Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts on January 17, 1706. Massachusetts was then one of the thirteen American colonies that belonged to England.

There were seventeen Franklin children. Benjamin's father hoped that Benjamin, the tenth and youngest son, would grow up to be a minister.

Benjamin always had lots of ideas. When he was still a young boy, he invented swimming paddles that fit over his hands and helped him swim faster.

Benjamin began school when he was eight years old. He had good handwriting and was an excellent reader, but he did poorly in arithmetic.

Benjamin's father did not have enough money to keep him in school. When Benjamin was ten, he began to work in his father's soap-and-candle shop. Benjamin cut wicks, poured hot wax into candle molds, and did errands. He hated the smell of the wax and the boiling soap. He hated making candles.

Benjamin wrote poetry. He loved books and reading. So when he was twelve, his father put Benjamin to work in a print shop. The printer and owner of the shop was James Franklin, Benjamin's older brother.

James Franklin printed one of the first newspapers in America, The New England Courant. Benjamin set type and ran the press. He also wrote clever articles for the newspaper. He signed them Mistress Silence Dogood so no one would know who wrote them. James was angry when he found out that his brother was Silence Dogood. He refused to print any more of the articles.
In 1728, when Benjamin was twenty-two, he set up his own print shop and published a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Benjamin worked hard. He became the official printer of Pennsylvania. Later he became the official printer for New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, too.

Once a year, beginning in 1732, Benjamin printed *Poor Richard's Almanack*. At the time, it was the most popular *almanac* in America. It had information on the weather, recipes, and a calendar of important dates. It also had stories and wise sayings, including "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise" and "Haste makes waste."

Benjamin Franklin helped set up Philadelphia’s first fire and police departments. He helped to start the first lending library and the first hospital in America. He was made *postmaster* of Philadelphia and later postmaster of all thirteen American colonies.

Benjamin Franklin invented the Franklin stove. It saved fuel and heated a room better than a fireplace. He invented *bifocal* glasses and a “long arm” to reach books on high shelves. He also invented the lightning rod that saved many homes from fires.

Benjamin Franklin was very interested in electricity. In one dangerous experiment, he flew a kite in a thunderstorm. When lightning struck the kite, sparks flew from a key attached to the string. Benjamin had proved that lightning is electricity.

In 1765 Benjamin went to England. He spoke at the *English House of Commons* against the *Stamp Act*, a tax which the American colonists felt was unfair. Franklin helped to convince the English to end the tax.

Benjamin Franklin remained in England for ten years. He told the English king and his advisors to give people in the thirteen colonies more rights and freedom. But the king refused.

Benjamin Franklin returned to the colonies in 1775, soon after the beginning of the *American Revolution*. He was at the *Second Continental Congress* and was chosen to help write the *Declaration of Independence*.

**Spotlight On: Benjamin Franklin and the Birth of America**

During Benjamin Franklin’s lifetime, the American colonies grew bigger and stronger. The colonists wanted to decide their own laws, but the colonies still belonged to England. In the 1760s, England started taxing the colonies, which only made the colonists want their independence more. The colonies sent Benjamin Franklin to England to ask for their independence, but England didn’t want to give them freedom. To show that they wouldn’t pay the tax on English tea, colonists snuck on to a trading ship in the middle of the night and threw 45 tons of tea into Boston Harbor!

In 1775, the American Revolution began at the Battle of Lexington and Concord. The English thought that they would win the war quickly, but the colonists surprised them, and America won its independence in 1783. Benjamin Franklin and other important people chose new laws and wrote them down as the Constitution of the United States of America. Though he was one of the most important people in the country, he was never president. By the time the war was over, he was already almost 80 years old.

Richness: In order to grasp Benjamin Franklin’s historical significance, students must have background knowledge of the American colonies. Check to ensure that students are using the information in the “spotlight” to help them.

