

# Benjamin franklin's satire

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



Benjamin Franklin, a prominent actor of the 18th century political scene and one of Founding Fathers of the United States. Owing to his diplomatic talents, Franklin represented the interests of the colony in the British Royal Court. His interests, however, were diverse and included literature as well as writing tracts and political articles.

Being aware of the necessity of nurturing tolerance to and acceptance of individuals of different cultural backgrounds in the new independent state, Franklin created a number of satirical works, dedicated to multiculturalism. In order to support his general argument in favor of the diversity policy, the author uses numerous literary techniques, including comparison/contrast, characterization and tone, which the present paper is designed to analyze.

"Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America" (1784) contain a number of instances of comparison and contrast, intended as the tools of demonstrating that the culture of Native Americans is valuable equally to the colonists' mode of life, in spite of the distinctions: "Savages we call them, because their Manners differ from ours, which we think the Perfection of Civility, they think the same of theirs" (Franklin, at <http://www.mith2.umd.edu>, 2005, par. 1). As one can interpret, the author observes that the so-called savages also have their own national and cultural dignity, despite the dissimilarity of their lifestyle.

In addition, the scholar implies that the cultural patterns, learned early in the childhood, are actually used as most appropriate and suitable, regardless of the existing cultural context the person enters (Wright, 1990). It needs to be noted that the author wisely approaches to the comparison of cultures and mentions such dimensions (or criteria) as the views on governance, <https://assignbuster.com/benjamin-franklins-satire/>

social life, ethics and morality as well as gender roles. Thus, discussing the two perspectives on governance, the author first and foremost claims that the political power in the Native society doesn't have the apparatus of compulsion and law enforcement.

Neither has it any units of punishment. Due to the fact that the author also observes that all members of these communities are perfectly knowledgeable about their roles, freedoms and responsibilities, such units appear needless, so the author implies his positive surprise with such a microcosm, as the 19th century American society was greatly dependent upon countless regulations and thus complicated in nature, whereas the Native Americans, as one can interpret the argument, construct no weighty superstructures and simplify their political life, which is, however, described as "democratic" (Lemay, 1986, p.

91). For instance, everyone, with no exceptions, is allowed to participate in councils: "Having frequent occasions to hold public Councils, they have acquired great Order and Decency in conducting them. The old Men sit in the foremost Ranks, the warriors in the next, and the Women and children in the hindmost" (Franklin, at <http://www.mith2.umd.edu>, 2005, par. 3). This strict order is never violated, as opposed to the atmosphere in the British House of Commons, in which "havoc and confusion" (Wright, 1990, p.

264) often act as the major components. Furthermore, the savages, as the author observes, always manage to allocate time for both job and leisure and their spiritual development is therefore never-ending, whereas it is recognized that the American institutions are "slavish and base" (Franklin, at <http://www.mith2.umd.edu>, 2005, par. 3) in terms of the frames of the <https://assignbuster.com/benjamin-franklins-satire/>

personal freedom and spare time. Thus, the society, depicted in the tract, has the advantage of the constant self-improvement, in contrast to New England.

In his sense, the writer allows his contemporaries to look at the Native community from a different angle: they are not lazy or poorly civilized, but rather treasure the value of freedom and thus avoid any institutionalizations and bureaucracies (Lemay, 1986). The final key point of comparison is ethos and social norms of politeness in the groups of the "savages". In fact, all of them are strictly organized and extremely polite in interpersonal, social and international relations: for instance, it is unacceptable to interrupt the speaker during meetings, so everyone keeps silence.

On the contrary, in the House of Commons, "scarce a Day passes without some Confusion, that makes the speaker hoarse in calling to order" (Franklin, at <http://www.mith2.umd.edu>, 2005, par. 4). Furthermore, the "savages" are very patient to the other religions, conversely to New English missionaries, who persistently impose Christian beliefs upon the aboriginal communities. Thus, the author implies that instead of judging the ethics of the other culture, it is necessary to correct the imperfections in the existing norms in the "civilized" society.

Characterization is used in order to increase the attractiveness of the Native culture or promote it to the reasonable degree. Notably, the most important terms of characterization are capitalized, so that it is clear which qualities are emphasized (Wright, 1990): "By this means they indeed avoid Disputes, but then it becomes difficult to know their Minds, or what Impression you make upon them" (Franklin, 2005, par. 4). Therefore, one can underline the <https://assignbuster.com/benjamin-franklins-satire/>

following qualities of the indigenous individuals: patience, self-control and interest in common peace.

The most prominent point of characterization, used by the author, is the enthusiastic and inspiring description of their hospitality and generosity. It is clear from the writing that they provide their guests with the best facilities available, moreover, their principles ban them from attacking guests unless they behave violently. In this sense, the author implies that the visitors, in turn, not always appreciate warm welcomes, referring probably to the first encounter between colonists and the Natives, celebrated nowadays as the Thanksgiving Day.

Finally, the humorous tone of particular episodes determines the absurdity of the English educational and religious programs, "kindly offered" (Wright, 1990, p. 266) to the indigenous society. One of the stories, for instance, describe the uselessness of the enlightenment (in the Western understanding) of the Natives: "Several of our Young People were formerly brought up at the college of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods..." (Franklin, 2005, par. 3).

As one can understand, the efforts towards educating the Natives without teaching them the natural life skills appears ridiculous. Another interesting narrative depicts a Swedish Minister, who tries to address the Biblical legend about the Creation in his lecture, but the practical and level-headed Natives respond that Eve acted unreasonably when eating apples as she could have done cider of them. Thus, the Christian mission is also fallible, as the tribes have much older and more usable religious and spiritual doctrines, which

have conditioned their survival in the wilderness and supported them in their daily routines.

To sum up, the use of contrast and comparison, as one can conclude from the analysis, is determined by the author's willingness to show that the conceptual paradigm of the Native society equally deserves its existence and recognition, instead of the " Savages" label. Characterization as a technique is employed in order to create a positive emotional impression of the indigenous community as a group of hospitable, tolerant and broad-minded people.

Finally, episodes of particularly humorous tone are included so that the ineptitude of the government efforts towards " civilizing" the tribes is emphasized. Works cited Franklin, B. " Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America". 28 June 2005, Lemay, J. The Canon of Benjamin Franklin, 1722-1776: New Attributions and Reconsiderations. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986. Wright, E. Benjamin Franklin: His Life as He Wrote It. Cambridge: HarvardUniversity Press, 1990.