**Franklin and kite - A00120**

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**This material was adapted by Peter Schmitt from the book “Four Great Americans: Washington, Franklin, Webster, and Lincoln. A book for young Americans.” by James Baldwin. The book is now in the public domain.**

**The full text of the book is available through the Gutenberg Project.**

**A public domain audio recording is available through Librivox.com**

**Audio is read by Sibella Denton.**

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**http://librivox.org/four-great-americans-by-james-baldwin/)**

**Line drawing of kite is from Microsoft clip art library as part of the Office suite.**

**The colored drawing of Franklin and the kite is from http://www.fi.edu/htlc/teachers/lettieri/classroomexperimentsandactivities.html  
(a page on the Franklin Institute website with resources for teachers)**

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**FRANKLIN'S WONDERFUL KITE**

**Adapted from: Four Great Americans by James Baldwin**

Benjamin Franklin was not only a printer, politician, and statesman; he was the first scientist of America. It was his

delight to study the laws of nature and try to understand   
some of the mysteries.

In his time the steam engine was unknown. The   
telegraph was unknown. Comforts which we now enjoy  
were deemed to be impossible.

Franklin began to make experiments in electricity   
when he was about forty years old. He was the first   
person to discover that lightning is caused by electricity.   
He thought that this was true, but he had no means of proving it.

C:\Users\Peter\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\UFIBK13Z\MC900330436[1].wmfAt last he thought of making a kite and sending it up to the clouds. At the top of the  
kite he placed a pointed iron rod. The string   
was of hemp, except a short piece at the lower  
end, which was of silk. At the end of the  
hemp string an iron key was tied.

He told no one else about it, for if the experiment should  
fail, he did not care to have everybody laugh at him.

At last, one day, a thunder-storm came up, and Franklin,  
went out into a field to fly his kite. There was a steady breeze,  
and it was easy to send the kite far up towards the clouds.

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The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled. The experiment was  
a very dangerous one.

He put his knuckles close to the key, and  
sparks of fire came flying to his hand. He  
was wild with delight. The sparks of fire were  
electricity; he had drawn them from the  
clouds.

When Franklin's discovery was  
made known it caused great  
excitement among the learned men of  
Europe. They could not believe it was true until some of them  
had proved it by similar experiments.

Franklin soon became famous in foreign countries as a  
philosopher and man of science. But people in America still  
thought of him as a great printer, and as the editor of *Poor  
Richard's Almanac*.

He invented the lightning-rod. And, by trying many  
experiments, he learned more about electricity than the world  
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Franklin \_\_\_began\_\_ to make experiments in electricity \_\_when\_\_\_ he was about forty \_\_\_years\_\_ old. He was the first person to \_\_\_discover\_\_\_ that lightning is caused by \_\_electricity\_\_. He thought that this was \_\_true\_\_, but he had no means of proving it.

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