

Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide



Of Kites and Kings

Written by Gary Wright

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SACRAMENTO THEATRE COMPANY

1419 H Street * Sacramento, California 95814 * 916-446-7501

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions on the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

<http://www.sactheatre.org>



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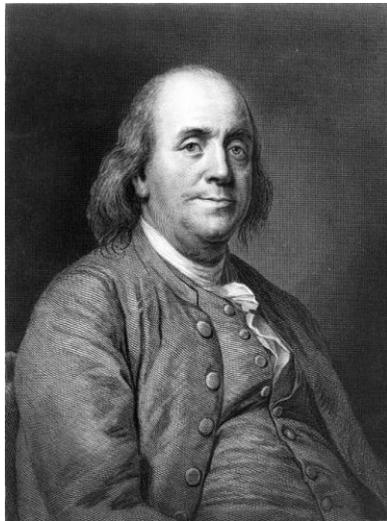
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Ben Franklin



Questions to Ask & Answer- Before Visiting the Theatre

1. When was the play written?
2. Who wrote the play? Have they written other things?
3. This play is a new work / world premiere; how is that different than established plays?
4. What is the inspiration for the play?
5. The play is about an actual historical figure, does that mean it is a biography?
6. How can I tell what is historically accurate and what was created by the playwright?
7. Is the play set in a time and place familiar to the author?
8. What are the important issues of this time and place and in what way do they differ from our own?
9. What can I do to be sure I can follow the action of the play?



Answers to Questions

When was the play written?

Of Kites and Kings is a brand new work and this is the very first production of it, with revisions in the structure of scenes and the flow of dialogue occurring almost daily as rehearsals with the actors reveal intriguing perspectives to the playwright's earlier versions. In fact, it is very likely that there will be changes in the script all the way up until the last days of rehearsal before the play is performed for an audience. Because actors need time to memorize and gain confidence with the lines, directors and playwrights avoid making big changes at the last minute, but changes have been made on new plays even after preview performances and openings. There may even be one or two new drafts after the show closes at Sacramento Theatre Company before it is performed anywhere else, incorporating ideas and solving problems discovered in our production.

Who wrote the play? Have they written other things?

The play was written by Gary Wright. He has also written an adaptation of *Dracula* that was produced at Foothill Theatre Company and *Evermore*, a piece about the author Edgar Allen Poe.

This play is a new work / world premier. How is that different than established plays?

In many ways, there is no difference at all. However, because it is a new work; it is impossible to read the underlying story in its original novel format or read through the script before seeing the production. This means that the audience comes in less prepared, but also with fewer expectations.

What is the inspiration for the play?

The playwright has avoided presentation of many of Franklin's accomplishments, as might be done in a biography or documentary of a historical figure, to focus on the man's relationship with his son. He has done so within the context of three 'storms' in their lives: the storm in which they flew a kite and developed an understanding of electricity, the tumult of William's education in the Law while in England, and the coming war for freedom in America that would set the two men at opposing sides. We often hear half of the phrase "opposites attract," as derived from the basic understanding of electricity and magnetic fields, in use as a metaphor for relationships; it is the other part of the concept that applies here. That "like repels like."

The play is about an actual historical figure. Does that mean it is a biography?

It does not. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term biography: "the story of a real person's life written by someone other than that person." *Of Kites and Kings* may use people who existed in our history, along with events of their lives, to provide a foundation or frame of reference for the story that is told; that story is artificial and has been crafted to convey a specific message by the playwright.



How can I tell what is historically accurate and what was created by the playwright?

The best way to do that is to spend some time learning more about Ben and William Franklin from historical documents and biographies that have been written about them. There is possibly no more difficult style of presentation than this for drawing a clear line between fact and fiction. However, you should remember that even the best researched historical biography can have details of details of fact knitted together by the historian's unproven theories.

Is the play set in a time and place familiar to the author?

A play like this is rarely put together completely from the creative regions of the playwright's mind. The process of developing the script involved reading/research of a number of biographies and representations of the life and accomplishments of Franklin and his son.

