



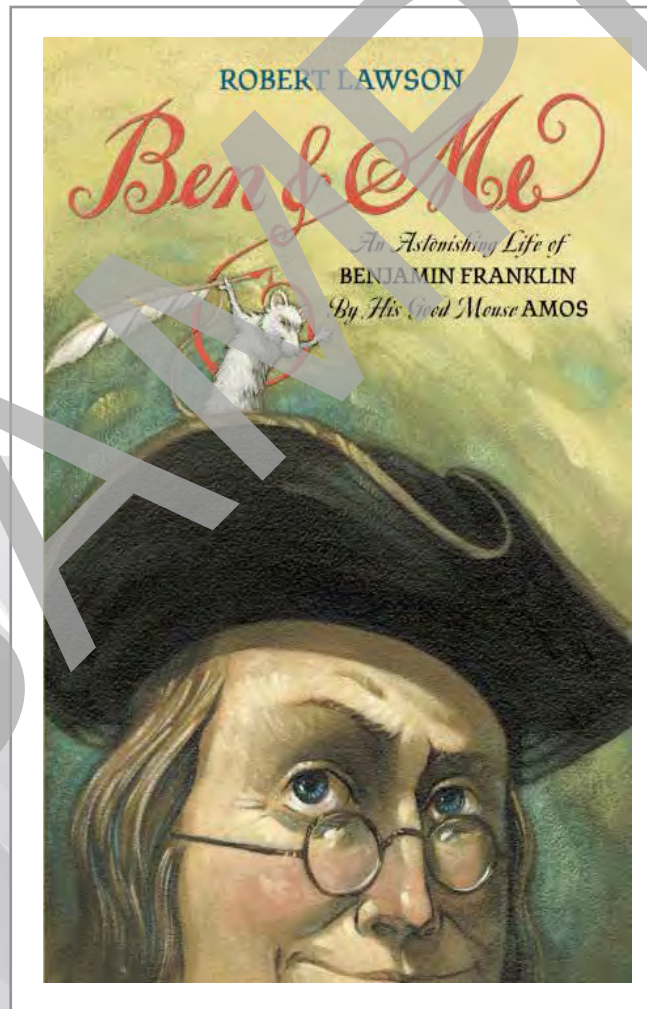
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Ben and Me

Robert Lawson



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Ben and Me

Robert Lawson

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, categorizing, visualization, research

### Literary Elements

Historical fiction genre, point of view, story elements, characterization

### Listening/Speaking

Dramatic reading, interviewing

### Vocabulary

Word mapping

### Comprehension

Comparison/contrast, predicting

### Writing

Letter-writing, descriptive, newspaper article, almanac, naming, dialogue, animal phrases

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## Summary

Amos is a brilliant, literate mouse who lived with Benjamin Franklin. While enjoying the improved living conditions of the Franklin residence over his family's abode in the local vestry, Amos provided advice and counsel to Franklin. Lawson's book provides an enjoyable look at history from a most unique vantage point. It could easily be used in conjunction with work on Benjamin Franklin or electricity.

## Instructions Prior to Reading

You may wish to choose one or more of the following pre-reading discussion questions/activities. Each is designed to help students draw from their store of background knowledge about the events and themes they will meet in the story they are about to read.

## Pre-reading Activities

1. **Previewing:** Have students examine the title and cover illustration. Also suggest that they flip through the book. Ask: What can you tell about the time period of the story from the clothes of the person shown on the cover?
2. List what students already know about Benjamin Franklin. Use the K-W-L visual to help students' comprehension. (Carr, Eileen and Ogle, Donna, 1987. "K-W-L Plus: A Strategy for Comprehension and Summarization." *Journal of Reading*, 30 [7] 626-631.)

What I Know	What I Want To Find Out	What I Learned

3. Write the name of the novel, *Ben and Me*, along with the term “historical fiction.” Explain that *Ben and Me* is an example of historical fiction. Then have students define “historical” and “fiction.” Explain that in historical fiction the main characters are usually creations of the writer’s imagination (although real people may appear or be mentioned in the story). The setting is real—usually a time and place which had historical importance. Help students fill in the chart below, comparing and contrasting historical fiction with history.

	Historical Fiction	History (Factual)
<i>Setting:</i>	Our world	Our world
<i>Characters:</i>	May or may not be people who really lived	People who really lived
<i>Action:</i>	Could have happened or not but not entirely a true story	True story
<i>Problem:</i>	Could have belonged to someone living at the time of the story	Real problem
<i>Examples:</i>	<i>Courage of Sarah Noble</i> <i>What’s the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?</i>	<i>Diary of Anne Frank</i>

4. **Real Versus Make-Believe:** Read the Forward of the book to the class. Is this going to be a make-believe story or a realistic story? How do you know? Use the T-chart to discuss.

