

Good example of frederick douglass and benjamin franklin essay

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



The classic American myth of rags-to-riches can be seen in the lives of Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass. These self-made aspects of their lives can be seen in the narratives of the stories of their lives. Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass became very successful in achieving their goals. Their lives paint a clear picture of self-made individuals who fought odds in their lives and struggled to become famous and highly revered individuals in America. Even though they were separated, by time, place and circumstances, the two writers had a similar chronology of life events in their narratives. Benjamin Franklin is an important figure in American history and is often regarded to as the “ first American” due to the roles he played in the liberation and independence of America. Through his efforts of self-improvement, Benjamin Franklin studied and taught himself to be of moral behavior, industrious and socially perfect so as to gain success in life. Frederick Douglass, on the other hand, was one of the most respected writers and speakers of his time. Douglass was born into slavery and had a much more difficult childhood as compared to Benjamin Franklin. From a very young age, Frederick Douglass knew that he was a slave. His tribulations in life and the various hardships gave him the impetus and ambition to face his challenges and become successful in life. He was more than determined to come out of slavery and initiate activism against slavery. Both Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass fought for freedom of some sort, with Franklin fighting for American freedom and Douglass fighting slavery. Benjamin Franklin fought slavery but he was not an abolitionist like Frederick Douglass. Despite their differences in family life, obvious racial differences and different time periods, Benjamin Franklin and Frederick

Douglass' lives were similar in a way. Their stories are composed of life events and encounters with hardships, but they struggled and strived for success and in the end they became successful in achieving their goals. They are classic examples of self-made men.

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and The Narrative of Frederick Douglass are composed of a series of life events and hardship encounters that eventually led them to success. Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass followed the pathways of self-motivation, hard work and self-improvement to gain success and become people of great importance to the American society. In their rise from insignificance and anonymity to fame, Franklin and Douglass had challenges in their respective journeys in life. They were born into humble beginnings without many opportunities to succeed in life. Benjamin Franklin was born to an average-class family and had seventeen siblings. As a result of this, he had to rely on self-motivation and his desire for self-improvement when growing up. Frederick Douglass, on the other hand, was born to a slave mother that he rarely saw during his childhood. For a fact, he saw his mother only a number time before she finally died. Douglass never knew his white father but often suspected his master. Douglass suspected that his master had offered him out to another master to avoid getting into conflicts with his wife with regards to his parentage. Douglass served under a number of masters during his time as a slave, some of whom were kind and others cruel. On many occasions he witnessed many whippings and oppression carried out by the masters and their overseers. Occasionally, he was a victim of the whippings. As a result of the situation they were in, neither Benjamin Franklin nor Frederick Douglass

were satisfied with their poor and low conditions and always thought of means to liberate them and have a better life. They both knew the value of self-motivation and self-improvement as the course to a bright future. In their quest for freedom and success, they found out that education was also an important tool.

In the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, the concept of self-made men is vividly captured. The basic idea of the concept, as depicted in the book, is that a person of low origins or low life beats all the odds and struggles out of his low life situation to achieve a new and successful identity (Lynch, 7). For his case, Franklin, a son of a candle maker, beat all the odds in his life to become a renowned scientist, writer, a powerful politician and patriot, and a highly successful businessman. From his autobiography, it can be noted that the key constituents to Benjamin Franklin's success in various fields are hard work, desire for self-improvement, self-education and having a steadfast moral character (Lynch, 9). Franklin mainly stresses on the value of education, self-improvement and industriousness to be successful in life (Franklin, 8). Franklin describes his way from being a mere and poor son of a candle maker to one of the most successful businessman and highly acknowledged members of the American society. Although he was born in an average family background, Benjamin Franklin fought the odds to succeed in life, a classic example of being a self-made man.

Benjamin Franklin was born to a simple average family and was the fifteenth out of the seventeen offspring. His family was slightly abusive, as his bother often abused him physically. He states " for his blows of his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me" (Franklin, 9) After only two years in school,

Benjamin Franklin's father decided that he could no longer support his education because of the limited finances and hence he had to drop out of school. Franklin retreated to his father's candle making trade. From an early age, Franklin showed an early inclination towards being a scholar. He often disliked his father's trade of candle making and as a result he was sent to his uncle to work as an apprentice under his uncle, who was a painter. This move enabled him to feed his huge appetite for reading and model his own writing style.

At the age of 12 years, he was already working as a printer and sold papers and pamphlets to people in the streets of Boston. This showed his enterprising and industrious nature from an early age. By the time he was 15 years of age, he had turned out to be a popular and witty columnist and often penned his articles under the pseudonym Silence Dogood. Benjamin Franklin ran away from home after having enough of his strained and relationship with his older brother, James. Eventually he took up a job as a printer in Philadelphia. He quickly rose among the ranks to become the owner of the printing press. Franklin in the autobiography reminds us of how industrious and self-reliant he was. He stated ". the library afforded me the means of improvement by constant study" " my industry in business continued" (Franklin, 61). Franklin's life reflected his personal beliefs in self-improvement. He constantly sought to himself in terms of his thinking, health and lifestyle.