What are the important issues of this time and place and in what way do they differ from ours?

The setting of the play is one that many contemporary issues reference as discussions on political issues are compared with the original documents and the wishes of our Founding Fathers. Of course, our world is very different from that of pre-Revolutionary America.

If you have time to discuss these issues with your class, compare our perspective today with the common stance on these issues in the mid-18th century:

- Taxes
- Religion in politics
- Slavery
- Marriage
- Family inheritance
- Child out of wedlock

What can I do to follow the action of the play?

This play will be performed in our Pollock Stage. The space is small, often called intimate. This puts you right in the midst of the action. While an understanding/knowledge of Franklin's life might enable you to connect his life effects together more quickly; you may find that just focusing on understanding the personal relationships between Ben and his son William will serve far better.

If done right, the production elements will give you insights into the characters, their interactions, and the time period in ways that one may not discover in reading a biography. The production team of the play, led by the Director, studies the script and the historical details and the author. The creative team hopes the audience will bridge the gap between the contemporary world to understand the relationship between father and son... like any father and son, whether one of them is a Founding Father of the country or a father living today.



The Author - The Voice behind the Voices

Playwright Gary Wright

Gary has been focused on screenwriting since 2005, but is very much enjoying a return to his artistic roots with *Of Kites and Kings*, a new work for the stage, commissioned by the Sacramento Theatre Company.

Gary has been a professional stage actor since 1984, and made use of that experience in the creation of his first full-length play, *Nobler in the Mind*, about a Hamlet understudy who will do anything for a chance to go on in the greatest role ever written. It was produced by The Show Below here in Sacramento, and won the 1990 Elly Award for Best New Play.

In the mid 90s, Gary left Sacramento, and spent 15 years as an Associate Artist at the Foothill Theatre Company in Nevada City, California. There, he started writing plays again, beginning with several one-acts for FTC's educational programs. One of those one-acts proved so popular in public performances, that Gary was urged to expand it to a full-length work for FTC's mainstage. The play was a whimsical adaptation of Chauncey Canfield's Gold Rush classic, *The Diary of a Forty-Niner*. The full-length version premiered at FTC in the Spring of 1999, was a critical and popular success, and won the 1999 Sacramento Critics' Choice Award for Best New Play in the Region.

That same year, Gary wrote a gritty new adaptation of *Dracula*, which premiered on FTC's mainstage in the Fall. That script was subsequently translated into Russian, and staged by the Maxim Gorky Drama Theatre in Vladivostok, where it opened in June of 2000, and remained in the Gorky's repertory for two years. The Gorky's Artistic Director said the play was popular enough to run much longer, but regrettably, they had to close it because "it was drawing a bad crowd." He didn't elaborate.

A few years later, Gary wrote *Evermore*, a new play which examined Edgar Allan Poe's bitter feud with editor Rufus Griswold, his ardent love for his wife Virginia, and the likely sources of inspiration for such works as *The Raven*, *Annabel Lee*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, and Gary's favorite Poe story, *Never Bet The Devil Your Head*. *Evermore* was a surprise hit for FTC in the Fall of 2007 – it won that year's Sacramento Critics' Choice Award for Best New Play in the Region, and was later published by Next Stage Press (along with his *Dracula*). Gary's screen adaptation of *Evermore* is currently under option to Justin Lothrop at Buffalo 8 Productions. Gary recently finished co-writing a screenplay on assignment for Buffalo 8, and they have plans to work together on several more projects, going forward.

Gary currently lives in Grass Valley, California, with his partner Carolyn Howarth, and their rescued Lab-Pitbull mix, Gracie.



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The Characters

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Famous in his own lifetime as the most accomplished American of his Age, Benjamin Franklin is considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America – although it might be more appropriate to call him the Founding Grandpa. He was more than a quarter century older than any of the other major players. The closest to him in age was Washington, 26 years his junior, followed by Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and those crazy gunslinging kids Hamilton and Burr, who were 49 and 50 years younger than Franklin, respectively. Franklin had a knack for being on the scene when history was made. He served in the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, signed the Declaration of Independence, went to Paris to help draft the treaty to bring France into the Revolutionary War on America's side, and almost singlehandedly wrote the peace treaty with Great Britain to end the war – those are just some of the highlights.

