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## Benjamin franklin an american life by walter isaacson free pdf

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Franklin's most read full-length biography. -John Ferling, Washington Post Book of the World Walter Isaacson gave us Ben Franklin for ages. In this wondrous, groundbreaking book, Franklin stands on the center stage in the drama of America's founding, where he has long deserved to stand. The reader will fall in love with this highly spiritual, larger-than-life character, who, above all the founders, was the most devoted in practice and in theory - to the common man. - Doris Kearns Goodwin (Doris Kearns Goodwin) a solid new biography... Isaacson's account of Franklin's diplomacy that created, first, the alliance with France that made American victory possible, and secondly, the peace treaty that confirmed victory is the most complete in any of Franklin's biography of the clearest and most accurate, and perhaps the most interesting, biography of Franklin since his own autobiography of the founding father about 200 years ago. -Ted Dreiter, in a Saturday night post Isaacson wrote a biography worthy of his theme, with a simple, direct tone that his subject would most likely have approved. This volume is well documented, but it also walks, making it both distracting and informative. -Tracey Lee Simmons, the National Review Man we meet in Benjamin Franklin-funny, pragmatic, and self-aware, seems to be one of us, or at least someone we'd like to be . . . It's cool. - Malcolm Jones, Newsweek Benjamin Franklin is the first course of a popular biography, worthy of David McCullough's best-strength-deeply researched and written in prose that is accessible, friendly and clever. The book of labor love is about the most attractive, and important, guy. -Bob Frost, San Jose Mercury News Marvelous . . . A fascinating one-volume review of Franklin, which should be on the reading list of those interested in the years leading up to and immediately after the founding of our country. -Bob Van Brocklin, Sunday Oregonian Isaacson's vivid and readable narrative gives a clear account of Franklin's scientific work, his extraordinary career as a social innovator, his writings as a diplomat and statesman, and the vagaries of his love life. -Robin Blackburn, nation invigorating . . . A fresh and organic story about Franklin's life... Isaacson's narration is lively, thoroughly researched and well-developed, easily moving from science and philosophy to the frivolity of Franklin's Parisian years to its famous hundredth humor. -David Takami, Seattle Times With his exhaustive research, set out in a simple and readable manner, with its comprehensive applications His many insightful and surprising conclusions about his era, Isaacson's book is extremely useful as an important study for those interested in the dawn of the American mind. -Charlie Mount, Forbes Walter Isaacson understands that spin is the essence of Franklin, and so in his extremely read new biography he builds his portrait around the skills of a great diplomat for myth-making and subterfuge. This is not a revisionist biography, but a celebratory one depicting Franklin as, among other things, America's first public relations genius... An irreplaceable and very interesting addition to the long afterlife of Benjamin Franklin. - John Freeman, Cleveland Plain dealer Isaacson produced an entertaining, compassionate, and evenhanded glimpse into the mind and life of our most representative founding father . . . Settle down with a copy of his biography of Franklin and rediscover what being an American is really all about. - Dorman T. Schindler, Denver Post Franklin is the centerpiece, and he couldn't be more alive, accessible, practical and winking. -Patrick Beach, Austin U.S.-State Persuasive . . . Isaacson is an experienced writer and he tells a wonderful story. The book is abundantly researched, but she wears her scholarship easily. The writing, whether about diplomatic negotiations or scientific experiments, is clear, straightforward, and even humorous-touch Franklin would appreciate. Scientists and non-professional readers will appreciate this nuance and thoughtful volume. Terry W. Hartle. The Christian Science Monitor's Benjamin Franklin, was the most experienced man of his age. This is the meaning of Walter Isaacson's excellently written and most executed account and assessment of this man. He said with great pleasure, facts that have a purpose and a point, anecdotes that are revealing and reliable. As poor Richard might have said: Only the truly great among us deserve a really great book about us. Both Isaacson's subject and the book meet this test. Jim Lehrer has thoroughly researched and clearly ... This balanced assessment of Franklin explores his flaws as well as his successes. Warts and the whole approach to Franklin's life humanizes the person, not reduces it . . . Wonderful book... Final. -Mark Horton, Edmonton (Alberta) Magazine Attraction to readers who think of him as a kite-flying dabbler . . . Written in lively, colloquial prose, Benjamin Franklin will appeal to the same great body of readers who made John Adams David McCullough a huge bestseller. Like this book, it transforms marble people into figures of flesh and blood, complex and admirable, if hardly perfect... Good reading. - Fritz Lanham, Houston Chronicle Superb. Isaacson has a keen eye genius man whose fingerprints lie everywhere in our history. -Publishers Weekly (Star) Kissinger: Biography of The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made (with Evan Thomas) Pro and Con CONTENTS Chapter ONE Benjamin Franklin and The Invention of America Chapter Two Chapter EIGHT Troubled Waters: London, 1757-1762 Chapter NINE Home Leave: Philadelphia, 1763-1764 CHAPTER ELEVEN REBEL: London, 1771-1775 WORLD 1775-1776 Chapter THIRTEEN Courtier: Paris, 1776-1778 Chapter 4 Bon Vivant: Paris, 1778-1785 CHAPTER FIFTEEN Peacemaker: Paris, 1778-1785: Philadelphia, 1785-1790 Chapter SEVENTEEN Epilogue CHAPTER EIGHTEEN Conclusions Cast Characters Currency Transformation Confessions Sources and Abbreviations Photos Of Author Illustration Credits Note on Type Notes Index Katie and Betsy as always . . . Head ONE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND