

ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE WORKS OF FRANKLIN

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT:

ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received:07.02.2025

Revised: 08.02.2025

Accepted:09.02.2025

KEYWORDS:

Enlightenment,
education,
Autobiography,
philosopher, self-
improvement

This work explores the theme of Enlightenment in the writings of Benjamin Franklin, emphasizing his contributions to the intellectual movement of the 18th century. The study examines Franklin's essays, letters, and Autobiography to highlight his advocacy for reason, self-improvement, and scientific inquiry key Enlightenment ideals. Particular attention is given to his views on education, morality, and civic responsibility, demonstrating how he applied Enlightenment ideals.

INTRODUCTION. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement of the 18th century that emphasized reason, scientific inquiry, individualism, and progress. One of its most influential figures in America was Benjamin Franklin, a polymath whose writings and actions embodied the core ideals of the era. Franklin was not only a scientist and inventor but also a statesman, philosopher, and writer, deeply engaged in shaping the intellectual and political landscape of his time. His works reflect the Enlightenment's emphasis on rational thought, self-improvement, and civic responsibility. In *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, he outlines his pursuit of moral perfection and lifelong learning, illustrating the Enlightenment belief in human progress. His essays and letters promote the values of education, scientific discovery, and practical knowledge, reinforcing his commitment to reason over superstition. This study examines how Franklin's writings encapsulate Enlightenment ideals, particularly in their emphasis on rationalism, virtue, and societal reform. By analyzing his contributions to literature, politics, and science, this work aims to

demonstrate how Franklin helped shape the intellectual foundations of both America and the broader Enlightenment movement.

FAMOUS PEOPLE OF ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD

The Enlightenment period, also known as the Age of Reason, was an intellectual and philosophical movement that emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries. It emphasized reason, scientific inquiry, individual liberty, and the questioning of traditional authority. Many influential figures played a vital role in shaping modern philosophy, politics, and science during this era.

One of the most notable thinkers was John Locke, an English philosopher who introduced the concept of natural rights—life, liberty, and property—and argued that governments should exist with the consent of the governed. His ideas heavily influenced modern democracy and the development of constitutional governments.

Another key figure was Voltaire, a French writer and philosopher known for his sharp wit and advocacy for freedom of speech, religious tolerance, and civil liberties. His criticisms of the Catholic Church and absolutist monarchy contributed to revolutionary ideas across Europe.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau further expanded on political philosophy by emphasizing social equality and the idea of the "general will," which later influenced the French Revolution. Meanwhile, Baron de Montesquieu developed the principle of the separation of powers, which became a cornerstone of many modern democratic governments, including the United States.

In the realm of science, Isaac Newton revolutionized the way people understood the natural world with his laws of motion and universal gravitation, laying the foundation for classical physics. Additionally, Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, explored the nature of human reason and morality, proposing that enlightenment comes from individuals thinking freely and critically.

Francis Bacon, English philosopher, statesman, orator and scientist. Bacon is considered the “father of empiricism” for his work and advocacy of scientific method and methodical scientific inquiry in investigating scientific phenomena. He encouraged an empirical approach both through his own example and philosophically. A key figure in the Scientific Revolution of the 17th Century.

Thomas Jefferson was an American Founding Father and the principal author of The Declaration of Independence(1776). In this declaration, Jefferson laid out the fundamental principles of America, calling for equality and liberty. He also advocated ending slavery and promoting religious tolerance.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the American Founding Fathers of the United States. He was an author, politician, diplomat, scientist, and statesman. He was a key figure in the American Enlightenment, which saw major breakthroughs in science and ideas of political republicanism. Franklin was an early supporter of colonial unity and the United States.

The ideas of these Enlightenment thinkers challenged traditional norms, inspiring revolutions, promoting democratic ideals, and shaping the political and scientific advancements that continue to influence society today.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AS AN EMBODIMENT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE 18TH CENTURY.

Benjamin franklin was a key figure in what is sometimes called “ the American Enlightenment”. Like his counterpart among the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, Franklin was urbane, transcontinental, and interested in the sciences and invention. Politically, he was a humanist, meaning that he believed that problems could be solved by rational thinking and that secularism was always preferable to theocracy, or a government ruled by a dominant church.

Franklin invented early swim fins, bifocals, and the Franklin stove , an iron furnace that was safer and more efficient than other wood stoves. He authored Poor Richard’s Almanack, a father’s guide that published from 1732 to 1758 under the pseudonym, Richard Saunders. He also published his autobiography after his death, which revealed his early commitment to discipline as well as his work in printmaking.