He lived 84 years in the 18th Century – when the average life expectancy was about 41 – and he was active and influential the entire time. He attended the Constitutional Convention in the last year of his life, and signed the Constitution. In *Of Kites and Kings*, we get glimpses of him in Philadelphia, conducting the famous kite experiment with his son; we see him in London where he served almost 20 years working for the colonies of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Georgia as a lobbyist (before the word “lobbyist” was invented); we see him in Paris, hammering out a contentious part of the peace treaty; and finally, we see him making one last stop in England on his final voyage home to America.

WILLIAM FRANKLIN

Born out of wedlock, William Franklin was Benjamin Franklin's eldest and only surviving son (the legitimate Francis Folger Franklin, one year younger, died of smallpox at the age of four). William was described by contemporaries as one of the handsomest men in the American colonies, quick-witted and capable, and sometimes a more lively conversationalist than his father – who was pretty lively himself. William was with his father on that stormy day in 1753 when he conducted the kite experiment, proving that lightning and electricity were the same substance. Father and son were very close for the first quarter century of William's life, but then Ben put Will through law school at the Inns of Court, and they grew apart as William became increasingly determined to make his own decisions, and assert his independence from his father. From Ben's point of view, William began to associate with the wrong friends, pursue the wrong career, marry the wrong girl, and think the wrong thoughts.

Things came to a head between them when the American Revolution began, and they found themselves on opposing sides in a war. William was taken prisoner by the rebels in June of 1776, and spent nearly half of the war in captivity, including an 8-month stint in solitary confinement at Litchfield Jail in Connecticut, in conditions so hellish that his health was permanently ruined. After the war, William attempted to reconcile with his father, and they met one last time, but the hoped-for reconciliation did not occur. Benjamin died without forgiving his son for siding against him in the Revolution. In his last will and testament, Ben left William some worthless land in Nova Scotia, and a barbed comment to the effect that, if William's side had won the war, Ben would have had nothing to leave him, anyway. In *Of Kites and Kings*, we see William as a devoted son helping his father conduct the kite experiment; see



him assimilating into London society as a promising young law student at the Inns of Court; then as his father's political opponent in the early days of the Revolutionary War; and finally, as a broken man on the wrong side of history – and even worse, on the wrong side of an unforgiving father.

WILLIAM TEMPLE FRANKLIN

William Temple Franklin, sole son of William Franklin, was also born out of wedlock. He was called “Temple” by his family and friends. Contemporaries described him as having all the gifts of his father and grandfather – wit, charm, good looks, formidable intelligence – but none of their virtues. Both his father and his grandfather wanted him to pursue a career in politics, but Temple never showed any inclination to do so. He was more inclined to have scandalously inappropriate love affairs (with a sister-in-law, with the wife of a next-door-neighbor, etc.). As he grew into adulthood, he devoted himself to dressing in the latest fashions, drinking a lot, and spending outrageous sums of inherited money. He did distinguish himself in one way – he sired more illegitimate children than his father and grandfather combined. In *Of Kites and Kings*, we see him torn between his father and his grandfather; and we perhaps get an inkling of why he chose to avoid the world of politics altogether.

POLLY STEVENSON

There was a Polly Stevenson who worked at the boardinghouse at Number 36 Craven Street, where Ben and William lived in London. She was unusually well-educated for an Englishwoman of that period. Ben was very fond of her, and he did indeed try to persuade William to marry her, but William had eyes only for Elizabeth Downes. History doesn't tell us how Polly felt about William Franklin, but we do know that she was briefly married to a physician named William Hewson, who died of an infection contracted while he was dissecting a cadaver. Polly and Ben maintained a close friendship over the years, exchanging many letters – she is a witty, engaging correspondent. After the failed attempt at reconciliation between Ben and William, Polly returned with Ben to America. She was with him when he died. In *Of Kites and Kings*, the character Polly serves as a lens for the audience to view this story of a rift between father and son. Although she's far from being a disinterested third party, she is more or less impartial, because she cares deeply for both men – in different ways.