THE INVENTION OF AMERICA His arrival in Philadelphia is one of the most famous scenes in autobiographical literature: bedraggled 17-year-old fugitive, cheeky yet with the pretense of humility, straggling off a boat and buying three swollen rolls as he wanders along Market Street. But wait a minute. There's something else. Clean the layer back, and we can see him as a 65-year-old crooked observer sitting in an English country house, writing this scene, pretending to be part of a letter to his son, an illegitimate son who became royal governor with aristocratic pre-claimings and should be reminded of his humble roots. A careful look at the manuscript exfoliates another layer, Inserted in the proposal for the progress of his pilgrim on Market Street is a phrase written in the manuscript exfoliates another layer, Inserted in the proposal for the progress of his pilgrim on Market Street is a phrase written in the manuscript exfoliates another layer. Inserted in the proposal for the progress of his pilgrim on Market Street is a phrase written in the manuscript exfoliates another layer. me and thought that I had done, as I am, of course, the most clumsy funny look. So here we have, in a brief paragraph, a multi-layered character known so fondly to its author as Benjamin Franklin: as a young man, then seen through the eyes of his older self, and then through flashbacks later told by his wife. All this is topped by the old man's deft little statement, as I certainly did, in which his self-deprecation barely hides the pride he felt about his remarkable rise in the world.1 Benjamin Franklin is a founding father who winks at us. George Washington's colleagues found it hard to imagine stern general on his shoulder, and we'll find him even more so today. Jefferson and Adams are just as intimidating. But Ben Franklin, this ambitious urban entrepreneur, seems to be made of flesh, not marble, addresses us from the scene of the story with eyes that shimmered because of these new-fashioned glasses. He speaks to us, through his letters and hoaxes and autobiographies, not with orotund rhetoric, but with a chatty and clever irony that is very modern, sometimes unnerving so. We see its reflection in our time. During his 84-year life, he was America's best scientist, inventor, diplomat, writer and business strategist, and one of the most practical, though not the deepest, political thinkers. He proved by flying the kite that lightning was electricity, and he invented the rod to tame it. He developed bifocal glasses and clean ovens, Gulf Stream graphics and theories about the contagious nature of the common cold. He has launched various civil improvement schemes, such as a credit library, college, volunteer fire corps, insurance association and related grant fundraisers. He helped invent America's unique style of homespun humor and philosophical pragmatism. In foreign policy, he has created an approach that weaves idealism with the realism of the balance of power. And in politics, he proposed fundamental plans to unify the colonies and create a federal model of national government. But the most interesting thing that Franklin invented, and constantly reinvented, was himself. America's first great publicist, he was, in his life and in his writings, consciously trying to create a new American archetype. In the process, he carefully developed his own persona, portrayed him in public, and polished it for posterity. It was partly an image issue. As a young printer in Philadelphia, he ox rolls paper through the streets to give the look of hard work. As an old diplomat in France, he wore a fur hat to portray the role of a sage zakhord. In between, he created an image for himself as a simple but aspiring merchant, diligently honing virtues - diligence, thrift, honesty - a good shopkeeper and reverent member of his community. But the image he created was based on reality. Born and raised a member of the leather apron class, Franklin was, at least for most of his life, more comfortable with artisans and thinkers than with the established elite, and he was allergic to the pomp and perks of hereditary aristocracy. Throughout his life, he treated himself like B. Franklin, a printer. From these views emerged what may be Franklin's most important vision: an American national identity based on the virtues and values of his middle class. Instinctively more comfortable with democracy that later critics would feel towards his own shopkeeping values, he believed in the wisdom of the common man and felt that the new nation would draw its strength from what he called the average people. Through his self-improvement advice for cultivating personal virtues and his civic improvement schemes to improve the common good, he helped create and celebrate a new ruling class of ordinary citizens. The complex interaction between the various aspects of Franklin's character - his ingenuity and unde reflected wisdom, his Protestant ethic, detached from dogma, the principles he held firmly, and those he was willing to compromise - means that every new look at him reflects and refracts the changing values of the nation. He was reviled in romantic periods and lionized in entrepreneurial ones. Each epoch evaluates it anew, and at the same time reveals some assessments of himself. Franklin has a special resonance in The FIRST Century America. A successful publisher and consummate networker with inventive curiosity, he would feel at home in the information revolution, and his unabashed desire to be part of an up-mobile meritocracy made him, according to social critic David Brooks, our founder of Yuppie. We can easily imagine a beer with him after work, showing him how to use the latest digital devices, sharing a business plan for a new venture, and discussing recent political scandals or political ideas. He laughed at the last joke about the priest and the rabbi, or at the farmer's daughter. We would like to relate to the way he tried to balance, sometimes restlessly, the desire for reputation, wealth, earthly virtues and spiritual values. 