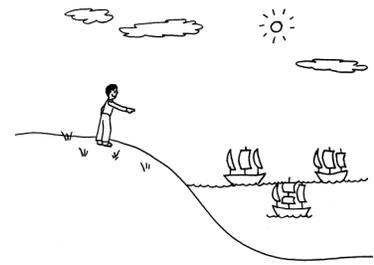
“You’ll be swimming, then?” his father asked.

Ben grinned. “Partly,” he said.

His father nodded. Ben was a fine swimmer.

That afternoon Ben flew down the streets of Boston.

He was headed for home. Along the way he noticed the waves cresting in the harbor. The ships rocked back and forth.



That was good, he thought. He needed a strong wind today. When Ben got to his house, his mother met him at the door. Inside, two of his sisters were busy making hasty pudding by the hearth. Ben had sixteen brothers and sisters.

“Ben,” his mother said, “why are you in such a hurry?”

Ben told her about his plan.

“Since your father approves, I won’t keep you,” said his mother. “Just be back for supper.”

Ben nodded. He ran to get the kite he had made the week before. Then he left the house. At the millpond a few of Ben’s friends had arrived to watch.

“You’ve picked a poor place to fly a kite,” said one.

Ben shrugged. “I’m doing an experiment,” he said.

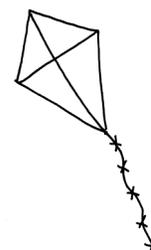
Ben got undressed. He gave his clothes to one of his friends.

“Please carry these to the other side of the pond,” he said.

“What are you going to do?” asked the other boys. “Carry the kite while you swim?”

“No,” said Ben. “The kite is going to carry me.”

“But that kite is nothing special. It’s just paper, sticks, and string,” said one boy.



“That’s true,” Ben said. “But you see, the kite isn’t the invention. The invention is what I’m going to do with it.”

Ben raised the kite in the air. Once the wind had caught and carried it aloft, Ben walked into the water. There he lay on his back, floating.

“I’m going to cross this pond without swimming a stroke,” said Ben. The wind tugged on the kite. The kite string tightened. The water began to ripple at Ben’s feet. The kite was pulling him! The boys whooped and hollered as Ben glided across the pond. Finally he reached the other side. The other boys met him there.

“That was amazing!” said one.

“You crossed the whole pond without swimming a stroke,” said another.

“What will you do next?” they asked.

Ben didn’t know. But he was sure he would think of something.

High-Frequency Words -

carry

answered

different

brothers

poor

Selection Words -

amazing

hearth

invention

hasty pudding

harbor