Franklin was an important American scientist, inventor, and printer who was part of the larger Enlightenment, or Age of Reason. The enlightenment was an international conversation of ideas that took place in the eighteenth century to increase and classify knowledge about the natural world and human condition through reason and experimentation. Scientist and other thinkers joined learned

scientific societies, corresponded with one another, and published their discoveries in scientific journals. Their goals were to improve society and humanity.

Although Franklin made plenty of money from his printing, he also believed his work served a greater civic and humane purpose. Newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets were like little beacons of light, spreading knowledge among citizens throughout the land. Printing also helped keep government from becoming corrupt. Franklin remembered how, in 1733, authorities had dragged the New York newspaperman John Peter Zenger into court for criticizing the royal governor, William Cosby. Zenger's newspaper published articles suggesting that the governor had fired colonial justices who refused to increase his salary. Zenger was found not guilty of libel in the landmark case for freedom of the press. However, colonial authorities continued their attempts to censor newspapers. Franklin knew he had to be clever in using satire and anonymously written pieces if he were to criticize the government in print.

AN IMPORTANT AMERICAN SCIENTIST, INVENTOR, AND PRINTER.

Benjamin Franklin, one of America's most iconic Founding fathers, was a polymath of unparalleled magnitude. His extraordinary life spanned the 18th century and encompassed an astonishing array of achievements and contributions to society.

From his early days as a printer's apprentice to his prominent role in the American Revolution and his groundbreaking scientific discoveries, Franklin's life was a testament to the power of determination, curiosity, and innovation.

Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706, in Boston, Massachusetts. He was the fifteenth of seventeen children, born to a humble candle maker, Josiah Franklin, and his second wife, Abiah Folger. Despite limited formal education, Franklin's insatiable curiosity led him to a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

At the age of 12, he began working as an apprentice in his older brother's printing shop, where he honed his skills in the printing trade.

The Printing Business and "Poor Richard's Almanack"

In 1723, Franklin left Boston and settled in Philadelphia, where he established himself as a printer and publisher. He created "The Pennsylvania Gazette" a widely

read newspaper, and gained prominence for his annual publication, “Poor Richard’s Almanack”.

Public Service and Political Career

Benjamin Franklin was also a dedicated public servant. He served as the Postmaster of Philadelphia, and later as the Deputy Postmaster General for North America, revolutionizing mail delivery services. His commitment to public welfare extended to his role as a diplomat, representing American interests in France and helping secure crucial French support during the American Revolution.

The American Revolution and the Founding Documents During the American Revolution, Franklin played a pivotal role as a diplomat and statesman. He was a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document that declared America’s independence from British rule. Franklin’s wisdom and diplomacy were instrumental in forging critical alliances with France, securing crucial support for the American cause.

Later Years and Legacy

In his later years, Franklin continued to be active in various scientific, civic, and political endeavors. He passed away on April 17, 1790, at the age of 84.

His legacy lives on in the numerous institutions, inventions, and ideas he left behind, such as the University of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the American Philosophical Society.

The life of Benjamin Franklin is a remarkable story. From humble beginnings, he rose to become a celebrated polymath whose contributions to science, literature, and politics left an indelible mark on American history.

His enduring legacy reminds us of the power of determination, intellectual curiosity, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge.

His life and legacy of scientific and political achievement, and his status as one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, have seen Franklin honored for more than two centuries after his death on the \$100 bill and in the names of warships, many towns and counties, educational institutions and corporations, as well as in numerous cultural references and a portrait in the Oval Office. His more than 30,000 letters and documents have been collected in The Papers of Benjamin Franklin. Anne Robert

Jacques Turgot said of him: "Eripuit fulmen cœlo, mox sceptrum tyrannis" ("He snatched lightning from the sky and the scepter from tyrants").

Conclusion: Benjamin Franklin was a key figure of the Enlightenment in America, embodying its ideals through his contributions to science, politics, and philosophy. His works reflected the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, experimentation, and social progress. As a scientist, he conducted groundbreaking experiments with electricity, demonstrating the power of observation and rational inquiry. As a writer and thinker, his works, such as *Poor Richard's Almanack*, promoted practical wisdom, self-improvement, and civic responsibility. Politically, Franklin played a crucial role in shaping democratic ideals, advocating for liberty, education, and diplomacy. His participation in drafting the U.S. Constitution and his belief in government for the people reflected Enlightenment principles of democracy and human rights. Ultimately, Franklin's works and legacy exemplify how Enlightenment thought shaped the foundations of modern America, reinforcing the values of reason, innovation, and freedom that continue to influence society today.

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