2 Some who see Franklin's reflection in the modern world are worried about the superficiality of the soul and the spiritual complacency that seems to permeate the culture of materialism. It is said that it teaches us how to live a practical and monetary life, but not a sublime existence. Others see the same reflection and admire the core values of the middle class and the democratic sentiments that now seem to be under attack by the elite, radicals, reactionaries and other bourgeoisie bashers. They see Franklin as a model of personal character and civic virtue that are all too often absent in modern America. Much of the admiration is justified, and so too is some of the remorse. But the lessons of Franklin's life are more difficult than those usually done by either his fans or his enemies. Both sides too often confuse him with the aspiring pilgrim he portrayed in his autobiography. They take his ingenious moral maxims beyond the fundamental religions that his actions. His morality was built on a sincere belief in a virtuous life, serving the country he loved, and hoping to achieve salvation through good deeds. Case, led him to make a connection between private virtue and civic virtue, and to suspect, based on the scant evidence he could have received about God's will, that these earthly virtues were related to heaven. As he put it in the motto of the library he founded, it is divine to contemporaries such as Jonathan Edwards, who believed that people are sinners in the hands of an angry God and that salvation can come through grace alone, this worldview may seem somewhat smug. In some ways it was, but it was also authentic. Whatever point of view you occupy, it is useful to interact with Franklin again, for in doing so we are struggling with a fundamental guestion: how to live a life that is useful, virtuous, worthy, moral and spiritually meaningful? For that matter, which of these attributes is the most important? These questions are as important for the revolutionary. CHAPTER TWO PILGRIM'S PROGRESS Boston, 1706-1723 FRANKLINS ECTON In the late Middle Ages, a new class appeared in the villages of rural England: men who possessed property and wealth but were not members of the titled aristocracy. Proud but without much pretensions, pushy their rights as members of the independent middle class, these libertarians were known as franklins, from the average English word frankeleyn meaning freeman.1 When surnames have purchased currency, families from the upper classes tend to take over the names of their domains, such as Hill or Meadows. Artisans tend to take their name from their labor, whether it's Smith or Taylor or Weaver. And for some families, the descriptor that seemed most appropriate was Franklin. The earliest documented use of this name by one of Benjamin Franklin, born around 1540 in the Northamptonshire village of Acton. His independent spirit became part of the family knowledge. This obscure family of ours was at the beginning of the Reformation, Franklin later wrote, and was sometimes in danger of trouble because of their zeal against popery. When the queen Mary I participated in her bloody crusade to restore the Roman Catholic Church, Thomas Franklin kept the forbidden English Bible tied to the bottom of the chair. The stool could have been turned on its knees so that the Bible could be read aloud, but then instantly hidden whenever the apparial rode. 2 Thomas Franklin's strong but pragmatic independence, along with his clever ingenuity, seems to have been passed down through four generations. The family produced dissenters and nonconformists who were to challenge the authorities, though not before becoming fanatics. They were smart, and inventive blacksmiths with a love of learning. An avid readers and writers, they had deep convictions but knew how to wear them lightly. Sociable by nature, the Franklins tended to become trusted advisers to their neighbors, and they prided themselves on being part of the middle class of independent shopkeepers and merchants and free owners. It may just be the vanity of a biographer to think that a person's character can be illuminated by rummaging among his family roots and pointing to repetitive traits that culminate neatly in the personality at hand. Still, Franklin's family heritage seems like a fruitful place to start research. For some people the most important forming element is the place To appreciate Harry Truman, for example, you have to understand the boundary of nineteenth-century Missouri; Besides, you have to delve into the Hill Country of Texas to understand Lyndon Johnson.3 But Benjamin Franklin wasn't so rooted. His legacy was that people without a place - the younger sons of middleclass artisans, most of whom have made their careers in cities different from their fathers. Thus, it is best understood as a product of the line, not the land. What's more, Franklin thought so, too. I have ever had the pleasure of getting any little anecdotes of my ancestors, reads the introductory sentence in his autobiography. It was a pleasure he would engage when he went to Acton as a middle-aged man to interview distant relatives, research church records, and copy inscriptions from family tombstones. Dissenting streak that ran into his family, he found involved more than just matters of religion. Thomas Franklin's father

was active, according to knowledge, as a lawyer on the side of the common man in a dispute over a practice known as the corps under which the aristocracy landed closed their estates and prevented poor farmers from grazing their herds there. And Thomas's son Henry spent	a year in prison for writing poems that, as
one descendant observed, touched the character of some great man. The propensity to challenge the elite, and write mediocre poems, was to last several more generations. Henry's son Thomas II also exhibited traits that later manifested themselves in his famous grandson. He write and tinker. As a young man, he built a watch from scratch that worked throughout his life. Like his father and grandfather, he became a blacksmith, but in small English villages the blacksmith took on various tasks. According to his nephew, he also practiced to divert the traits that later manifested themselves in his famous grandson. He write and tinker. As a young man, he built a watch from scratch that worked throughout his life. Like his father and grandfather, he became a blacksmith, but in small English villages the blacksmith took on various tasks. According to his nephew, he also practiced to divert the traits.	
