

# auto biography of benjamin franklin

**auto biography of benjamin franklin** stands as one of the most influential and insightful personal narratives in American history. This seminal work offers a detailed glimpse into the life of Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, highlighting his journey from humble beginnings to becoming a renowned inventor, statesman, and philosopher. The autobiography not only chronicles Franklin's personal growth but also reflects the values and spirit of the Enlightenment era. Through his own words, readers gain an understanding of his principles, ambitions, and contributions to society. This article will explore the background of the autobiography, key themes and lessons, Franklin's achievements, and the lasting impact of his narrative on literature and American culture.

- Background and Context of the Autobiography
- Early Life and Formative Years
- Career and Major Accomplishments
- Philosophical and Moral Principles
- Impact and Legacy of the Autobiography

## Background and Context of the Autobiography

The auto biography of Benjamin Franklin was written over several years, with the first part composed in 1771 and subsequent sections added later. Franklin began this personal narrative as a letter to his son, William, intending to provide insights into his life's journey and the principles that guided him. The autobiography reflects Franklin's desire to document his experiences and lessons learned as a way to instruct and inspire future generations. It is considered one of the earliest examples of an American autobiography and remains a valuable historical document that illuminates colonial American life and thought.

## Purpose and Audience

Franklin's purpose in writing his autobiography was multifaceted. Primarily, he aimed to provide an honest and instructive account of his life for his son and descendants. Additionally, Franklin wished to share practical wisdom and ethical guidance based on his own experiences. The autobiography was also intended as a demonstration of self-improvement and the power of perseverance, reflecting the Enlightenment ideals of reason and individual

agency.

## **Publication History**

The work was not published in its entirety during Franklin's lifetime. Portions of the autobiography were first released posthumously in 1791, several years after Franklin's death in 1790. Since then, it has been republished and studied extensively, becoming a staple in American literature and history curricula. The text has been translated into multiple languages, underscoring its global significance.

## **Early Life and Formative Years**

The auto biography of Benjamin Franklin provides a vivid account of his early years, beginning with his birth in Boston in 1706. Franklin was the fifteenth of seventeen children in a modest family. His formal education was limited, as he attended school for only a few years before becoming an apprentice to his brother James, a printer. These formative experiences laid the foundation for his lifelong passion for reading, writing, and self-education.

## **Family Background**

Franklin's family was of modest means, with his father working as a candle maker and soap maker. Despite financial constraints, Franklin's parents valued hard work and moral discipline, which influenced his character development. The family environment instilled in him a strong work ethic and a commitment to learning.

## **Apprenticeship and Early Career**

At the age of 12, Franklin began an apprenticeship at his brother's printing shop. This experience was crucial as it introduced him to the world of publishing, writing, and journalism. Franklin honed his skills by writing articles anonymously and later established his own printing business, marking the start of his entrepreneurial ventures.

## **Career and Major Accomplishments**

The auto biography of Benjamin Franklin details the progression of his career, highlighting his multifaceted roles as an inventor, scientist, diplomat, and statesman. Franklin's achievements were vast and diverse, reflecting his insatiable curiosity and dedication to public service.

## **Inventor and Scientist**

Franklin's scientific contributions, especially in the field of electricity, are well documented in his writings. He is credited with inventing the lightning rod, bifocal glasses, and the Franklin stove, among other innovations. His experiments and observations significantly advanced understanding of natural phenomena and practical technology.

## **Political and Diplomatic Roles**

As a statesman, Franklin played a pivotal role in the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. He served as an ambassador to France, securing critical support for the American cause. Franklin was also a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, contributing to the shaping of the nation's governing framework.

## **Publishing and Civic Engagement**

Franklin's career in publishing included founding the Pennsylvania Gazette and Poor Richard's Almanack, which disseminated knowledge and practical advice. His civic contributions extended to establishing institutions such as the first public library in America, the University of Pennsylvania, and the American Philosophical Society.

## **Philosophical and Moral Principles**

The auto biography of Benjamin Franklin is not merely a chronological account but also a reflection on ethics, self-discipline, and personal improvement. Franklin famously outlined a set of virtues he sought to cultivate, demonstrating his belief in continuous self-betterment and rational living.

## **The Thirteen Virtues**

Franklin's thirteen virtues included temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility. He meticulously tracked his progress in these areas, illustrating his commitment to moral perfection and practical wisdom.

- Temperance: Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
- Silence: Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself.
- Order: Let all your things have their places.