	Realistic Story	Make-Believe Story
<i>Setting:</i>	Our world	Not quite our world
<i>Characters:</i>	Like us	Unusual
<i>Action:</i>	Could happen	Could never happen
<i>Problem:</i>	Could be ours	Couldn’t be ours

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5. **Concept Map:** Write “Inventions” at the center of a large piece of paper, to be kept for later comparison with events in the book (or as a bulletin board display to be expanded as the story is read). Have students generate any ideas that come to mind when they hear the term, helping students organize their ideas into categories such as “synonyms,” “famous inventors,” “important inventions,” etc. Draw “wagon spokes” around the central concept, (“Inventions”), to connect it with the supporting ideas, (categories). Encourage students to add to the chart during and after their reading of the novel.
  6. **Bulletin Board:**
    - a) Have students create a bulletin board display depicting the characters they meet in the book, complete with the clothing or props which identify each.
    - b) Have the students create a bulletin board display with illustrations of the most important inventions of the twentieth century and/or suggestions for the twenty-first century.
  7. The students will keep a response journal. The students will divide their papers in half (vertically). On the left side, they will keep short summaries of what has happened in each chapter, using their own words. On the right side, they will react to what they have read.

## Recommended Procedure

Teachers are encouraged to adapt the Novel Unit to meet the needs of individual classes and students. You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them. Here are some of the “nuts and bolts” for using these “tools”—a glossary of some of the terms used that will facilitate your use of the guide.

**Blooms’ Taxonomy:** A classification system for various levels of thinking. Questions keyed to these levels may be:

- Comprehension questions, which ask one to state the meaning of what is written;
- Application questions, which ask one to think about relationships between ideas such as cause/effect;
- Evaluation questions, which ask one to judge the accuracy of ideas;
- Synthesis questions, which ask one to develop a product by integrating the ideas in the text with ideas of one’s own.

3. **Creative Thinking:** Design an invention that you think will be useful, such as a portable floor warmer, homework machine, or automatic bed-maker. Prepare diagrams, illustrations, and a written summary of your invention. Be sure to explain why it's important and useful.

## Chapter 9: "War!"—Pages 66-70

### Vocabulary:

outrages 66  
manifesto 68

catastrophes 67  
orated 69

firebrand 68  
singed 70

### Vocabulary Activity:

Each student or cooperative group will make a poster, banner, or sign to advertise their word or words. The ad must show what the word means and how to pronounce it. The words will be displayed and should be signed by the artist(s).

### Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Who was Red? (Page 68, He was a mouse who had come with Jefferson.)
2. Why would Jefferson's mouse be called Red? (Page 68, He was redheaded, a fiery revolutionist and a great talker.)
3. Where did Franklin get ideas for the Declaration of Independence? (page 68, from Red's Manifesto)
4. In what ways were Red and Thomas Jefferson like Amos and Ben? Use the T-diagram to list similarities.

Red and Amos	Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mice who had suffered under the domination of men</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men who have suffered under English rule</li> </ul>

### Prediction:

What advice will Amos offer on this trip to France? Will Ben listen to him?

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**Supplementary Activities:**

1. **Research:** Look up details of the American Revolution in the encyclopedia or your Social Studies book.
2. Look up Thomas Jefferson in the encyclopedia. Prepare a report on him. Why should children study Jefferson? What are the most important things to remember about him? List other children's books about Jefferson.

## Chapter 10: "La Belle France"—Pages 71-75

**Vocabulary:**

superb 71

aspirations 73

profanity 75

rumblings 75

**Vocabulary Activity:**

Each student will choose two vocabulary words from Chapters 5-10. The student will write two sentences omitting the vocabulary words. Sentences will be read aloud and classmates will guess the correct word to complete the sentences.

**Discussion Questions and Activities:**

1. How did Ben decide to appeal for help for the colonies from France? (*page 72, with the help of Amos who suggested certain pleasures to be gained on a trip to France*) What were the reasons to visit France? (*French pastry, French wine, and beautiful French women*)
2. How was the sea trip for Amos? (*Page 74, He was terribly seasick.*)
3. Why did the Captain and seamen get angry with Ben? (*Page 75, Ben had a new theory for setting the sails to increase the speed.*)

**Prediction:**

How will Amos help Ben in France?

**Supplementary Activities:**

1. **Research:** Look up sailing in an encyclopedia. What was it like to travel to France in the eighteenth century? Write a short paragraph to answer.
2. **Interviewing:** Talk to someone who is a sailor. How is a sailboat powered? How fast does a sailboat move? What kind of sails did they use in the eighteenth century? How are sails different today?
3. **Mapping:** Is this an episodic story? Why? How are we going to make a story map for this book?