gunsmith, surgeon, scrivener, and wrote as beautiful a hand as I had ever seen. He was a historian and had some skills in astronomy and chemistry. His eldest son took over the blacksmithing business and also flourished school owner and Lawyer. But this is the story of the youngest son of younger sons for five generations. Being the last of the litter is often meant to be struck out on your own. For people like the Franklins, it is usually meant to leave villages such as Acton that were too small to support more than one or two practitioners of each transfer.	ounger sons: Benjamin Franklin was the
could secure an apprenticeship. It was not unusual, especially in the Franklin family, for the younger brothers to be an apprentice of the elders. It so happened that Thomas II's youngest son, Josiah Franklin, left Acton in the 1670s in the nearby Oxfordshire market town of Bunb	oury and tied myself to a nice older brother
named John, who opened a shop there as a silk and fabric dye. After the days of Cromwell's protectorate, the restoration under King Charles II led to the brief heyday of the garment industry. While in Bunbury, Josiah was swept up in the second great religious cramp to hit Englisheth: the English church will be Protestant, not Roman Catholic. However, she and her successors subsequently faced pressure from those who wanted to go even further and cleanse the church of all Catholic traces. Puritans like these Calvinist dissenters who advocated	this purge of papal remnants became
known, were particularly vocal in Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. They emphasized congregational self-government, emphasized preaching and studying the Bible over liturgy and ritual, and despised much of the decorations of the Anglican Church as lingering contaminant puritanical views on personal morality, their sect appealed to some of the more intelligent members of the middle class because it emphasized the value of meetings, discussions, sermons, and personal understanding of the Bible. By the time Josiah arrived in Bunbury, the city	was torn apart by the struggle for
puritanism. (During one of the most physical battles, a mob of Puritans toppled the famous Bunbury cross.) The Franklin family was also divided, albeit less bitterly. John and Thomas III remained faithful to the Church of England; their younger brothers, Josiah and Benjamin (so distinguish him from their famous nephew), became dissenters. But Josiah has never been a fanatic in the pursuit of theological disputes. There is no record of any family feud on this issue. RUD INTO WILDERNESS Franklin later claimed that it was the desire to enjoy the enjoy t	oyment of his religion with the freedom that
led his father, Josiah, to emigrate to America. To some extent, it was true. The end of Cromwell's puritanical rule and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 led to restrictions on Puritan believers, and ministers were forced to leave their chairs. Department. Josya's brother, Be attribute the move to economic rather than religious factors. Josiah is not zealous about her faith. He was close to his father and older brother John, both of whom remained Anglicans. All the evidence suggests that that it was the spirit of independence, combined with a kind of	
rather than controlling doctrinal beliefs, that led to the fact that only two Franklins, Benjamin the Elder and Josiah, who became puritans, followed this course, writes Arthur Turtellot, author of a comprehensive book about the first seventeen years of Franklin's life. At the age of Child, and brought her to a friend from Ecton, Ann Child, and brought her to Bedbery. In quick succession, they had three children. With his apprenticeship over, he worked on a paycheck at his brother's shop. But there wasn't enough business to support both Franklin's fast-group.	19 he married a friend from Ecton, Ann
impossible for Josya to go into a new trade without serving another apprenticeship. As Benjamin the Elder said, things that did not succeed there according to his mind, with the vacation of his friends and father he went to New England in 1683. The story of the Franklin family's Franklin, provides a glimpse into the formation of the American character. Among the great romantic myths about America is that, as school textbooks emphasize, the main motive of its settlers was freedom, especially freedom of religion. Like most romantic American myths, it	migration, like the story of Benjamin
seventeenth century wave of puritanical migration to Massachusetts, as in the subsequent migration waves that made America, the journey was primarily a religious pilgrimage that included escaping persecution and achieving freedom. And like most romantic American myths, For many other Puritan migrants, as for many in the subsequent waves, the journey was primarily an economic quest. But to create such a sharp dichotomy is a misconception of Puritans and America. For most Puritans, from the rich John Winthrop to poor Josia Franklin, their	it also obscures some important realities.
