

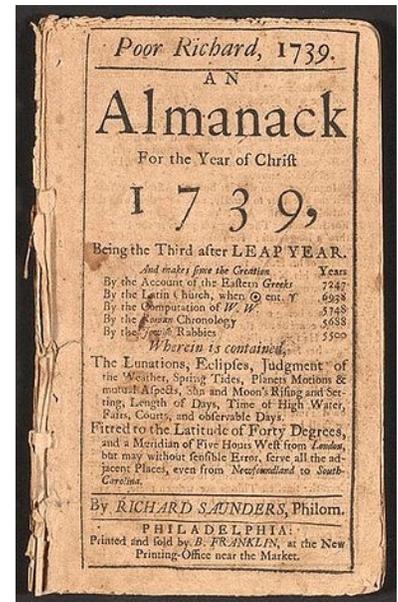
**THEME:** Colonial Life

**TOPIC:** Almanacs

**PREPARATION / PROPS:** Tables and chairs (or picnic tables) to comfortably fit all of the kids, table coverings (patriotic ones if possible), tables to hold the finished projects for drying, example of an almanac, copies of pages from Poor Richard's Almanack

**LESSON: Almanacs.** “First published by Benjamin Franklin in 1732, *Poor Richard's Almanack* was a guide to both weather forecasts and wise maxims. Franklin used the pseudonym Richard Saunders in writing the text, which soon became an annual publication up until 1757. Response to the almanac was tremendous, and it sold as many as 10,000 issues a year. Franklin wrote *Poor Richard's Almanack* as a service to the American people, hoping to educate them and entice their intellectual appetites. Since it was extremely common for the almanac to be the only publication a person ever purchased, the author felt indebted to write as much as he possibly could.

As Richard Saunders, Franklin was given both the freedom to express his thoughts and the freedom to do so with dramatic license. Consequently, he continued to emphasize the two qualities he found most essential to success: industry and frugality.



Back in the 1700's, almanac was spelled with a "k" on the end but, over time, the "k" was dropped to merely be "almanac".

The almanac had various tidbits of information including when the sun would rise and set, the days of the week, the number of days in the month, the holidays, the moon phases, recipes, riddles, poetry, scripture, tips on saving money/frugality and words to hymns. This was important to the people of the time. There were really no newspapers, no television, no radio, no cable, no internet, no cell-phones, and no weather channel. This is something that the colonists depended upon, especially for those that were farmers. Almanacs have changed from the year 1753. The size, type of paper, print style, color pictures, recipes, tide schedule, and types of stories are different, but the concept is the same.

Richard Saunders (Ben Franklin) included some wise sayings called proverbs in his almanack. Here are a just a few: Would you live with ease, do what you ought, and not what you please. Look before, or you'll find yourself behind. Three may keep a Secret, if two of them are dead.

## DISCUSSION POINTS:

- What kind of things (magazines, commercials, etc.) or people (parents, teachers, etc.) entice you to want to learn more? Why do you think Benjamin Franklin wanted people to be educated?
- Benjamin Franklin emphasized the qualities of industry and frugality as being most essential to success. What are some ways you are industrious? What are some ways you are frugal? Can you explain why those two things are important to success?
- Benjamin Franklin included things such as: sunrise and sunset times, holidays, moon phases, recipes, riddles, poetry, scripture, and more in his almanacs because those things were important to people of colonial times. If you were to author an almanac, what would you put in it? What is important to people today? Are the same things important now and then? Would you choose a pen name or use your real name? Why?
- Can you explain what the proverbs (printed at the end of the lesson) mean? Do you think they are wise?

## ACTIVITY:            Make Your Own Almanac

**Materials:** One piece of 9"x12" construction paper and three pieces of 8 ½" x 11" copy paper per participant, assorted yarn, assorted ribbon, glue sticks, glitter glue, stickers, die cuts, crayons, scissors, colored pencils, and markers

**Method:** Each participant creates their own almanac with their own design. Take one piece of 9" x 12" construction paper and fold in half. Dimensions should be 6" wide x 9" long. This will be the front and back cover of your almanac. Take 3 pieces of 8 ½" x 11" white, plain paper and fold in half. Dimensions should be 4 ¼" x 5.5". Place the white paper inside of the construction paper cover, with the fold of the white paper tight against the fold of the construction paper. Using a hole punch, punch 3 holes along the spine of almanac. Next, either tie ribbon or string through the holes. This will keep the almanac together. Don't tie the string too tight or you will have trouble turning the pages. Have the kids put their names on their almanac. Then decorate with stickers, die cuts, and glitter glue, or draw pictures or designs on the front. Tell the kids they can write anything they want in their almanac, including interesting information they learn at Patriots' Club meetings. Younger kids can draw pictures or cut and paste pictures from magazines. Older kids can write their own poetry or some wise sayings like Richard Saunders'.

**REFERENCES:** ThinkQuest.com, <http://solitaryroad.com/art.html> (Topically Arranged Proverbs, Precepts, Quotations), Poor Richard's Almanack, [www.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/his341/pra1753contents.html](http://www.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/his341/pra1753contents.html), [www.library.thinkquest.org/22254/pra.htm](http://www.library.thinkquest.org/22254/pra.htm)