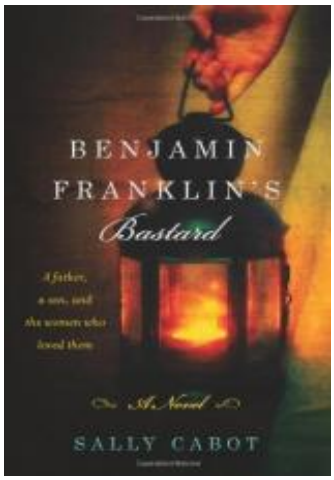
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Benjamin Franklin's Bastard

by Sally Cabot



About the Book

An absorbing and compelling work of literary historical fiction, set in colonial Philadelphia, that brings to life a little-known chapter of the American Revolution --- the story of Benjamin Franklin, his bastard son and the women who loved them.

Sixteen-year-old Anne is an uneducated serving girl at the Penny Pot tavern when she first meets the commanding Benjamin Franklin, and soon bears him a son she names William. But growing up a bastard amid the squalor of the Philadelphia slums isn't the life Anne wants for her boy. She makes a heartbreaking decision to give up William forever, allowing Benjamin and his common-law wife, Deborah, to raise him as their own.

Anne secretly watches out for her beloved child --- as Deborah struggles to accept him --- and takes great pride as William rises to become Royal Governor of New Jersey. But when the colonies begin to fight for independence from the British Crown, William is torn between allegiance to his beloved monarchy and his own father.

A poignant tale of passion, family, love, and war, Benjamin Franklin's Bastard skillfully draws together a remarkable cast of real characters to vividly re-create one of the most thrilling periods of history --- the birth of the American nation.

Discussion Guide

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.

Author Bio

Sally Cabot lives in Brewster, Massachusetts, with her husband, Tom. A lifelong resident of New England, she is active in the local historical society and creates tours that showcase the 300-year history of her village.

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