



The "Respectable" Turkey



When you think of turkeys, you probably think of Thanksgiving, right? But when Benjamin Franklin, one of America's first leaders, thought of turkeys, he thought of the United States! Benjamin Franklin thought that the turkey, rather than the bald eagle, should be a symbol of our nation. In a letter to his daughter Sally, Franklin wrote about why he felt the turkey would make a good symbol. Read part of Benjamin Franklin's letter and decide for yourself which bird better represents the USA!

Benjamin Franklin's Letter to His Daughter Sally

"For my own part I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly. You may have seen him **perched** on some dead tree near the river, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the **labor** of the fishing hawk. And when that **diligent** bird has at length taken a fish, and is bearing it to his nest for the support of his mate and young ones, the bald eagle **pursues** him and takes it from him.

"With all this **Injustice**, he is . . . generally poor and often very lousy. Besides he is a rank **coward**: The little king bird, not bigger than a sparrow, attacks him boldly and drives him out of the district. He is therefore by no means a proper **emblem** for the brave and honest [citizens] of America who have driven all the *King birds* from our country . . .

"The turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird, and . . . a true original **native** of America . . . He is besides, though a little **vain** & silly, a bird of courage, and would not hesitate to attack a **Grenadier** of the British Guards who should presume to invade his farm yard with a red coat on."

Glossary

coward not brave; fearful

labor work

diligent careful and hardworking

native one who is originally from a certain area

emblem symbol

perched sitting or resting

Grenadier soldier

pursues chases

injustice unfairness

vain proud