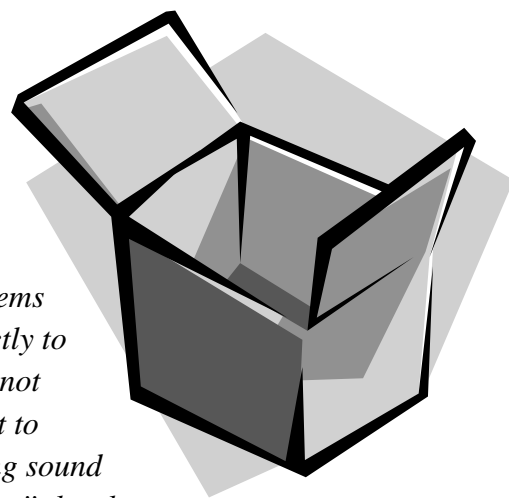


BELIEVE-IT-OR-NOT BOX



After reading a biography or a non-fiction book, students will write a short summary of the book. They will then select three items to place in a box; two of the items are related directly or indirectly to the life of the famous person or the non-fiction book, and one is not related at all. While presenting the box, the students will attempt to convince their classmates that all objects are legitimate by giving sound reasons for each object. Bonus points are awarded for “stumping” the class.

Preparation for the Believe-It-or-Not Box

- Students choose a biography or non-fiction book (teacher approved) to read independently over the next two or three weeks. Class time may be used for independent reading if desired or necessary.
- The teacher explains the assignment and demonstrates with a summary and a believe-it-or-not box prepared in advance. A summary and a believe-it-or-not box example are found on pp. 54-55.

Believe-It-or-Not Box Activity

- ❖ After completing a biography or non-fiction selection, students will write a short summary of the book to read to the class.
- ❖ They will find a small box for their presentation. A shoebox works well. Students write the title and author of the book on the box and may want to decorate the box appropriately.
- ❖ Students choose two items to include in the box that represent factual information that they read about in the book.
- ❖ Students will also include a third item that has no significant meaning to the book. The item should be closely related to the facts presented in the book, so they will have a chance to “stump” the class.

- ❖ After giving a short summary of the book, students will orally share the contents of their boxes with the class. Each item is identified and becomes part of the oral presentation.
- ❖ The class will then decide (by a show of hands) which is the bogus item! Bonus points are awarded for “stumping” the class.

Sample Believe-It-or-Not Box

Benjamin Franklin by Chris Looby
Chelsea House Publishers

Summary

Benjamin Franklin was a statesman, scientist, inventor, postmaster, philanthropist, publisher, musician, abolitionist, and a revolutionary. Born in Boston in 1706, Franklin worked in his father’s candle shop and later became an apprentice printer for one of his older brothers. By the age of 24, he established himself as a newspaper publisher in Philadelphia where he published the first issue of *Poor Richard’s Almanack*.

Franklin also pursued a career in politics. He served as a colonial ambassador to Great Britain until the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776. During the war, he was appointed to the Second Constitutional Convention and helped to draft the Declaration of Independence. As ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin enlisted France’s financial and military support for the American Revolution. John Adams, John Jay, and Franklin negotiated peace with Great Britain; on September 3, 1783, they signed the Treaty of Paris, and in it, Britain recognized the United States as a separate nation.

Believe-It-or-Not Box Items

Item #1 in box: Chair (dollhouse size)

In his later years, Benjamin Franklin was carried from his home to the East Room of the State House in Philadelphia in a specially constructed sedan chair that was suspended between two flexible poles that was borne by four convicts from the Walnut Street Jail.

True: Franklin was revered by the other Constitution Convention delegates, and they wanted to make sure he attended the convention meetings in spite of his poor health. The chair made it possible for Franklin to avoid walking from his home to the state house and to continue his important role in framing the U.S. Constitution.

Item #2 in box: A leaf

Franklin came up with a brilliant innovation called “nature printing” to prevent the counterfeiting of currency. He used a leaf, with its intricate and unique pattern of veins, to make an impression in a soft material, and then he used the impression to cast a metal plate that could be inked and pressed to imprint the leaf’s image. The detailing of this single image would be so fine that it was beyond the ability of the most skilled engraver to copy it.

True: In 1736, Franklin was engaged to print the currency of New Jersey. From July to September he worked in Burlington to do so. Counterfeiting was widespread at the time, and Franklin set his mind to the task of devising a way to prevent it.

Item #3 in box: A book with a cover titled *Poor Richard’s Almanack*

Franklin was the first to coin and print many proverbs and sayings which he published in his almanack. Famous among them were: “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,” “An apple a day keeps the doctor away,” and “Fish and visitors smell in three days.”

False: Franklin freely admitted that he found and copied the majority of the proverbs and sayings that he published from the books he read or owned, and much of the wit and wisdom originated centuries earlier.