

Benjamin franklin and me influences ideals and directions admission essay

[Countries](#), [England](#)



If I were to select an historical figure that has had the most vibrant and direct impact on me, it would be Benjamin Franklin. An American inventor, politician, philosopher and innovator, he is a figure whose resolve and imagination I have perpetually admired. He never rested, moving from discipline to discipline in an attempt to master all of them. He held an immense curiosity about the world around him, both in nature and in his fellow man. That type of altruism and sense of exploration is something I have held dear to myself, and hope I can merely come close to emulating.

Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706 to a candlemaker, Josiah, and his wife Abiah. While he took to candlemaking, Franklin noted that it was simply not enough for him, and so he moved on to becoming educated. Franklin praised the pursuit of knowledge, and it is something that he held very closely to his own principles - he once said that " the Library afforded me the Means of Improvement by Constant Study, for which I set apart an hour or two each Day, and this repair'd in some Degree the Loss of the Learned Education my Father once intended for me" (Franklin, p. 64).

Franklin's first real passionate work was as an apprentice at Boston's The New England Courant; despite this low position, he started to write letters and sign them with a different name - Silence Dogood. His strong opinions and perspectives on the concept of suffrage and women's rights led the fictional Dogood to notoriety, eventually giving that fame to Franklin once he revealed that he was the real author (Ushistory. org). It is this willingness to do whatever it took to make sure his opinion was heard that inspires me to keep an open mind and speak it proudly.

Franklin was also a prolific writer; his essays, letters and texts are all brimming with insight and imagination. He wrote thousands of articles for various newspapers, publishing his own (The Pennsylvania Gazette) in 1728. In it, he railed against society's ills, proposing his own reforms and making observations on how things could be done better. It was the Dogood letters writ large, without any sort of censorship or disguise. He also started Poor Richard's Almanack, an annual tome filled to the brim with proverbs and weather forecasts, dispensing his wisdom upon anyone who would listen. What's more, Franklin's own autobiography is a detailed and honest appraisal of his life that is held up as a template of the autobiography itself.

In addition to his writing, Franklin contributed greatly to the American Enlightenment, pioneering several new scientific discoveries and inventions. The bifocal glasses provided an easy way for individuals with eye conditions to read and see both near and far away. The catheter permits people lacking bladder control to safely urinate, particularly in a hospital setting. The metal lined fireplace known as the Franklin stove also made cooking food and heating a home more efficient; all of these inventions helped simplify American life and revolutionize many technologies that stemmed from them (Isaacson, p. 2).

Obviously, Franklin's most well known scientific achievement is the discovery of electricity, particularly as it exists naturally. He posited that there were "some intriguing similarities between electrical sparks and lightning," deciding that lightning strikes were some form of electrical charge, and proceeding to perform an experiment (Isaacson, p. 37). During a

thunderstorm, Franklin tied the infamous key to the kite, and when the lightning struck the key and shocked him, he was able to support the idea that lightning carried electricity. From there, he developed the lightning rod, meant to attract lightning so that it would not strike houses or people. It turned out to be a huge success, and the discovery of electricity came from this writer and inventor who simply had an idea and ran with it. That type of inspiration is incredible, and something I wish to incorporate in my daily life.

Despite all of these fantastic achievements, he never patented any of them. According to Franklin, “ as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously” (Franklin, p. 55). This sort of altruism and complete faith in the future of mankind is something that is sorely lacking in today’s world of entitlement and restitution, where no good deed goes unpunished. I firmly hold to the principles of helping others for its own sake, and Franklin’s altruism is a fantastic example of that.

Franklin’s political activism helped pave the way for the American Revolution, and for that every citizen of America owes him a great debt. Early in his life, he went up the ladder in Pennsylvania politics, eventually landing in the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1751 (Franklin, p. 287). After a long and storied career in politics, even traveling and working abroad in England and France, Franklin exacerbated the tensions between England and America by releasing the Hutchinson letters, letters which showed that London intended to provide further restrictions on Bostonian freedoms and rights. Franklin soon went back to Pennsylvania in 1775 in order to help draft

the Declaration of Independence as part of the Second Continental Congress (Franklin, p. 451). While there, he was made the first Postmaster General of the United States, as the Continental Congress also established the United States Post Office for the first time. This position was not new to Franklin, who had acted as a postmaster before. He helped to pioneer the basics of the United States postal system, yet another in a long line of innovations that remain to this day.