See especially: Questions 4, 8, 9
Teacher Guide for FAST-R Passage: A Picture Book of Benjamin Franklin (Nonfiction • Biography)

The annotated answer key below highlights common reasons students might choose each answer, and the sidebar gives more insight into the question types, to help you understand patterns of student responses. Always make time to follow up with students in conferences or small groups to probe their thinking, teach in response to patterns, and help them apply effective reading and thinking strategies to their everyday reading.

Note: You may find it helpful to refer to the “Types and Levels of Thinking Assessed on FAST-R” sheet from your teacher resource folder as you examine your students’ responses. The icon in the right-hand column, below, corresponds to that sheet’s more detailed explanations of the kinds of thinking each type of question asks of readers.

1. Which of the following was one of Benjamin Franklin’s earliest inventions?
   A. bifocal glasses (OOP1, ¶11)
   B. candles (OOP2, ¶5)
   C. dictionaries (OOB)
   ✔ D. swimming paddles

   FE1: Identify evidence explicitly stated in the text

2. According to paragraph 6, Benjamin Franklin’s father put him to work in a print shop because he
   A. was the oldest son. (OOP2, ¶2) BF was the youngest son
   ✔ B. loved books and reading. (¶6)
   C. had good handwriting. (OOP1, ¶4) true, but NOT the reason
   D. wanted to write a dictionary. (OOB) not in the text, but in choice C for Q1

   FE1: Identify evidence explicitly stated in the text

3. Read the sentence in the box: He also wrote clever articles for the newspaper.
   The word clever means
   ✔ A. smart and funny. (¶7) can be inferred from the fact that the articles were good enough to print and the pseudonym, “Mistress Silence Dogood”
   B. old fashioned. (OOB) the writing may be “old fashioned” by today’s standards, but the context suggests a more positive description of the articles
   C. angry. (OOP1, ¶7) plausible if students plug in answers to see if it makes sense, or if they confuse his brother’s feelings with the tone of the letters themselves
   D. postmaster. (OOP2, ¶10) he was postmaster, but it makes no sense here

   M11: Determine implicit meaning from words in context

4. Based on this passage, Benjamin Franklin can BEST be described as a man who
   A. did not have many friends. (OOB) no basis to conclude this from the text
   B. was intelligent but poor. (OOP1, ¶5) he was clearly intelligent but there is evidence only to suggest he was poor during his childhood, not his entire life
   C. lived in England all his life. (OOP2, ¶13-14) he lived in England for ten years
   ✔ D. did many important things. (this answer choice is general enough to be correct in describing his entire life, not just small sections of his life)

   M12: Determine a single meaning from the total text

5. In paragraph 9, the author states that Benjamin Franklin is well known for writing Poor Richard’s Almanack. An almanac is a book of
   ✔ A. useful information. — (¶9) A generalization about the contents of the almanac
   B. witty sayings. — (OOP1, ¶9) too specific; almanacs contain much more
   C. maps and charts. — (OOB) atlases, another reference, contain maps and charts
   D. popular people. — (OOP2, ¶9) the almanac was “popular,” with a person’s name in the title, but there is no mention that the almanac lists or describes people

   M11: Determine implicit meaning from words in context
6. Benjamin Franklin is known as both
   A. fireman and librarian.— (OOP, ¶10) he set up the first fire department and library, but he served as neither fireman nor librarian
   B. doctor and President of the United States.— (OOB) some students may think that BF was President, though he wasn’t
   C. minister and Englishman.— (OOP, ¶2, ¶13-14) his father wanted him to be a minister, he was not; he lived in England for ten years, but he was American
   ✓ D. printer and inventor.— (¶8, 11)

7. Read the list of events from the biography in the box [see question set]. Which event happened SECOND in Benjamin Franklin’s life?
   ✓ A. Began publishing the Pennsylvania Gazette—(¶8)
   B. Went to Second Continental Congress—(OOP, ¶15) Students may have misunderstood the sequencing task; see Watch-For for Q8 & Q10
   C. Was born in Washington, D.C.—(OOB)
   D. Convinced English king to continue the Stamp Tax—(OOP, ¶13-14) Out of sequence and a misreading of his stance on the tax.