considerations of faith and finance. The Massachusetts Bay Colony was eventually created by investors such as Winthrop to be a chartered commercial enterprise, and to create a celestial city on a hill. These Puritans would not make any or different between spiritual and secu	ular motives. For among the useful notions
that they would veil America was a Protestant ethic that taught that religious freedom and economic freedom are linked, that entrepreneurship is a virtue, and that financial success should not impede spiritual salvation. Instead puritan treated the old Puritans. Puritans. The Chu escaping worldly economic problems, and they preached that hard work is a heavenly as well as earthly imperative. What the literary scholar Perry Miller calls the paradox of Puritan materialism and inmatology was not paradoxical for puritans. Making money was a way to glorify the control of the	ify God. As Cotton Mather put it in his famous
Christian sermon in his calling, delivered five years before Franklin was born, it was important to participate in some settled business in which a Christian must spend most of his time so that he could glorify God by doing good for others, and receiving good for himself. The Lord were diligent in his earthly calling and, as poor Richard's almanac later pointed out, helped those who helped themselves. And thus puritanical migration created the basis for some of the characteristics of Benjamin Franklin, and America itself: the belief that spiritual salvation are almost an analysis.	and secular success should not conflict that
hard work is close to piety, and that free thought and free enterprise are inextricably linked. MAN OF SOLID JUDGMENT Josiah Franklin was 25 years old when in August 1683 he went to America with his wife, two toddlers and a girl just a few months. The journey on a land-bapassengers, took more than nine weeks, and it cost the family almost 15 pounds, which was about six months of earnings for a trader such as Josiah. However, it was a reasonable investment. Wages in the New World were two to three times higher and the cost of living was longer than the cost of living was	ower. <sup>9</sup> Demand for brightly colored fabrics
and silk was not great in a border town, especially a Puritan such as Boston. Indeed, wearing clothes that were considered too complex was a legal offence. But unlike England, there was no law requiring a person to serve a long apprenticeship before going into trade. So Josia glamour but much more utility: that of lard chandler, rendering animal fats in candles and soap have just turned from luxury to staples. The odier challenge of making lee out of the ashes and boiling it for hours with fat was one that every considered too complex was a legal offence. But unlike England, there was no law requiring a person to serve a long apprenticeship before going into trade. So Josia	en the most cordial of border housewives
were willing to pay someone else to do. Cattle, once a rarity, have been killed more often, making it possible. However, the trade was uncrowded. One roster of professions in Boston shortly before Josia arrived lists twelve cobblers, eleven tailors, He set up a shop and residence in a rented two-and-a-half-story clapboard house, only thirty-by-twenty, on the corner of Milk Street and High Street (now The first floor was only one room, with a kitchen kitchen separate tiny structure added to the back. Like other Boston homes	
been easier to keep warm, but it was brightly colored to make it more cheerful.1º Across the street was the Southern Church, the newest and most liberal (relatively speaking) of Boston's three Puritan congregations. Josiah was admitted to the Church or allowed to own the cov Membership in the Church was, at least, for the Puritans a social leveller. Although he was simply a struggling merchant, Josiah was able, thanks to his membership in the Southern Church, to make friends with such luminaries of the colony as Simon Bradstreet, once governor	•
and diligent diarist. A trusted and paternalistic figure, Josiah rose to the Puritan/Civil hierarchy of Boston. In 1697 it was used to become a tithe, a name for moral marshals whose job is to ensure attendance and attention at Sunday services and keep an eye on nightwalkers, tip else, aspire to debauchery, non-religiousness, profanity and atheism. Six years later he became a constable, one of eleven people who helped control tithing. Although the posts were unpaid, Josiah practiced the art that his son would be perfect, marrying public virtue with privative	, , ,
the night watchmen whom he oversaw11 In his autobiography Benjamin Franklin gives a lacy description of his father: he had an excellent body constitution, he was of medium stature, but well established and very strong. He was brilliant, able to draw beautifully, a little adept a that when he played psalm melodies on the violin and sang with wa, as he sometimes did in the evening after the day's affair was over, it was very nice to hear. He also had a mechanical genius, and sometimes he was very comfortable using the tools of other merchants. But h	•
understanding and firm judgment in prudential matters, both in private and public affairs I remember well how he was often visited by leading people who consulted with him for his opinion on the affairs of the city or the church He also consulted extensively with individuals a difficulties, and often chose an arbitrator between the warring parties 12 This description was perhaps too generous. It is, after all, in an autobiography designed in part to instill family respect for Benjamin's own son. As we shall see, Josiah, wise though he undoubtedly was, had	about their cases when there were any
son's educational, professional and even poetic aspirations. The most outstanding feature was etched in a phrase, deeply puritanical in its fairyness to both and egalitarianism, which would be inscribed on his tombstone by his son: Hard work in your calling. It came from Josia S 22:29), an excerpt that he will often quote to his son: Seest you are a diligent man in his calling, he will stand before the kings. As Franklin recalled when he was 78, with a wry mixture of light vanity and amused self-awareness that permeates his autobiography, I saw industry finds the control of the contro	Solomon's favorite work of wisdom (Proverbs
