



A Benjamin Franklin Reader

Walter Isaacson

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Selected and annotated by the author of the acclaimed *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, this collection of Franklin's writings shows why he was the bestselling author of his day and remains America's favorite Founder and wit.

As a twelve-year-old apprentice in his brother's print shop, Benjamin Franklin taught himself to be a writer by taking notes on the works of great essayists such as Addison and Steele, jumbling them up, and then trying to recreate them in his own words. By that method, he recalled in his *Autobiography*, he was encouraged to think he might become a "tolerable" writer. In fact, he became the best, most popular, and most influential writer in colonial America. His direct and practical prose shaped America's democratic character, and his homespun humor gave birth to the nation's unique brand of crackerbarrel wisdom.

This book collects dozens of Franklin's delight-ful essays and letters, along with a complete version of his *Autobiography*. It includes an introductory essay exploring Franklin's life and impact as a writer, and each piece is accompanied by a preface and notes that provide background, context, and analysis. Through the writings and the introductory essays, the reader can trace the development of Franklin's thinking, along with the birth of the nation he and his pen helped to invent.

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