ELIZABETH DOWNES

Daughter of wealthy plantation owners from Barbados, William Franklin married her very much against his father's wishes. Ben disapproved of the match, but freely admitted that she was a very nice girl. She had a difficult time in America, especially as things got ugly between the colonies and Britain. She suffered from asthma, which was aggravated by the stress of being the Governor's wife in a colony where the peoples' dissatisfaction threatened to break into mob violence at any moment. After William was arrested by the rebels, Benjamin Franklin sent her some money and invited her to come and live with him, but she refused. She evacuated, along with other Loyalists, to New York – where she fell ill and died. In *Of Kites and Kings*, two different versions of her are played by Polly.



ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN

Solicitor-General of Great Britain, widely reputed to be the best litigator in the British Empire. Ruthlessly ambitious, he was feared by opponents, and disliked by most people, including King George III, who regretted elevating him to the position of Solicitor-General. His humiliating denunciation of Benjamin Franklin over the Affair of the Hutchinson Letters is considered, by some historians, to be the turning point at which Franklin stopped working for reconciliation between Britain and America, and went all in as a supporter of Revolution. Another interesting detail about Wedderburn: although he was extraordinarily quick-witted in cross-examination, he had a reputation as a dreadful bore at social gatherings. People tried to avoid sitting next to him at dinner parties.



The Synopsis

Written by Gary Wright

Act One

Of Kites and Kings takes us into the world, and often into the mind, of its narrator, Polly Stevenson. Polly works in an 18th Century London boardinghouse, cleaning rooms, changing linens, running errands for her lodgers, and occasionally picking up a little extra money with her secretarial skills. She takes dictation and copies documents (before copy machines, of course, everything had to be copied out by hand). She is well-educated, with a ready wit and a breezy way of explaining things, but she's also quite self-involved, and a bit insecure, because she appears doomed to spinsterhood. And she's been told, by some of London's high society mean girls, that she's not very attractive.

In her spare time, Polly loves to attend the theatre. She's especially fond of David Garrick, manager and leading player of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane – not only because he's the greatest actor of all time, but also because he was kind to her when she was a little girl. Another point in Mr. Garrick's favor: he has the good sense to change the endings of Shakespeare's tragedies, which obviously need it. Mr. Garrick's new and improved versions are always more agreeable, and in Polly's opinion, superior plays.

As Of Kites and Kings opens, Polly is preparing rooms for her new lodger, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, of the legendary kite experiment, inventor of the Franklin stove, the lightning rod, and the flexible catheter. He is easily the most famous American in the world; though considering America is just a colony at this point, the distinction is less than it may seem. Polly is mildly star struck by Ben Franklin (he's no Garrick), but she is swept off her feet by Ben's handsome young son, William. Literally. Swept off her feet and carried away. This is our introduction to Polly's most notable quirk as a narrator – she tends to show us what she wishes had happened, first. The more agreeable version. The Garrick ending, if you will. After indulging briefly in that fantasy, she shows us what really happened. She was not, in fact, swept off her feet. Well, not literally.

So, harboring a secret crush on William, Polly soon becomes friends with both father and son. Ben spends his days in the halls of Parliament, lobbying for some of the American colonies, while William attends the Inns at Court, studying Law. Over the next five years, his studies take more and more of William's time, and Ben becomes concerned that he and William are growing apart. William has sewn a few wild oats – he's fathered an illegitimate son, but lacks the means to provide for the boy and his mother, so Ben has to do it. To make matters worse, the Inns at Court Law program seems to be turning William into a conservative Englishman, and a Tory – the party that invariably opposes Ben when he tries to improve conditions in the colonies. Ben is especially troubled by his suspicion that William is romantically involved with a young woman from a prominent Tory family. Desperate to nip that in the bud, he assumes a prerogative very common to 18th Century parents – he arranges for William to marry someone more suitable: their mutual friend and hostess, Polly Stevenson. William passionately objects to this match, but bows to his father's will when Ben threatens to withdraw all financial support for his living expenses, his tuition, and the upkeep of his illegitimate son. And so, the courtship begins. Polly is over the moon – this is a dream come true for her. William