As an apprentice at his brother's printing shop, he decide to improve his writing skills and abilities. He states that he studied the writings of the authors he liked and copied their writing styles in his own essays. He went

further to rewrite the works of famous authors of that time, in a bid to improve them. Although he had spent little time in grammar school, he learnt primarily by replicating what he thought was good from his readings. He developed his skills from the prominent writers of that time, many of whom shaped his views on a number of topics including politics. Such moves of self-improvement greatly improved his writing skills and abilities making one of the most respected writers of his time. Not only was Benjamin Franklin an avid reader, but he also liked to discuss what he read. He formed the Junto as a forum by which they could discuss and explore intellectual topics. Franklin knew very well that this was a sure way of expanding his knowledge on a number of topics and a way by which he could write concrete argumentative essays (Benjamin, 21). Franklin leveraged on the diversity of the Junto to expand his education. Benjamin Franklin also engaged in lifelong learning. During his travels to different countries, he met with the greatest minds, scientists and scholars alike, and learnt from them through discussions. He went further to learn a number of foreign languages including French. At an early age, he had learnt swimming when swimming was not widely known. Benjamin Franklin also embarked on a moral perfection journey as he believed it was a path towards his success. He had resolved to turn around his behavior by avoiding extravagance, being honest and sincere in his actions, being industrious in his businesses and never to speak ill of others. As it can be seen, Benjamin Franklin's desire for self-improvement, hard work, industrious nature and self-education catapulted him to greater success in his life (Lynch, 10). His determinations made him become a 'renaissance man' given that he was able to paint, write and

pursue business interests.

In the Narrative of Frederick Douglass, Douglass paints a picture of the horrific acts that happened in his life and the horrific period America was in. Slavery was rife in most parts of America, and being a black-American, he was a victim. Frederick Douglass family life was shattered to a point that he could not even know his real age. He states “ I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it” (Douglass, 21). Frederick Douglass documents the significant events hardships he had to encounter as a slave before he finally became a respected and successful person. Frederick Douglass came out from the shackles of slavery and poverty to become one of the most a highly respected newspaper, author and one of the most renowned abolitionists (Martin, 4). Frederick Douglass that whatever he had achieved despite the various problems he had encountered could easily be achieved by another person given the same circumstances he was in. The narrative is an account of how Frederick Douglass forged his own freedom through will and shrewdness. Frederick Douglass’ life is another classic example of a self-made man.

Frederick Douglass came to the realization of the power of knowledge from a very young age. He was seven years of age when he was sent to work under his master’s brother-in-law, High Auld, in the city of Baltimore. Mrs. Auld, who had never owned a slave before, was particularly kind to Douglass.’ She was kinder than any other master that Douglass had worked under. Mrs. Auld often sympathized with Frederick Douglass and began teaching him how to read. She had barely covered a few letters, when High auld became aware of what she was doing. He became infuriated of her actions and forbade her

from conducting any other lessons to Douglass. High Auld stated that “ he would become unmanageable, and of no value to the master” (Douglass, 14) He further stated that it would not make him any happier but only discontented with what he was going through. When Douglass heard the words of High Auld, he quickly realized the value of written language as a means of negotiating power with the white men. From that point onwards, he began taking control of his own life. In fact, this was the turning point for Frederick Douglass. He realized that the only way to gain his freedom and end slavery was through self-betterment, particularly education. Douglass stated, “ from that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom” (Douglass, 32). Douglass realized that education was the only way by which he could gain his freedom from slavery.

Frederick Douglass was able to piece his own education through self-motivation. Building on what Mrs. Auld had started; Frederick Douglass vowed to gain knowledge at all costs. Douglass engaged in bribing poor white boys with food as he ran his errands in his master’s city. In exchange, he would obtain lessons from them; which to him were much more valuable than food. Douglass became fond of those boys and felt gratitude for them for their occasional tutorials as they had innocently seen the evils of slavery. Determined to hone his writing skills, he utilized his master’s son copybooks and emulated the writings. Having gained new skills, he decided to put them to work by occasionally reading newspapers and books such as “ The Columbian Orator”. This particular book not only served as his lesson plan but also as a new viewpoint by which slaves can be put into the positions of power. The book broadened his mind and expounded his knowledge.

Douglass was aware that he could not be found reading the book as it would have led to severe punishment. The more Frederick Douglass read, the more he abhorred slavery and detested his conditions. At one point, he decided to display his independence engaging a slave breaker in a fight. The newly acquired knowledge revealed to him the truth that had been held from him for a long time, and as a result he began of thinking of ways to escape. Eventually, Frederick Douglass escaped to New York despite the fear of being caught by his masters. In New York, he found the help of David Ruggles. Douglass married a free black woman and moved further North to New Bedford where he planned to build his life. Upon arrival to New Bedford, he worked with vigor as a caulker and happily prospered. Once Douglass had saved enough money, he subscribed to an abolitionist periodical “The Liberator” that played an important role in shaping his views. Frederick Douglass became so moved by the articles to a point that he became inspired to work as an activist for the many others who had not escaped the bondage of slavery (Martin, 10). It was at this point that he began his history as an abolitionist orator. Douglass turned out to be one of the fiercest abolitionists and an evangelist for work and continuous self-improvement. He was later to be recognized as a very vocal abolitionist, a defender of justice and equal rights and a supporter of feminism. He later became one of the trusted advisors of Abraham Lincoln. Frederick Douglass is another classical example of a ‘self-made’ man given that he fought the odds of slavery to become one of the most respected people in America.

Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass are perfect examples of the self-made men concept. Although faced with a number of challenges during their

lifetime, none of them was ready to relent and accept failure or surrender to fate. Through the self-motivation, self-education and the burning desire to ‘self-improve,’ they fought the odds and became successful in their pursuits. They went on to become people highly revered by the Americans. To this date, they hold a special place in American history and their legacies have continued to live on.

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