distinction, which encouraged me, though I did not think I should ever literally stand before the kings, which, however, has since happened; for I stood before five, and even had the honor of sitting with one, the King of Denmark, for dinner.13 As Josiah prospered, his family grev four years. Such fertility was common among strong and lustful Puritans: the Rev. Samuel Willard, pastor of the southern church, had twenty children; the famous theologian Cotton Mather was fifteen. Children tend to be a resource rather than a burden. They helped around the	w; he will have seventeen children for thirty-
men's affairs.14 To the three children who accompanied them from England, Josiah and Anne Franklin quickly added two more, both of whom lived to adulthood: Josiah Jr., born in 1685, and Anna Jr., born in 1687. Then, however, death struck violently. Three times over the ne Milk Street to burial sites in the southern church: first in 1688 for a newborn son who died five days later; then in 1689 for his wife Anne, who died a week after the birth of another son; then for this son, who died a week later. (A quarter of all Boston newborns at that time died w	ext eighteen months, Josiah marched across
colonial New England to outlive two or three wives. Of the first eighteen women who came to Massachusetts in 1628, for example, fourteen died within a year. Nor was it considered that the husband, who had lost loved ones, had quickly let away with the marriage. In fact, as we economic necessity. At the age of 31, he had five children to raise, trade, usually, and shop to save. He needed her quickly. VIRTUOUS WOMAN Like the Franklins, the Folger family (originally Foulgier) was rebellious but also practical, and to	vith Josia, this was often seen as an
religious and economic anxiety. A descendant of the reformist Flemish Protestants who fled to England in the sixteenth century, the Folgers were among the first wave of emigrants to retreat to Massachusetts when Charles I and his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, beg	gan cracking down on puritans. John Folger's
family, including his 18-year-old son Peter, to Boston in 1635, when the city was only five years old. While traveling over, Peter met the met servant of a girl named Mary Morrill, who was indentation to one of the Puritan ministers on board. Upon their arrival, Peter was able to be as his wife. Inspired by religious and personal freedom, the Folgers were restless over economic opportunities. From Boston, they moved to a new settlement up the river called Dedham, then to Watertown, and finally to Nantucket Island, where Peter became a schoolteacher.	Most of the inhabitants were Indians, and he
learned their language, taught them English and tried (with great success) to convert them to Christianity. Rebellious by nature, he was persecuted and became a Baptist, which meant that the faithful Indians he led to Christianity now had to follow him through a ritual that requiresistance to the power that ran in both the families of Folger and Franklin, Peter was a kind of rebel who was destined to transform colonial America. As court secretary at Nantucket, he was at one point jailed for disobeying a local judge during a struggle between the island's variable.	wealthy shareholders and its growing middle-
class shopkeepers and artisans.15 He also wrote a nearly seditious pamphlet, in verse, sympathising with The Indians during what became known as King Philip's War in 1676. The war, he declared, was the result of God's anger at the intolerance of puritanical ministers in Bost talents: Let the magistrates and ministers/consider what they were doing; / Let them repeal these evil laws/ and break those ties in two. His grandson Benjamin Franklin later said the poem was written with personal freedom and pleasant simplicity.16 Peter and Mary Folger had	ten children, the youngest of whom, Abia,
was born in 1667. When she was 21 and still unmarried, she moved to Boston to live with her older sister and husband, who were members of the Southern Church. Although Abia grew up as a Baptist, she joined the congregation shortly after her arrival. By July 1689, when the went there to bury his wife, Abiya was a faithful parishioner less than five months later, on November 25, 1689, they married. Both were younger children in a large brood. Together they will live to an unusually mature age - to 87 years, to 84 years. And their longevity was one	of many traits that they would hang on to
their famous youngest son, who himself will live to be 84 years old. He was a pious and prudent man, she was a reserved and virtuous woman, Benjamin later inscribed on their tombstone. For the next twelve years, Josia and Abia Franklin had six children: John (born 1690), Posarah (1699) and Ebenezer (1701). With those from Josia's first marriage that made eleven children, still still crammed into a tiny Milk Street house that also contained lard, soap and candle equipment. It may seem impossible to keep a watchful eye on such a large brood in such	
provides tragic evidence that this was the case. When he was 16 months old, Ebenezer drowned in his father's foam bath. Later that year, in 1703, the Franklins had another son, but he also died as a child. Thus, despite the fact that their next son, Benjamin, will spend his yout sisters, the youngest of them will be seven years older than him. And he will have two younger sisters, Lydia (born 1708) and Jane (1712), looking at him. SPUNKY LAD Benjamin Franklin was born and baptized on the same day, On Sunday, January 17, 1706. II Boston was by	
outpost, but a thriving commercial center filled with preachers, merchants, sailors and prostitutes. In its harbor there were more than a thousand ships and seven thousand inhabitants, which is twice as many as every twenty years. As a child growing up alor recalled, a general leader among boys. One of their favorite gathering places was the salt marsh at the mouth of the river, which became a quagmire due to their constant trampling. Under Franklin's leadership, the friends built themselves a marina with stones designed to build	,
workers went home, I gathered a few of my buddies, and we worked hard, like many emmets, sometimes two or three stone until we brought them all to make our little wharf. The next morning he and other criminals were caught and punished. Franklin told the tale in his autobic father's maxim that nothing was useful, that was not honest.18 However, like many of Franklin's attempts at self-deprecation, the anecdote seems less intended to show how bad the boy he was than how good a leader he was. Throughout his life he was proud of his ability to or	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