appears to play along, but things don't quite go as expected, because William has a few secret plans of his own, which he reveals when he's ready to (if you'll pardon the expression) declare his independence from his father. He dumps Polly, marries Elizabeth (the Tory girl he loves), and returns to America, where he assumes his new position as Royal Governor of New Jersey, and at last shoulders the burden of providing for his illegitimate son, William Temple Franklin (known to friends and family as "Temple"). Ben is furious with William, not just for his defiance, but because he treated Polly so shabbily. Ben has come to regard Polly as his daughter.

From here, as the 1760s fade into the 1770s, Polly fantasizes about the many different ways Elizabeth might die so that Polly and William can be together – all while tracking Ben's diplomatic (and un-diplomatic) efforts in the run-up to the war in America. Just as the first act comes to a close, Temple (now 14 years old) comes to live in the boardinghouse. William has advised him to take up residence there, where Grandpa Ben will see to his material needs. William is no longer able to do so, because his salary, paid by Great Britain's Royal Treasury, is some months in arrears. Something to do with the troubles in America.

Act Two

Act Two opens with the third flashback to the day of the kite experiment (there were two such flashbacks in Act One – the fourth and final kite flashback will occur at the very end of the play). These scenes show Ben and William in an earlier phase of their relationship, before things were quite so contentious. Their discussion of the properties and behavior of lightning resonates with their own choices and actions in the later scenes.

Next, we see Ben in his last months in London. A famous and popular man when he first arrived, he is now considered "too much of an American." Blamed for the unrest in America (not without justification), he is roundly condemned and vilified in the press, and the legal process has been set in motion to have him arrested for treason. He takes Temple out of school, and quietly flees London on a mail packet boat – one step ahead of the constable. By the time they reach America's shores, the battles of Lexington and Concord have taken place. The American Revolution has begun.

Ben takes Temple to spend the summer with his father in New Jersey. Ben and William argue about which side is in the right – the colonists or the mother country. William still hopes that further bloodshed can be avoided, but Ben doesn't think that's possible. With nothing resolved, Ben leaves Temple with his natural father, and heads for Philadelphia, where he will join the Second Continental Congress. During the summer, a bitter, bloody battle takes place outside Boston, at Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill. Casualties are high on both sides, but twice as high for the British. Any illusions about the bloodshed ending soon are gone.

At the end of summer, Ben returns to William's house, to take Temple to Philadelphia for school. He finds William and his wife very stressed out. Rebel activity has ratcheted up in New Jersey over the summer, and William is convinced it's only a matter of time before the rebels kidnap him to be used as a bargaining chip in prisoner exchanges. Ben makes a strong attempt to persuade William to come over to the rebel side, but William refuses. Ben offers William everything he has, if he will cross over. Still William refuses. Ben leaves with Temple, and some very hard feelings toward William.

At this point, the story jumps forward several years. The war has ended. Polly receives a letter from



Ben. As American Ambassador to France, he is being housed in an enormous and beautiful country mansion outside Paris, with lots of rooms going unused, and he invites her to come and stay with him, and be his secretary again, like in the old days.

When Polly arrives in France, she accompanies Ben to the treaty talks. They are discussing Article V of the treaty, which stipulates that America will make reparations to all American Loyalists who had property destroyed or confiscated during the war. Ben takes a hard line against this, and gets his way. The Loyalists will get nothing, and like it.

Back at home, Polly asks about William, and Ben shows her the letter he received from William after he evacuated to London – asking permission to come and visit him in France, and put their past differences behind them. Ben has no intention of allowing this, and no interest in forgiving his son. He wonders – if the British had won the war – if William would have hanged his own father, as readily as he hanged others.