- Resolution: Resolve to perform what you ought.
- Frugality: Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself.
- Industry: Lose no time; be always employed in something useful.
- Sincerity: Use no hurtful deceit.
- Justice: Wrong none by doing injuries.
- Moderation: Avoid extremes.
- Cleanliness: Tolerate no uncleanness.
- Tranquility: Be not disturbed at trifles.
- Chastity: Rarely use venery but for health or offspring.
- Humility: Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

## **Self-Education and Lifelong Learning**

Franklin's emphasis on education extended beyond formal schooling. His autobiography details his practices of reading widely, engaging in intellectual societies, and fostering curiosity. This approach to learning was groundbreaking at the time and remains influential today.

## **Impact and Legacy of the Autobiography**

The auto biography of Benjamin Franklin has had a profound influence on American literature, culture, and identity. It is widely regarded as a foundational text that embodies the American Dream and Enlightenment ideals. Franklin's story of self-made success and ethical living continues to inspire readers worldwide.

## **Influence on American Literature**

Franklin's autobiography set a precedent for American autobiographical writing, emphasizing honesty, practicality, and individualism. It helped establish a uniquely American literary voice that celebrated personal achievement and democratic values.

## **Educational and Cultural Significance**

The autobiography is frequently included in educational curricula to illustrate early American history and philosophy. It provides valuable insights into colonial society and the mindset of one of its most important figures.

## **Enduring Inspiration**

Benjamin Franklin's life story, as told through his own words, continues to serve as a model for self-improvement, civic responsibility, and intellectual curiosity. His autobiography remains a timeless resource for understanding the principles that shaped the United States.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the 'Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin' about?**

The 'Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin' is a memoir written by Franklin that details his early life, work, and personal philosophy, providing insight into his rise from humble beginnings to becoming a prominent American statesman and inventor.

### **When was the 'Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin' written?**

Benjamin Franklin began writing his autobiography in 1771 and continued revising it intermittently until shortly before his death in 1790.

### **Why is Benjamin Franklin's autobiography considered important?**

It is considered important because it offers a first-person account of 18th-century American life and embodies the ideals of self-improvement, industriousness, and civic responsibility, influencing American culture and literature.

### **What themes are explored in Franklin's autobiography?**

The autobiography explores themes such as self-education, moral improvement, hard work, perseverance, and the pursuit of happiness and virtue.

## Is the 'Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin' complete?

No, the autobiography is incomplete; Franklin did not finish it before his death, and some sections are missing or were never written.

## Where can I read the 'Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin'?

The autobiography is widely available online for free through sites like Project Gutenberg, as well as in print editions from various publishers and in many libraries.

## Additional Resources

### 1. *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*

This biography by Walter Isaacson offers a comprehensive look at Franklin's multifaceted life as a founding father, inventor, writer, and diplomat. It explores his early years, scientific achievements, and pivotal role in American independence. The book provides rich historical context alongside Franklin's personal and professional accomplishments.

### 2. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

Franklin's own memoir, this classic autobiography provides insight into his life from his youth to his early political career. It highlights his values of hard work, education, and civic responsibility. The text remains one of the most influential personal narratives in American literature.

### 3. *Benjamin Franklin: The Religious Life of a Founding Father*

This book delves into Franklin's spiritual beliefs and how they influenced his public and private life. It examines his complex relationship with religion, morality, and ethics throughout his lifetime. The author uncovers a less-discussed aspect of Franklin's character.

### 4. *Benjamin Franklin and the Birth of America*

Author H.W. Brands traces Franklin's contributions to the founding of the United States, focusing on his diplomatic efforts and political philosophy. The book situates Franklin within the broader revolutionary era. It also covers his scientific experiments and inventions.

### 5. *Young Benjamin Franklin: The Birth of Ingenuity*

This narrative focuses on Franklin's formative years, exploring how his early experiences shaped his inventive mind and ambitious spirit. It highlights his struggles as a printer's apprentice and his rise to prominence. The book is ideal for readers interested in Franklin's youth and early career.

### 6. *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*

H.W. Brands presents a detailed portrait of Franklin's diverse roles in

society, from scientist to statesman. The biography covers his personal life, intellectual pursuits, and political achievements. It paints Franklin as a quintessential figure in American history.

#### 7. *Benjamin Franklin's Genius: Insights from His Autobiography*

This analytical book breaks down the lessons and philosophies embedded within Franklin's autobiography. It provides a closer look at his principles of self-improvement and pragmatism. Readers gain practical wisdom alongside historical knowledge.

#### 8. *Franklin: The Essential Founding Father*

This concise biography distills Franklin's life into key events and achievements, making it accessible for general readers. It emphasizes his role in shaping American identity and governance. The book balances personal anecdotes with historical milestones.

#### 9. *Benjamin Franklin's Letters: A Window into His Life*

This collection compiles Franklin's correspondence, revealing his thoughts, relationships, and wit. Through his letters, readers get an intimate view of his character and the times he lived in. The book complements his autobiography by offering additional personal perspectives.

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