



Benjamin Franklin's Bastard

By Sally Cabot
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Questions for Discussion

1. Describe Anne. Do you think she is a woman of her time—or ahead of her time? What is the nature of her connection to Benjamin Franklin? Would you call them friends? Do they love each other?
2. Describe the Benjamin Franklin that emerges from the pages of the novel. Is he a moral man? What does he do to—and for—Anne that reveals his character? What draws him to Anne and to Deborah Read?
3. Talk about the relationship between Benjamin and Deborah. How does it begin and progress as the story unfolds? How does Franklin's ambition affect their relationship? How would you describe Deborah's temperament and her character? How does she compare to Anne?
4. Did Anne do the right thing giving up her son to his father? What might the boy's life have been like if she did not? How would Anne's own life have been affected? Would Anne have been a good mother? How does Deborah react when she learns of William's existence? If their positions were reversed, how would Anne behave? Is Deborah a suitable mother?
5. What was life like for women in colonial days? How are their lives—their relationships, their choices, their needs, their ambitions—portrayed in *Benjamin Franklin's Bastard*? How have things changed for women—and single mothers—today?
6. Do you think Anne is content with her life? Do you think she made the best of things? What choices might Anne have made to make things different? Why can't she let go of her attachment to her son? Should she have found a way to tell him the truth regardless of the cost?
7. Talk about Franklin's relationship with his son, William. What are his expectations for William? What does William want for himself? Are William's choices his own—or driven by forces he cannot ignore or control? Would William have felt better or worse knowing the truth about his birth mother?
8. Compare William's bond with Maude in London with Franklin's bond with Anne. Would you call the Franklin men womanizers or are they just privileged men of their time?
9. Why does Franklin support the cause of independence yet William does not? What impact does this rift have on their bond?
10. *Benjamin Franklin's Bastard* is a novel of historical fiction. What challenges do you think writers face when interweaving fact and fiction? How does one enhance the other? What drew you or your group to read the novel? Did it match your expectations? What did you take away from reading *Benjamin Franklin's Bastard*?
11. Why do you think Deborah has such a difficult time accepting William? Discuss how much of this problem stems from her relationship with Benjamin and how much from her relationship with William.