Hanged others? Ben refuses to elaborate, so Polly grills Temple, who tells her about the war crimes William is accused of. Polly can't believe he would do such things, but Temple believes it. Temple thinks he did them, in part, to avenge the death of his wife, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth is dead? Yes, says Temple. William and Elizabeth were separated during the war, and Elizabeth fell ill and died.

Armed with this intelligence, Polly goes to Ben and makes a bold proposal. Suppose Ben and William do as warring nations do – seal the peace by marriage? Ben may give his “daughter” Polly to William, thus healing the rift between them. William and Polly will, at last, start their life together – the life they should have started years ago. Ben is skeptical, but if this is what Polly wants, he's willing to give it a try for her sake.

So, it's all arranged. When Ben returns to America for the final time, he and Polly will stop off to visit William in England. Polly and William will marry, and begin their life together, and Ben will return to America, to live out his life among the adoring people of a grateful new nation. Or so they hope.

Ben and Polly visit William at home, but William is not the man he was. Some of his teeth and hair have fallen out, and he rambles, and is prone to sudden outbursts of emotion – especially rage. He is obsessed with recovering the property he lost during the war, and wants his father's help getting it back. Ben doesn't want to talk about it now – he's going out to visit an old English friend, who he hasn't seen since before the war.

Polly stays with William, and learns he spent almost three years as a prisoner of war, eight months of it in solitary confinement in a hellish prison camp in Connecticut. His physical health was permanently destroyed. It's clear that his mental health was compromised, as well. She asks him about the accusations of war crimes, and he admits to it all, and wishes he had done more.

Polly reconsiders this marriage idea.

The next day, Ben offers to buy William's property from him, at ridiculous prices. William is offended by the offer, which is a fraction of the true market value, but Ben insists that it's a better deal than it looks like, because included in it is the forgiveness of William's debt to Ben. Ben presents him with an account



of the money William owes him, beginning with Temple's expenses, and William's Inns of Court tuition, and his living expenses in London, and then going back, through the years, to America, and back through time to childhood, all the way back to William's birth. To the best of his ability, Ben has drawn up a complete account of every penny he ever spent on William, in the mistaken belief that he was raising his son.

Ben, Temple, and Polly leave William alone, and Polly offers a quick sketch of the last five years of Ben's life, and reveals that he died without ever forgiving his son.

The play ends with a final kite flashback. The experiment is a success, and Ben cuts the kite loose, and they watch it drift away on the wind. The last few lines of dialogue, ostensibly about the kite and the weather, also describe their relationship and the political storms that destroyed it.



Actively Watching - What To Look For

Unlike a novel, where narration tends to show what critical elements the reader should notice, or a film, where camera angles, zoom lenses, and multiple transition and techniques are available to focus your attention; in a live performance, you have to be actively watching to see elements of characters not specifically in the dialogue. There are some things to be aware of that help you find these extra clues over the course of a play.

Common elements: Characters that move alike, who wear similarly styled or colored costumes, or enter the stage in specific ways don't do so by coincidence. A good artistic team (directors and designers working together to support the environment) build these clues in to help the audience make sense of the information overload that comes from being rapidly introduced to multiple people. Those patterns can also reveal other elements of character in addition to relationship with other characters on stage.

Status: A character sitting atop a throne high over their subjects is an obvious sign of someone in power. It's not only positioning on stage that can tell you who is in charge or in control of a given scene. Proximity can be a sign that two people are intimate or are on the verge of exploding into violence. Keeping a third party between two characters is a protective action or an attempt at hiding. Entering from the side of the stage is weaker than entering from upstage. Moving in a diagonal is more actively engaging than sideways, direct lines more so than arcs. Even simply being aware of how characters listen to other characters speak can tell you a lot about what is happening on stage.