8. Which of the following sentences BEST describes why Benjamin Franklin is famous?
   ✓ C. Benjamin Franklin was a man with many talents and interests.— can be inferred from the passage overall; it’s true of all cases, not just a specific section
   A. Benjamin Franklin was the inventor of the kite. — (OOP, ¶12) he did not invent the kite, though kites are mentioned and featured in the picture
   B. Benjamin Franklin was a very good President of the United States. — (OOB) he was never president, but it is an answer choice in an earlier question
   D. Benjamin Franklin wrote poetry as a boy. — (OOP, ¶6) too specific & minor

9. At the time of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin was chosen to
   ✓ B. help write the Declaration of Independence. (Found in the final sentence)
   A. be postmaster of the American colonies. (OOP, ¶10: he was postmaster, but not at the time of the Revolution)
   C. go to England to protect the king. (OOP, ¶13-14: he went to England before the war, but to persuade the king, not protect him)
   D. be Chief Justice of the United States. (OOB: never mentioned in the text)

10. In this biography, the author tells events and ideas in what order?
   ✓ C. in order from his youth to his old age (events are described in chronological order)
   A. in order of importance, from most to least important (OOB)
   B. in order from his old age to his youth (OOP2)
   D. in the order Benjamin Franklin remembered them (OOP2: this is a biography, not an autobiography; students must distinguish author from subject)
Benjamin Franklin was a man who did many things in his lifetime. Read this story about Benjamin Franklin and answer the questions that follow.

A Picture Book of Benjamin Franklin
by David A. Adler

1. Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts on January 17, 1706. Massachusetts was then one of the thirteen American colonies that belonged to England.

2. There were seventeen Franklin children. Benjamin's father hoped that Benjamin, the tenth and youngest son, would grow up to be a minister.

3. Benjamin always had lots of ideas. When he was still a young boy, he invented swimming paddles that fit over his hands and helped him swim faster.

4. Benjamin began school when he was eight years old. He had good handwriting and was an excellent reader, but he did poorly in arithmetic.

5. Benjamin's father did not have enough money to keep him in school. When Benjamin was ten, he began to work in his father's soap-and-candle shop. Benjamin cut wicks, poured hot wax into candle molds, and did errands. He hated the smell of the wax and the boiling soap. He hated making candles.

6. Benjamin wrote poetry. He loved books and reading. So when he was twelve, his father put Benjamin to work in a print shop. The printer and owner of the shop was James Franklin, Benjamin's older brother.

7. James Franklin printed one of the first newspapers in America, The New England Courant. Benjamin set type and ran the press. He also wrote clever articles for the newspaper. He signed them Mistress Silence Dogood so no one would know who wrote them. James was angry when he found out that his brother was Silence Dogood. He refused to print any more of the articles.

Spotlight On: Benjamin Franklin and the Birth of America

During Benjamin Franklin's lifetime, the American colonies grew bigger and stronger. The colonists wanted to decide their own laws, but the colonies still belonged to England. In the 1760s, England started taxing the colonies, which only made the colonists want their independence more. The colonies sent Benjamin Franklin to England to ask for their independence, but England didn't want to give them freedom. To show that they wouldn't pay the tax on English tea, colonists snuck on to a trading ship in the middle of the night and threw 45 tons of tea into Boston Harbor!

In 1775, the American Revolution began at the Battle of Lexington and Concord. The English thought that they would win the war quickly, but the colonists surprised them, and America won its independence in 1783. Benjamin Franklin and other important people chose new laws and wrote them down as the Constitution of the United States of America. Though he was one of the most important people in the country, he was never president. By the time the war was over, he was already almost 80 years old.

