

Assignment IV

Benjamin Franklin began working as a printer when he was only 12 years of age, and his fondness for the printed word continued to flourish throughout his entire life. He loved to read and write, and he savored those times when he was free to sit down with a pen or a book.

If Benjamin Franklin were alive today, he would be fascinated by the study of writing genres. He composed all types of writings: diaries, advertisements, songs, letters, poetry, and his autobiography. In addition, he assisted in writing the Declaration of Independence, The Treaty of Alliance with France, and other government documents.

Franklin began his writing career in 1722 at the age of 16 when he wrote 14 letters to the editor. He secretly mailed these letters to his brother's newspaper, *The New England Courant*, but instead of signing them with his name, he signed them with the penname "Silence Dogood" a supposed anonymous woman! Mrs. Dogood promoted women's rights, criticized the students of Harvard, and made other remarks about the people of Boston. Franklin's letters of propaganda affected citizen's views. Some people agreed with Mrs. Dogood. Some were angry with the letters. For Franklin, it was his first taste of the "power of the press."

Propaganda is a plan or method for spreading one's opinions or beliefs. This is often done to sell a product or promote an idea. Today, advertisers use many forms of propaganda to sell their products and ideas. You and the members of your group will investigate print ads in your favorite magazines. Select a few that use propaganda techniques. Discuss these ads, and then plan a lesson in which you teach your classmates about propaganda. Prepare a poster or PowerPoint presentation for your lesson.

Internet Connection:

To view scanned copies of some of Franklin's writings, go to <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/franklin-home.html>. To see scanned copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Alliance with France, go to <http://www.ourdocuments.gov>. Click on 100 Milestone Documents.

Background Dossier Four

Ben Franklin, Printer and Writer

Here are some facts about Mr. Franklin's life as a printer/writer:

- Began working as an apprentice printer for his brother at age 12
- Wrote letters to The New England Courant under the pseudonym of Silence Dogood at age 16
- Worked in London print shops from 1724-1726
- Opened his own printing company in Philadelphia
- Bought and then printed The Pennsylvania Gazette
- Printed U.S. currency
- Printed 26 editions of *Poor Richard's Almanack*, in which he printed calendars, dates of fairs, court dates, times of sunrise and sunset, tides, phases of the moon and eclipses, various weather predictions, and sayings about self-improvement. This became the best selling book in the colonies.
- Wrote his autobiography
- Helped with drafting the Declaration of Independence (although Jefferson did most of the writing)
- Wrote many letters, household inventories, and expense ledgers
- Published America's first German newspaper
- Kept a diary on his sea journeys in which he charted the Gulf Stream



Franklin's sayings, or aphorisms, were very popular!

"Fish and visitors stink after three days."

"Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."