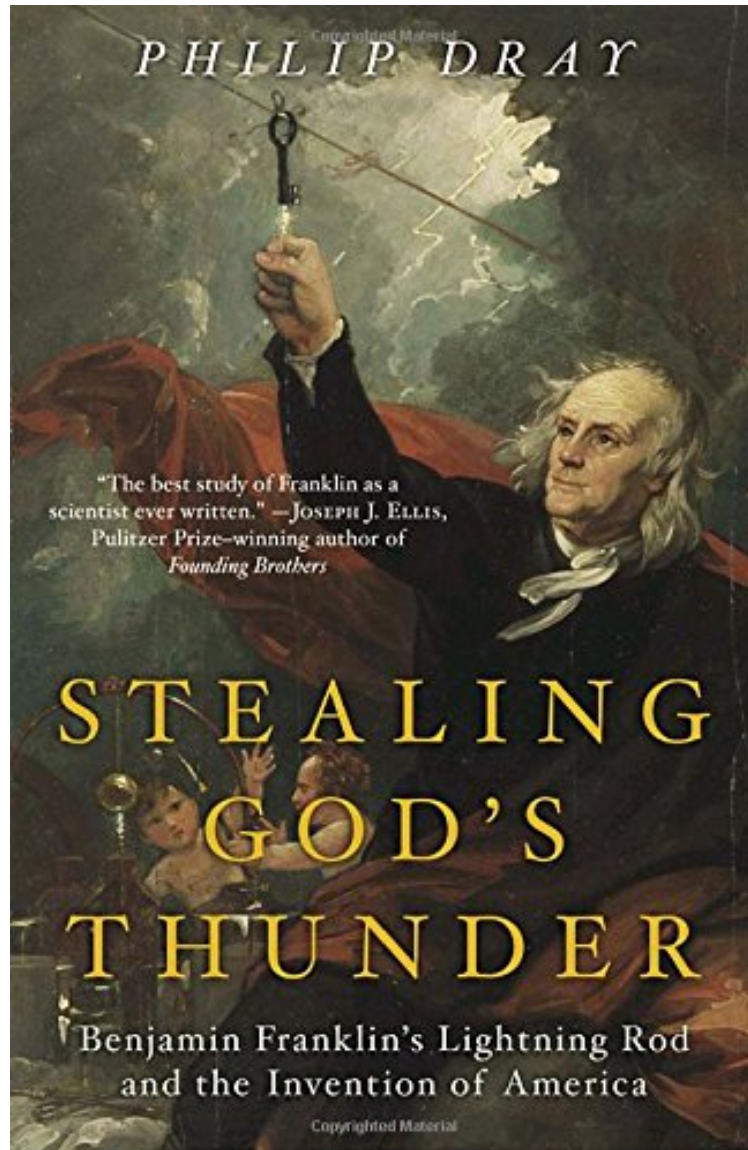


[Download] Stealing God's Thunder: Benjamin Franklin's Lightning Rod and the Invention of America

## Stealing God's Thunder: Benjamin Franklin's Lightning Rod and the Invention of America

*Philip Dray*

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#1080318 in Books Random House Trade Paperbacks 2005-12-27 2005-12-27Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.99 x .68 x 5.231, .56 #File Name: 0812968107304 pages | File size: 21.Mb

**Philip Dray : Stealing God's Thunder: Benjamin Franklin's Lightning Rod and the Invention of America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stealing God's Thunder: Benjamin Franklin's Lightning Rod and the Invention of America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable from start to finishBy KingSonII have read several books