projects. Franklin's childhood days, playing along the Charles River, also instilled a love of swimming throughout life. As soon as he learned and taught his playmates, he tinkered with ways to get himself to go faster. The size of people's hands and feet, he realized limited how their power movement. So he made two oval palettes, with holes for the thumbs, and (as he explained in a letter to a friend) I also fitted the soles of my feet with a kind of sandal. With these paddles and flippers, he could speed through the water. Kites, as he later famously shown in the soles of my feet with a kind of sandal.	·
air, he undressed, waded into the pond, swam on his back, and he pull it. After that, he's engaged in A boy wearing my clothes around a pond, he recalled, I began to cross a pond with my kite, which carried me completely without the least fatigue and with the greatest pleasure does not include in his autobiography, although he will talk about it more than seventy years later for the amusement of his friends in Paris, happened when he encountered a boy blowing a whistle. Fascinated by the device, he gave up all the coins in his pocket for him. His sible	· · ·
paid four times what it cost. I cried with annoyance, Franklin recalled, and the reflection gave me more distress than the whistle gave me pleasure. Modesty became not only a virtue for him, but also a pleasure. Industry and thrift, he wrote, describing the almanac of poor Richard virtue. 2° When Benjamin was 6 years old, his family moved from a tiny two-team house on Dairy Street, where fourteen children were raised, to a large house and shop in the city centre, on Hanover and Union Streets. His mother was 45 years old, and in the same year (1712)	rd' almanac, are a means of wealth and thus
Jane, who was to become Benjamin's beloved brother and lifelong correspondent. Josia Franklin's new home, coupled with a reduction in the number of children still living with him, allowed him to entertain interesting guests for dinner. At his desk, Benjamin recalled, he liked to or neighbor as often as possible, and he always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for discourse that could improve the minds of his children. The conversations were so fascinating, Franklin claims in his autobiography, that he took little or no notice of what was se	communicate with some reasonable friend
a perfect inattention to food for the rest of his life, a trait he considered great convenience, albeit one that seems to belied by the number of recipes of American and French culinary delights among his papers.21 The new house also allowed the Franklins to accommodate brother England in 1715 when he was 65, and his namesake was 9. Like Josia, the elder Benjamin found the New World inhospitable for his silk coloring craft, but unlike Josia, he had no drive to learn a new profession. So he sat around Franklin's house, writing bad poems (including the	ner Josia Benjamin, who emigrated from
family story, attending and transcribing sermons, entertaining his nephew, and gradually getting up on the nerves of his brother22 Uncle Benjamin stayed with the Franklins for four years, easily reliving his reception with his brother, if not with his nephew. At last he moved in wit immigrated to Boston. Years later, the younger Benjamin would write a write Sister Jane humorously talks about the disputes and misunderstandings that grew up between their father and uncle. The lesson of his father is that visits by distant relatives cannot be short enough for	th his own son Samuel, a cutter who
Richard Franklin's almanac, he later expressed a more pathetic voice: fish and guests stink three days later.23 THE plan for young Benjamin was to force him to study for ministry, the tenth son of Josia, anointed as his tithing to the Lord. Uncle Benjamin was strongly supportive was that he gave him something to do with his stash of second-hand sermons. For decades, he has scouted the best preachers and transcribed their words in a neat abbreviation of his own device. His nephew later remarked, with a curve of entertainment, that he offered to give	e; among the many advantages of this plan
suppose, as a stock to create a s. To prepare him for Harvard, Josiah sent his son at the age of 8 to Boston Latin School, where Cotton Mather studied, and then his son Samuel was enrolled. Although he was one of the least privileged students, Franklin excelled in his first year top and then jumped the class forward. Despite this success, Josiah suddenly changed his mind to send him to Harvard. My father, Franklin wrote, burdened with a large family, could not support the costs of higher education without inconvenience. This economic explanation is	ar, rising from the middle of the class to the
and there were fewer Franklin's children supported at home (only Benjamin and his two younger sisters) than they had for years. There was no study at a Latin school, and as at the top of his class he would easily have won a scholarship to Harvard. Of the forty-three students were fewer Franklin's children supported at home (only Benjamin and his two younger sisters) than they had for years.	who went to college when Franklin would
have, only seven were from wealthy families; ten were the sons of merchants, and four were orphans. The university at the time spent about 11 percent of its budget on financial aid, more than today. 24 Likely was another factor. Josiah certainly believed correctly that his younge Benjamin was skeptical, puckish, curious, irreverent, the type of person who would get a lifelong laugh from his uncle about what would be helpful for a new preacher to start his career with a cache of used sermons. Anecdotes about his youthful intellect and impure nature about the control of t	und, but there are none that show him as
pious or faithful. Just the opposite. The tale, related to his grandson but not included in the autobiography, shows that Franklin is cheeky not only about religion, but also about the verbiage in worship, which was a hallmark of the Puritan faith. Doctor when the child found the long eating very tiringly, his Reported. The day after the winter was salty, I think Father, Benjamin said, if you said Grace all over the barrel - once and for all - it would be a huge saving of time. 25 So Benjamin was enrolled for a year at the Writing and Arithmetic Academy two blocks and the complete the provided with his lock of condense are provided wi	s from the launch of a bland but business