Fluidity of time and space: While this sounds like something at the beginning of a lecture on Quantum Mechanics, it's much simpler in its relationship to a stage production. Simply be aware that theatres don't have the ability to describe every physical detail of a new location or to tell you the time. To keep events moving along on stage and the focus on the story, there is rarely a break from the action to change scenery. As a result, the scenery needs to become radically different several times within the duration of the play; smaller elements like a walnut tree, a streetlamp, or a different style chair may be the only physically visible difference on the stage. When this happens, understand that the change represents a difference in place or time from the previous scene. Sometimes this will happen with lights dimmed down and other times it will happen in full view as the dialogue and action continues.

Changes in physicality through the play: In a play that encompasses a long period of time, there are a number of ways to present the change of time in characters. Sometimes, actors apply aging makeup and wear different costumes that represent the change in fashion over time. In other cases, there are changes in their physical movement choices: an older character might no longer stride around the stage, choosing instead to hobble in short segments; or one might stand and sit more carefully and peer through the intervening space as though their vision is no longer as clear. Look for these sorts of things in your efforts to track the passage of time through the production.



Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance. Whispering is still speaking, so only in an emergency.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great.
- Do not whistle or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.



Questions to Ask and Answer - After Seeing the Play

1. Were you able to follow the progression of events, especially through scene and act changes?
2. Did the environment serve the purpose of the play? Did the costumes suit the characters of the play?
3. Did the lighting and sound used in the production enhance the environment of the production?
4. Which characters did you identify with the most?
5. Considering how specialized we often have to be in our career choices today, are you surprised to discover how many different things Ben Franklin did in his lifetime?
6. What would it be like knowing that you are the tenth child and that your family expects you to join the clergy from a young age?
7. What is the part of the play that you least understood? What elements of the script or production confused you?
8. How do you think this play gives you any better insight into the lives of the sorts of individuals who founded our country two centuries ago?
9. How do you think this play gives you better insight into the lives of people today?
10. What would you consider to be the climactic moment of the play?
11. Could this play be placed in a contemporary setting and still work?



Using What You Know to Learn More

This study guide was developed with permission from the playwright for the world premiere, *Of Kites and Kings* at the Sacramento Theatre Company in 2015. Further information was collected from online sources. There are many books about Ben and William for sale online or for loan from your public Library.

Ben Franklin at the History Channel

<http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/benjamin-franklin>

A collection of articles and videos on Franklin and his diplomacy and statesmanship, especially in connection with the founding of the United States.

Wikipedia: Benjamin Franklin

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin

Wikipedia is unusually rich in both breadth and depth with information on Ben Franklin. We might almost suppose that being one of the Founding Fathers of the country lends him some importance and familiarity to the internet population that provides details for this resource.

Ben Franklin at the Biography site

<http://www.biography.com/people/benjamin-franklin-9301234>

Not unlike the History channel, a good collection of Franklin's general nature and his accomplishments can be found in the materials created about him on the Biography site.

Franklin's Autobiography

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20203/20203-h/20203-h.htm>

Long since in public domain, Franklin's own autobiography is available for online reading or download from the Project: Gutenberg site.

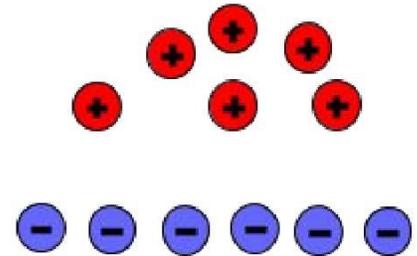


How Lightning Is Created

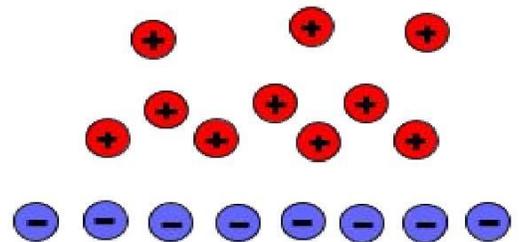
This information provided by The Discovery Museum Science and Space Center of Sacramento



During a storm, water and ice begin to move through the clouds. During this motion multiple collisions begin to happen. These collisions cause electrons to begin separating from particles in the cloud. Once the negatively charged electrons are separated, they collect in the bottom of the cloud, leaving the top of the cloud with a positive charge. The scientific community is still in debate on what causes the separation of charges in the cloud.