on Franklin, and so even with much knowledge going into reading this one I found the work to be thoroughly enjoyable from start to finish. The author does a good job of giving a basic biographical background while staying on the central theme of the discoveries in electricity. Though there is an underlying, subtle premise which seeks to discount the importance of religion, I found the tone to be more or less free of arrogance and presumption, which is rare for a biography, considering the strong desire of biographers to want to distinguish themselves from others walking the same path. What was particularly delightful to me was the history given of Franklin's time in France, long after his discovery of the lightning rod. The man truly did seem to know everyone important of the time. He was like a Forrest Gump who himself was a tremendously influential man. Many thanks to author; this was a book I didn't want to put down. It had good technical details, but not enough to make you bored. Really felt like I was taken back in time.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Highly entertaining and worth reading for many reasons  
By Barbara Turner  
Great book, and particularly important for a scientist or anyone interested in American history. I read it not long after it was published and just bought another copy for my college student grandson. Thought I knew all about Franklin, but this gave me a far better idea of his place as a scientist. Also led me to read most of his writings. The importance of the invention of the lightning rod is seldom explained, so I was fascinated by that. Highly enjoyable writing style besides.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyed this book  
By Violet  
We read this for book club, although I read a few books about Benjamin Franklin this one concentrated on his scientific pursuits. The discussion on the book was lively, everyone in the book club enjoyed the book even members who didn't want to read another Ben Franklin book.

Dray captures the genius and ingenuity of Franklin's scientific thinking and then does something even more fascinating: He shows how science shaped his diplomacy, politics, and Enlightenment philosophy. Walter Isaacson, author of *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* Today we think of Benjamin Franklin as a founder of American independence who also dabbled in science. But in Franklin's day, the era of Enlightenment, long before he was an eminent statesman, he was famous for his revolutionary scientific work. Pulitzer Prize finalist Philip Dray uses the evolution of Franklin's scientific curiosity and empirical thinking as a metaphor for America's struggle to establish its fundamental values. He recounts how Franklin unlocked one of the greatest natural mysteries of his day, the seemingly unknowable powers of lightning and electricity. Rich in historical detail and based on numerous primary sources, *Stealing God's Thunder* is a fascinating original look at one of our most beloved and complex founding fathers.

From Publishers Weekly  
Starred. Ben Franklin's invention of the lightning rod and his revelation of the mysterious workings of lightning and thunder made him one of the foremost scientists of his day. As Dray, who won the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Book Prize for *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*, points out in this lively and entertaining tale, Franklin made his reputation as a scientist long before he established himself as a statesman. He began his experiments with electricity in the mid-18th century, when numerous European scientists were similarly engaged. Franklin wondered whether the properties of lightning were the same as those of electricity. He established a rodlike device on a hill that attracted lightning from a passing thunderstorm and conducted the current away from houses and farms and into the ground. In 1751, Franklin published a widely popular book on his observations of electricity, which won him admiration throughout Europe. Dray elegantly observes that Franklin was the first to espouse an atomic theory of electricity, which he saw as an elemental force of nature contained in all objects. Dray provides not only a masterful glimpse of this aspect of Franklin's work but also a captivating cultural history of Franklin's America. Bw illus. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist  
Casting Benjamin Franklin as the personification of the Enlightenment, Dray reviews the avuncular Founder's science and inventions, of which the lightning rod is merely the most famous. As background, the author offers the Boston of Puritan Cotton Mather, whom the young Franklin knew and lampooned in his early pamphleteering. The irony, Dray finds, is that the future rationalist was against one advance in progress--inoculation against smallpox--while Mather was for it. Fast-forwarding to the adult Franklin's withdrawal from business to pursue natural philosophy, after having made his fortune, Dray ruminates on Franklin's experiments with electricity, which justly enshrine his name as a great scientist, though Dray admits there is doubt about the veracity of the kite-in-the-thunderstorm experiment (an outright Franklin fraud, according to Tom Tucker's *Bolt of Fate*, 2003). Tracing Franklin's beliefs through science, Dray's congenial history has information that will surprise even veteran Franklin fans. Gilbert Taylor  
Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved  
The best study of Franklin as a scientist ever written. Joseph J. Ellis, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Founding Brothers*  
Absorbing . . . There are other Franklin's the entrepreneur, the diplomat, the statesman, the architect of independence but in Franklin the scientist, Mr. Dray may have found the happiest one of all. *The New York Times*  
Delightful . . . Dray offers a survey of Ben Franklin's scientific career, describing both the ridicule and glory that his experiments inspired. *The Wall Street Journal*  
A masterful glimpse of . . . Franklin's work [and] a captivating cultural history of Franklin's America. Publishers Weekly (starred review)  
[An] illuminating study . . . elegantly written. *Los Angeles Times*