Even in his last days, Franklin was a political activist, signing a Congressional petition to abolish slavery eight weeks before he died (Sahlman, 2011). This incredible interest in justice and fairness, particularly for one's own people and country, was evidence of an amazing politician and diplomat. He engaged with the issues at hand and enacted changes to help his fellow Americans; all throughout his life, he never gave up on the issues that mattered to him, including equal rights for women and minorities. It is these values that I share and wish to uphold with the same vigor and enthusiasm.

Franklin's diplomatic skills were nothing to balk at, either. His diplomatic achievements include an alliance with France in 1778, which allowed the Americans to get the military assistance and training they needed to win the American Revolution. What's more, the peace treaty in 1783, which he was a part of, helped to ensure the independence of America as a sovereign country. All throughout this process, Franklin racked up considerable expenses for the French people, to the point where France became so deep in debt that the factors led to the French Revolution. In a way, Franklin

brought about two revolutions, though the French one was indirect (Hale, 1902).

His travels took him to England and France for the majority of his time away from America, acting as an “agent...for four of the provincial governments,” acting as a de facto ambassador for the colonies (Hale, p. 12). While he was there, he continued to act in America’s best interests, opposing the Stamp Act of 1765, and he visited France in 1767, where he was met with deserved fame, due to the notoriety he gained as the discoverer of electricity; he even got to meet Louis XV (Isaacson, p. 226). France absolutely loved Franklin for his scientific prowess, as well they should have; Franklin was recognized there to the point where the country was full of “pictures, busts, medallions of the illustrious American” (Franklin, p. 493). It is seemingly for this reason that he remained in France, committing himself to nine years in the country, focusing on trade treaties and further enhancing his image (Sahlman, 2011).

In spite of all this, perhaps one of the most interesting facets of Franklin’s persona was his gregarious and lively personality. Franklin always possessed a “gregarious personality and fascination with human nature...he appreciated tales about people’s foibles and behavior, and he understood why others did as well” (Isaacson, p. 71). Despite all of the amusement he brought people in his writings and his personal interactions, however, he never turned on anyone; despite a very well-reasoned argument for gossip in one article he wrote for the Gazette, he “resolved to speak ill of nobody” (Isaacson, p. 71).

He typically exercised everything in moderation, including drinking; while he

enjoyed the occasional drip and enjoyed taverns, he nonetheless refused to drink heavily, stating that it would interfere with one's industriousness. As for his sex life, he recognized that he had a larger than normal libido, which he sought to curb despite his enjoyment of the act (Isaacson, p. 80). This manner of moderated behavior, as well as his personable nature, is inspiring to me, and I would like a glimmer of Franklin's charisma to rub off on me and inspire my interactions with others.

Benjamin Franklin is an absolute inspiration to me. His history and achievements rival many people even living today, and his status as a Renaissance Man inspires me to be all I can be. Franklin was fascinated by the entire world and all facets of it, and his boundless resourcefulness and spirit allowed him to follow his dreams, becoming a pivotal part of American history from the most humble beginnings. His vast intelligence, savvy, and worldliness make me want to be a better person each day, and I can only hope to follow in his fine example. His pursuits toward knowledge, history and diplomacy are all proof that one man can accomplish incredible things if he simply puts forth the time and effort. Renaissance Men can still exist; I hope to become one of them in his stead.

Works Cited

Franklin, Benjamin. An autobiography of Benzamin Franklin: with illustrations & original photographs.. New Delhi: Adarsh Books :, 2009. Print.

Hale, E. E.. Modern Achievement. Vol. 6 . Washington: General Books LLC, 1902. Print.

Isaacson, Walter. Benjamin Franklin: an American life. New York: Simon &

<https://assignbuster.com/benjamin-franklin-and-me-influences-ideals-and-directions-admission-essay/>

Schuster, 2003. Print.

" Quick Biography of Benjamin Franklin." ushistory. org. N. p., n. d. Web. 8 June 2011. .

Sahlman, Rachel. " SPECTRUM Biographies - Benjamin Franklin." IncWell. N. p., n. d. Web. 8 June 2011. .