Benjamin Franklin was an inventor and an author, but his most significant role in American History was that of a revolutionary. Franklin was one of the original advocates for independence from Britain and lived to see the Treaty of Paris signed, officially recognizing the United States as an independent nation.

**General Information**

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**Description**

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**Keywords**


**Citation**

MLA
Benjamin Franklin was the 18th century version of a Renaissance man. He conducted experiments on electricity. He invented bifocal eyeglasses. He even wrote "Poor Richard's Almanack," a best-selling publication full of poems, proverbs, and weather forecasts. But of all the roles he played, perhaps his most important in American History was that of a revolutionary. Franklin was among the original advocates for independence from Britain. He helped unite the colonies and draft the Declaration of Independence, and he was a Founding Father of the United States of America.

Franklin began the fight for independence as a delegate in the Albany Congress of 1754 where he proposed the Albany Plan of Union, the first call to unite all 13 colonies and create a central government. While the plan ultimately failed to pass in the colonies, it laid the foundation for the future fight for independence. As a well-respected diplomat, Franklin traveled to London in 1766 and fought to repeal the Stamp Act, a tax collected on all printed goods to repay the British government for defense during the French and Indian War. Colonists protested the tax by boycotting British goods. In a testimony before the British House of Commons, Franklin stated, "it has appeared to be the opinion of every one that we could not be taxed by a Parliament wherein we were not represented." With the help of Franklin's diplomatic skills, the Stamp Act was repealed. A Loyalist before his trip to London, Franklin returned to the colonies with greater sympathies toward the American cause. But Franklin's biggest fight for independence began in the summer of 1775 when he joined the other delegates of the Second Continental Congress just a few months after the first shots of the American Revolutionary War had been fired. There in Philadelphia, Franklin and four other delegates drew up the Declaration of Independence, and while Thomas Jefferson wrote it, Franklin's role as an advisor and editor while drafting it was crucial. The delegates passed the resolution for independence, and on July 4, 1776, they signed the Declaration of Independence. Of the 56 men who signed it, Franklin, 70 years-old,
was the oldest. The document mandated independence and equality from the British, stating, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

Now waging a full-scale war, the colonists desperately needed supplies to defend themselves as fleets of British soldiers arrived from across the ocean. Franklin traveled to France as an ambassador to secure support for the American Revolution. He was immensely popular at the court of King Louis the sixteenth. Many of his essays on philosophy and science were translated to French and French citizens were enamored by his simple American appearance, his intelligence, and also his tact.

With a crushing American victory at the Battle of Saratoga turning the tide of the war in 1777, Franklin persuaded the French to help finance the American cause. It was a feat Thomas Jefferson called, "an excellent school of humility." In 1783, after eight years of fighting, the Americans won their independence. With the Treaty of Paris, Britain formally recognized the United States as an independent nation. Benjamin Franklin, now 77 years old, was there to sign the treaty, a witness to what he had fought so hard for - "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."