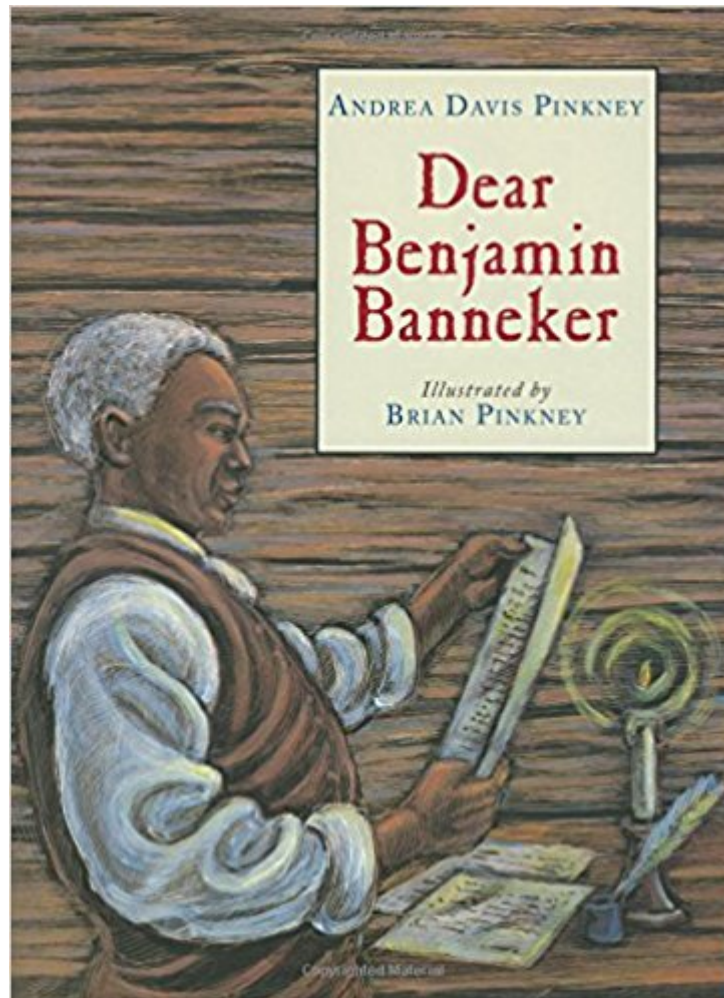




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# Dear Benjamin Banneker



## Synopsis

Throughout his life Banneker was troubled that all blacks were not free. And so, in 1791, he wrote to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, who had signed the Declaration of Independence. Banneker attacked the institution of slavery and dared to call Jefferson a hypocrite for owning slaves.

Jefferson responded. This is the story of Benjamin Banneker--his science, his politics, his morals, and his extraordinary correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. Illustrated in full-page scratchboard and oil paintings by Caldecott Honor artist Brian Pinkney.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1100 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (September 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152018921

ISBN-13: 978-0152018924

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.1 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #142,158 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #115 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary #238 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural #279 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Historical

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Banneker, an 18th-century astronomer and mathematician, was a free African American who corresponded with Thomas Jefferson about ending slavery. In a starred review, PW called this illustrated biography "a memorable portrait." Ages 6-10. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 1-3-This look at the life and times of the 18th-century black scientist is accompanied by Brian Pinkney's full-page masterful and luminous scratchboard/ oil paintings. Andrea Pinkney provides a basic outline of her subject's youth and years as a tobacco farmer, his passion for learning and

interest in astronomy, and his decision to write an almanac. She focuses the account on an exchange of letters in 1791, when Banneker sent a copy of his newly printed almanac to Thomas Jefferson, then U.S. Secretary of State, and chastised him for keeping slaves. The reply sounds like a polite brush-off, and Jefferson made no acknowledgement of the dichotomy between his Declaration of Independence and his ownership of slaves. The quoting of these letters in the prose of the time forces the inclusion of vocabulary and syntax several levels above that of the audience for which the book seems intended. Although the bare-bones details are here, he does not come alive; while the art is lovely, the text offers just a glimpse at this remarkable man's accomplishments. The author states that the publishing of Banneker's almanac "showed everybody that indeed all men are created equal." Since the almanac reached a limited audience, one wonders how many people at the time even knew who Banneker was, or about his ethnic background. Although the book is more accessible to younger readers than Jeri Ferris's *What Are You Figuring Now?* (Carolrhoda, 1988), it may not hold their attention. Martha Rosen, Edgewood School, Scarsdale, NY Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After reading the children's book MOLLY BANNEKEY, I noticed that either the author or the illustrator also had a part in a book about Molly's famous grandson. I have a biography of him for older children, but I am fascinated by these heroes of the African-American background. This adds another to my collection, which I have in a prominent bookshelf for my grandchildren when they come to visit.

Great! He worked closely with my ancestor, Andrew Ellicott.

arrived on time and met expectations

A kids book which contains a lot of good information

I bought *Dear Benjamin Banneker*, because I had read *Molly Bannekey* to my second graders (as part of lessons on "questioning") and my students loved *Molly Bannekey*. At the end of *Molly Bannekey*, she is sitting with a grandson named Benjamin. We wanted to see if this was the same Benjamin - and it was. The content and vocabulary is a little difficult for second graders, but it has some nice tie-ins to Martin Luther King, Jr. and the fight for equal rights. It would also be very

appropriate for immediate grades and studies on colonial America.

The story of Benjamin Banneker as related in this children's book is poignant, with a fine moral lesson. I should know the story better than I do, but what I do know is from this children's book from a fifth grade classroom. Banneker created and published an Almanac, was a student of science and astronomy, and was also a descendant of slaves. He wrote Thomas Jefferson who penned the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created equal," sending with his letter the Almanac he was responsible for publishing, which more or less made unquestionable the equality of intelligence and humanity the African Americans who escaped from slavery, and questioned if Jefferson truly believed the words that he wrote. Why, then did Jefferson continue to have slaves? Jefferson wrote Banneker back, complimenting him, agreeing with him, but at that same time, it is uncertain whether it affected Jefferson's practices in owning slaves. It is not stated that Jefferson mistreated slaves, but still and all, the concept of owning another human being was something that Banneker questioned Jefferson on. A powerful lesson in a simple format, every classroom in the United States, or any other country that has had African slaves, should have this book. Children should know the story and teachers should use this valuable historical lesson.

Good for young learners. Good illustrations

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