

Electric Turkey

You've probably heard a lot of facts about Benjamin Franklin. He was a founding father. He invented bifocals. He's on the one hundred dollar bill. But did you know that he was electrocuted by a turkey?

It's true. Benjamin thought that electrifying a turkey would make the meat "uncommonly tender." So, one night in 1749, he tried to test his theory. He used a device called a Leyden jar to make an electric charge. But instead of electrifying the turkey, he accidentally shocked himself.

Benjamin shook. He went numb. He was sore for days. But he learned more about electricity.

This experiment-gone-wrong led to more experiments with electricity. In 1752, Benjamin tried to prove a connection between electricity and lightning. He flew a kite during a thunderstorm.

Did Benjamin discover electricity during this famous kite experiment? No. The kite wasn't struck by lightning. Benjamin wasn't electrocuted. But he did receive a small shock from static electricity. And he proved that lightning is electricity.

The kite experiment led to Benjamin's invention of the lightning rod. This was a metal rod that could be put on a roof. The rod would attract



lightning. The lightning would hit the rod instead of the house. This invention prevented a lot of fires.

And just think – it all started with a turkey!



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Which of the following facts about Benjamin Franklin is NOT true?
 - a. He was a founding father
 - b. He's on the one hundred dollar bill
 - c. He discovered electricity
 - d. He was electrocuted by a turkey

2. What did Benjamin Franklin invent to prevent fires?
 - a. A kite
 - b. A lightning rod
 - c. Bifocals
 - d. A Leyden jar

3. According to the passage, which of Benjamin's experiments was most famous?
 - a. Electrifying the turkey
 - b. Flying the kite
 - c. Inventing the lightning rod
 - d. Making bifocals

4. What does the author mean by "it all started with a turkey!"
 - a. The turkey made Benjamin want to continue to experiment with electricity
 - b. The turkey gave Benjamin the idea for a lightning rod
 - c. The turkey gave Benjamin the idea for the Leyden jar
 - d. The turkey helped Benjamin discover electricity

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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