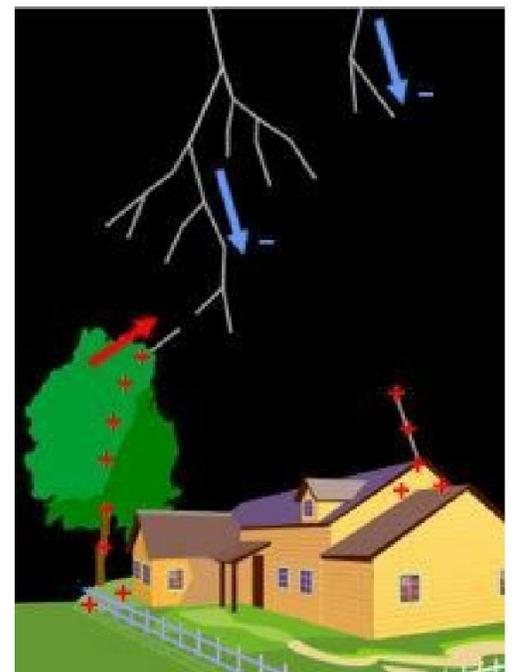


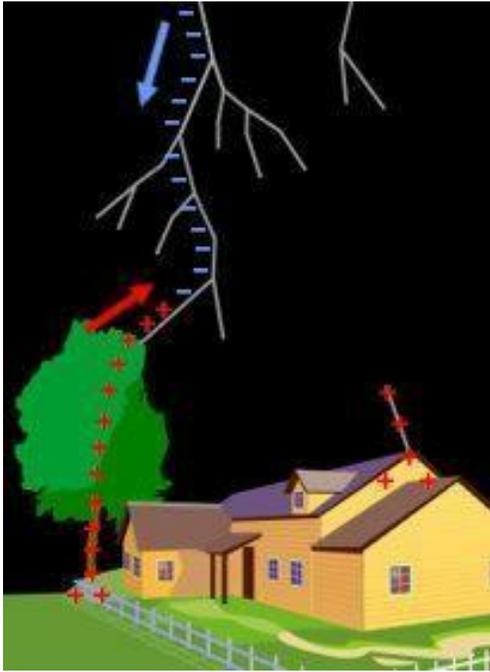
Once the negatively charged electrons are closer to the surface of the earth, it repels the negatively charged particles downwards leaving the positively charged particles near the surface. This happens because similar charges repel each other while opposite charges attract.



The negative charge from the bottom of the cloud begins descending downwards through a channel known as a "stepped leader." This stepped leader is searching for the easiest path to the positive surface of earth.

Meanwhile, the positive charges on the surface of the earth are reaching out towards the negative charge through their own channel known as a "streamer."





Once the stepped leader and the streamer connect, it allows for a current to flow from the cloud to the surface of the earth.

This current flow causes a tremendous amount of heat through these channels which heats up the air around it and causes it to light up. The air that lights up is the lightning that we are able to see.

Because of this process, taller objects tend to be the best target for lightning strikes but are not always the target.

Create your own static electricity detector (Electroscope)

Materials

- Wire
- Aluminum Foil
- Electrical Tape
- Static Electricity Source (Balloon, comb, etc)
- Clear jar or container with lid (if it does not have a lid, one can be made out of cardboard).

Procedures

- Cut 2 small stripes of aluminum foil in rectangles roughly 1 inch by 1/2 inch.
- Make a hole in the lid of your container.
- Curl one end of the wire and hang the aluminum foil strips from this end.
- Stick the curled end of the wire into the container and the other end through the hole in the lid.
- Tape the wire so that the aluminum foil stays suspended inside of the glass jar.



How does it work?

When the electroscope is at rest with no static charge present, the aluminum foil strips will come together like image 1 above. Once a static electric source is introduced to the wire outside the jar, the charge will travel to the aluminum foil charging each strip with the same electric charge causing them to repel like image 2 above.

