



How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning

By Rosalyn Schanzer

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How Ben Franklin Stole the Lightning By Rosalyn Schanzer

Ben Franklin was the most famous American in the entire world during colonial times. No wonder! After all, the man could do just about anything. Why, he was an author and an athlete and a patriot and a scientist and an inventor to boot. He even found a way to steal the lightning right out of the sky.

Is such a thing possible? Is it. Take a look inside and find Ben busy at work on every spread. Then find out how he used his discovery about lightning to make people's lives safer.

In an inventive way, Rosalyn Schanzer brings us a brilliant and ever-curious American original.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As with her *How We Crossed the West: The Adventures of Lewis and Clark*, Schanzer's lively writing and drawing style again makes history come alive. Here she gives appropriate spark to a picture-book overview of Benjamin Franklin's various inventions and scientific experiments, zeroing in on his discovery of lightning's electric power. The statement "It's true!" begins the exhilarating ride. From there the author summarizes, in a succinct and zippy style, many of Franklin's achievements as inventor, statesman, author, entrepreneur, activist, community leader and musician-a Renaissance man of boundless energy ("Didn't the man ever stop to rest?" she wonders). The artwork, a combination of vibrantly colored dyes and ink line, depicts an ebullient Franklin smiling, with his hair flying, as he flits from one role to the next. But the author devotes a significant portion of the book to Franklin's curiosity about electricity (which he believed to be found in lightning) and its potential to cause devastating fires, including the story behind Franklin's famous experiment of flying a kite with a key on its string during a thunderstorm. The compositions, which include period detail and accessible illustrated renditions of Franklin's documented projects and inventions, match the chipper tone of the text. An extensive author's note provides further information on Franklin's life and works, and spiffy endpapers reproduce diagrams and notes from Franklin's papers in Philadelphia's American Philosophical Society. This fitting tribute to a memorable leader emphasizes the playfulness that accompanies a curious mind and the boundless energy required for great accomplishments. Ages 6-12.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 2-4-Even in childhood, Franklin was inventing better ways to do things. "He lay on his back, held on to a kite string, and let his kite pull him lickety-split across a big pond." This spirited account of the most prodigious inventor echoes the tall-tale humor Schanzer employed in *Davy Crockett Saves the World* (HarperCollins, 2001). Her subject comes across as larger than life, even though the lively, color cartoon sketches often depict him in miniature. The book begins with Franklin's accomplishments but quickly moves on to his many inventions and his growing interest in electricity, culminating in his capture of lightning in the legendary kite experiment. The author does a nice job of explaining the historical context and the ultimate value of the lightning rod in saving lives. The deftly drawn comic scenes and the folksy tone lend folklore flavor, but this brisk account is not fictionalized. The concluding author's note adds information on Franklin's work as inventor, and the endpapers superimpose a small, cheerful depiction of him on a pleasant layout of his own sketches. Well conceived and crafted, this fresh view is particularly welcome as few of the fine picture-book accounts of the popular patriot remain in print. Enjoyable reading fare, this volume will pair neatly with Lisa Jo Rudy's *The Ben Franklin Book of Easy and Incredible Experiments* (Wiley, 1995).

Margaret Bush, Simmons College, Boston

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Review

"Well conceived and crafted, this fresh view is particularly welcome....Enjoyable reading fare." (School Library Journal)

"Schanzer's lively writing and drawing style again make history come alive...exhilarating!" (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

"Exceptionally engaging" (Washington Post)

Users Review

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