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[History](#), [American History](#)



Chloe Roden Mr. Boesch English III 28 November 2012 Character Analysis

From forming a nation to a man on the moon, Americans have always believed in the possibility of progress. Progress can be measured in many ways—technological, financial, educational, social, and even spiritual. Just as Benjamin Franklin invented devices to improve the quality of life in America, he also tried to invent a moral “ machine” to improve the quality of his own character. In his autobiography, “ Ben Franklin’s Autobiography, ” Benjamin Franklin illustrates the difficulties of achieving overall perfection by means of improving one’s morals and quality of life, in regard to his own character. Benjamin Franklin thought improving his character would simplify his life, making everything much easier. Therefore, he created a list of virtues that seemed necessary to him at that moment in time, in order to reach his goal. Each virtue was listed with the standards to clarify, “ These names of virtues, with their precepts, were: 1. Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation, 2. Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation, 3. Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time, 4. Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve. ” Only four of the thirteen listed, it shows Franklin’s ideas on how he decides to achieve his perfect character. Without the successes of one virtue listed, Franklin cannot accomplish any others. “ My intention being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone through the thirteen. ” Franklin’s expectations are very

high; he is willing to work on one virtue at a time, perfecting it until it is perfect, and then allowing himself to move to another. Benjamin Franklin was a very driven, logical individual. Franklin believed that helping others would help him improve his own personal character. In the excerpt, there is one part that conveys his generosity. " I gave the people...for my passage... who at first refused it.... but I insisted on their taking it. A man being sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps through fear of being thought to have but little. " Franklin gave money to those people even though he had little left for himself. He thought doing good for others, not being selfish and greedy like other people, would help him improve his desired character. Benjamin Franklin was a very ambitious, determined person. When he set his mind to complete something, he would in the end, no issue regarding time. " I determined to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively... committed...respecting that virtue. " Franklin thought by improving his own character, he would be able to help everyone that needed it. Many people try and achieve perfection, but only a few people actually do succeed. Although many people may have a different definition of perfection, it is not impossible to reach. Benjamin Franklin takes moral perfection to the next level. He changes his personality and way of life, in order to reach his so called perfection. By improving his own character, Benjamin Franklin was able to help others live happy lives, showing others that if they set their mind they could achieve anything.