Spotlight On: David Adler

David Adler is the author of the Cam Jansen and the Andy Russell series, as well as a series of “Picture Book” biographies of historical figures.
In 1728, when Benjamin was twenty-two, he set up his own print shop and published a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Benjamin worked hard. He became the official printer of Pennsylvania. Later he became the official printer for New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, too.

Once a year, beginning in 1732, Benjamin printed *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. At the time, it was the most popular almanac in America. It had information on the weather, recipes, and a calendar of important dates. It also had stories and wise sayings, including “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise” and “Haste makes waste.”

Benjamin Franklin helped set up Philadelphia’s first fire and police departments. He helped to start the first lending library and the first hospital in America. He was made postmaster of Philadelphia and later postmaster of all thirteen American colonies.

Benjamin Franklin invented the Franklin stove. It saved fuel and heated a room better than a fireplace. He invented bifocal glasses and a “long arm” to reach books on high shelves. He also invented the lightning rod that saved many homes from fires.

Benjamin Franklin was very interested in electricity. In one dangerous experiment, he flew a kite in a thunderstorm. When lightning struck the kite, sparks flew from a key attached to the string. Benjamin had proved that lightning is electricity.

In 1765 Benjamin went to England. He spoke at the English House of Commons against the Stamp Act, a tax which the American colonists felt was unfair. Franklin helped to convince the English to end the tax.

Benjamin Franklin remained in England for ten years. He told the English king and his advisors to give people in the thirteen colonies more rights and freedom. But the king refused.

Benjamin Franklin returned to the colonies in 1775, soon after the beginning of the American Revolution. He was at the Second Continental Congress and was chosen to help write the Declaration of Independence.
1. Which of the following was one of Benjamin Franklin’s earliest inventions?
   A. bifocal glasses
   B. candles
   C. dictionaries
   D. swimming paddles

2. According to paragraph 6, Benjamin Franklin’s father put him to work in a print shop because he
   A. was the oldest son.
   B. loved books and reading.
   C. had good handwriting.
   D. wanted to write a dictionary.

3. Read the sentence in the box:
   He also wrote clever articles for the newspaper.
   The word clever means
   A. smart and funny.
   B. old fashioned.
   C. angry.
   D. postmaster.

4. Based on this passage, Benjamin Franklin can BEST be described as a man who
   A. did not have many friends.
   B. was intelligent but poor.
   C. lived in England all his life.
   D. did many important things.

5. In paragraph 9, the author states that Benjamin Franklin is well known for writing Poor Richard’s Almanack. An almanac is a book of
   A. useful information.
   B. witty sayings.
   C. maps and charts.
   D. popular people.

6. Benjamin Franklin is known as both
   A. fireman and librarian.
   B. doctor and President of the United States.
   C. minister and Englishman.
   D. printer and inventor.

7. Read the list of events from the biography in the box.
   1. Worked in his father’s soap and candle shop.
   2. _____________
   3. Began publishing Poor Richard’s Almanack.
   4. Helped write the Declaration of Independence.

Which event happened SECOND in Benjamin Franklin’s life?
   A. Began publishing the Pennsylvania Gazette
   B. Went to Second Continental Congress
   C. Was born in Washington, D.C.
   D. Convinced English king to continue the Stamp Tax
8. Which of the following sentences BEST describes why Benjamin Franklin is famous?

- A  Benjamin Franklin was the inventor of the kite.
- B  Benjamin Franklin was a very good President of the United States.
- C  Benjamin Franklin was a man with many talents and interests.
- D  Benjamin Franklin wrote poetry as a boy.

9. At the time of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin was chosen to

- A  be postmaster of the American colonies.
- B  help write the Declaration of Independence.
- C  go to England to protect the king.
- D  be Chief Justice of the United States.

10. In this biography, the author tells events and ideas in what order?

- A  in order of importance, from most to least important
- B  in order from his old age to his youth
- C  in order from his youth to his old age
- D  in the order Benjamin Franklin remembered them

Open Response:

Explain why Benjamin Franklin is famous. Use information from the story to support your answer.