

Ben franklin vs henry david thoreau assignment

[History](#)



When a person thinks about the United States of America, things like our freedom, our rights, our system of government, and our pride come to mind. American is said to be the greatest nation in the world from those who live here and from those around the world who are seeking to make it their home as well. The United States is looked to for protection it times of trouble and for hope in times of desperation. But what really made us the greatest country in the world?

Some say it is our military trench and our capability to protect ourselves and others prove that we are the best, while others say it is our system of democracy. However, it is all of the people who inhabit it that really define our level of greatness. All of the individuals who have ever lived in America, from its founding to present day, have helped shape the ideas that make American what it is. These ideas have been constantly changing and will change for as long as America exists. Benjamin Franklin and Henry David Thoreau were two individuals that helped shaped American identity, character, and thought onto what it is today.

Benjamin Franklin is one of the most well-known individuals in American history, and for good reason. He was a signer of the Constitution and also made advancements in science that lead to technology that we use and take for granted each and every day. Signing the U. S. Constitution “[capped] an illustrious career as scientist and diplomat” (Driers). He was a great writer as well, “ whose wisdom was leavened by wit” (Saturday Evening Post). In his *A Way to Wealth* and in all of his almanacs, he gave some very useful advice that people can even use today.

He warned against pride, folly, and idleness and mentioned that in the end, they will cost more than taxes (Norton 221). Benjamin Franklin was a Deist, and believed in works and he wanted others to do good as well, hence all of his motivational sayings in his writings. He wrote his autobiography and filled it with his routines to make people realize that there are only twenty-four hours in a day, and they must be used wisely. He believed that everyone should wake up ready to begin the day. He said to be productive, a person must to get out and work- " early to bed and early to rise, makes a man lately, wealthy, and wise" (Norton 221). Prudence and diligence were his main rules" (Saturday Evening Post). Not only did Franklin wish to help individuals better themselves, but he also wanted to stimulate America as a whole. " Franklin, along with Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, botanist John Bertram, and physician Benjamin Rush, all sought to foster utilitarian knowledge in hopes of enhancing the economic, political, and social character of colonial America. These prescient thinkers secured the values of the mechanic, artisan, engineer, and inventor in American society. "

(Liposuction).

Benjamin Franklin was a key figure in the Age of Reason, where people began to think by reason and not by revelation. The Age of Reason was a crucial time for the American identity because people began to respect humanity and value maturity. Many of his ideas were based on reason, making him a vital part of American identity because we still use his ideas today. Henry David Thoreau was a writer out of the Romantic time period. He wrote Walden which outlined a two year and two month period of his life

where we lived in a cabin in the woods. He wanted to illustrate the benefits of a simplified lifestyle.

He believed that a person is better off in nature than in a society where everyone is trying to conform to the rules it bears. One quote out of Walden states “ It would be easier for them to hobble to town with a broken leg than with a broken pantaloons” He is saying that in society, man is much more concerned with the way that other people see him. His health and well-being are pushed aside because society forces us to prove our identity when really it is being stripped away. (Norton 855). He said in Civil Disobedience, “ government is best which governs least” and “ This American

Government,- what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some integrity? It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more if the government had not sometimes got in its way’ (Thoreau). Thoreau wanted people to be in nature and see the beauty that lies in it. He believed that in nature, one could find higher power and be completely absorbed in a divine being.

Thoreau ideas seemed far-fetched, but he inspired one of the greatest peace seekers in history. Mahatma Ghanaian was influenced by the writings of Thoreau (Slate) and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Was as well (USA Today). However, he did not influence American identity as much as the two whom admired him, he only spoke of government holding it back from its true

potential. The greatest way that he did shape America was his idea that individuality is key. He wanted people to find themselves away from the world so they could find their true potential without any outside factors.

The idea that everyone is unique and special still entities today. Benjamin Franklin and Henry Davis Thoreau both aim for self-improvement. Henry David Thoreau wants to better himself and put himself as far away from society as possible. Benjamin Franklin however, wants people to improve themselves for the betterment of the group, or the United States of America. It would be difficult to say that Henry David Thoreau helped shape the idea of American identity, character, and thought more than Benjamin Franklin did. Franklin wrote about how to be a well- rounded person and used himself as an example.

He loved the United States of America and wanted it to be as strong as possible and inhabited with people who were just as passionate about their home as he was. Henry David Thoreau despised civilization and all aspects of government, which is what America was founded upon. Some say that Franklin was very prideful, but he always admits his mistakes he made and this shows that self-improvement is always best. The United States is always trying to be better than we were the day before, so this is a major contribution that Franklin gave to American identity and thought.

The United States of America has so many great qualities that make it a great place to all home, and for a number of different reasons. Not only are we militarily strong, we have a strong democracy, we have freedoms that so many people do not, and we are united through everything. The U. S. Is a

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melting pot of cultures, ideas, and values that shaped us into the most appealing country in our world. The thoughts, character, and identity of the U. S. Are constantly changing, and so are the people who create it. A person could be as influential as Franklin or Thoreau, or as small as an innocent child.