master named George Brownell. Franklin excelled in writing, but not mathematics, a cold-blooded deficit he never completely corrected, and that, combined with his lack of academic training in the field, would eventually condemn him as simply the most ingenious scholar of his of truly profound theorists such as Newton. What would have happened if Franklin had, in fact, received a formal academic education and enrolled at Harvard? Some historians such as Arthur Turtellot argue that he would be deprived of his spontaneity, intuitive literary style, zero than the condition of the c	est, freshness, and uncluttered mind. And
indeed, Harvard has been known to do this and worse to make some of his accusations. But the evidence that Franklin was so hurt is weak and not triumphant before him or Harvard. Given his sceptical turn of mind and his allergy to power, it is unlikely that Franklin would have thirty-nine that were in what would have been his class, less than half eventually joined the clergy. His rebellious nature may have even been reinforced rather than repressed; College administrators were at the time fighting hard with excessive partying, eating and drinking that	infects campus. One aspect of Franklin's
genius was the diversity of his interests, from science to government, diplomacy and journalism, and they all came from a very practical point of view. If he went to Harvard, this diversity in outlook should not have been lost, for a college under the liberal Jo control of the Puritan clergy. By the 1720s, he offered well-known courses in physics, geography, logic and ethics, as well as classics and theology, and the telescope at the top of the Massachusetts Hall made him the center of astronomy. Fortunately, Franklin acquired what we have the top of the Massachusetts hall made him the center of astronomy.	as perhaps as instructive as Harvard
Education: the training and experience of a publisher, printer and newspaper. APPRENTICE At the age of 10, with but two years of training, Franklin went to work full time in his father's candlelight and soap shop, replacing his older brother John, who served his term as an apprachate Rhode Island. It wasn't a pleasant job - skimming, rendered fat from boiling fat boilers, was particularly harmful, and cutting wicks and Franklin made clear his dislike for it. ominously, he expressed his strong penchant for inclination sea,	though his brother Josiah Jr. had recently
been lost in depth. Fearing that his son would be snouting and going out to sea, Josiah took him on long walks around Boston to see other masters, so that he could observe my inclination and seek to fix it on some shopping that would keep me on the ground. This instilled in F and merchants. His fleeting familiarity with a variety of crafts also helped make him an experienced craftsman who served him in a good place as an inventor. Josiah eventually came to the conclusion that Benjamin would be better off as a cutlery by making knives and grinding	blades. So he was, at least for a few days, a
disciple of Uncle Benjamin's uncle's son Samuel. But Samuel demanded an apprenticeship fee that struck Josia as unreasonable, especially given the history of hospitality and aggravation that existed between him and the elder Benjamin <sup>6</sup> Instead, almost by default rather than 1718, at the age of 12, by his brother James, 21, who had recently returned from training in England to set up as a printer. At first, the wayward forge of the young Benjamin shied away from signing the backsliding documents; he was a little older than usual to start an apprentic	ceship, and his brother demanded a nine-
year term instead of the typical seven years. In the end, Benjamin signed a contract, although he was not destined to stay on the sidelines until he was 21. During his time in London, James saw how Grub Street ballads would shoot down odes and hawk them in coffee shops. So pushing type, but also producing poetry. With the support of his uncle, the young Franklin wrote two works based on the news as dealing with the sea: one about a family killed in a boat accident and the other about the murder of a pirate known as Blackbeard. They were, as Franklin wrote two works based on the news as dealing with the sea:	
sold well, which flattered my vanity27 Herman Melville once wrote that Franklin was everything but the poet. His father, not a romantic, actually preferred him that way, and he put an end to Benjamin's verification. My father dissuaded me by making fun of my speeches and telling avoided being a poet, most likely very bad. When Franklin began his apprenticeship, there was only one newspaper in Boston: The Boston News-Letter, which was launched in 1704 by a successful printer named John Campbell, who was also the city's postmaster. Then, as to	
of controlling both content and distribution. Campbell was able to join forces with a network of fellow postmasters running from New Hampshire to Virginia. His books and documents were sent along the route for free - unlike other printers, and postmasters in his network send it Furthermore, since he had held an official position, he could have declared that his article had been published by the authorities, which was an important certification at a time when the press was not proud of independence. The connection between the postmaster and the new	•
Campbell lost his former job, his successor as postmaster, William Brooker, suggested that he would also take over as a newspaper. Campbell, however, held it, prompting Brooker to start, in December 1719, a rival: the Boston Gazette. He hired James Franklin, the cheapest of two years later, James lost his contract to print the paper, and he did something rather audacious. He launched what was then the only truly independent newspaper in the colonies and the first with literary aspirations. His weekly New England Courant is not likely to be published.	of the city's printers, to produce it for him. But
mainly because it contained Benjamin Franklin's first published prose. And James became known as the stern and jealous master described in his brother's autobiography. In fairness, however, Courant should be remembered as America's first fiercely independent newspaper, helped create the nation's tradition of irreverent press. It was the first open attempt to challenge the norm, literary historian Perry Miller wrote.29 Defying power in Boston at the time meant challenging Mathers and the role of puritanical clergy in secular life, a case James took or	, a bold, anti-establishment magazine that
edition. Unfortunately, the battle he chose ended with smallpox vaccination, and he had to choose the wrong side. Smallpox epidemics devastate Massachusetts at regular intervals in the ninety years since its founding. The outbreak of 1677 killed seven hundred people, 12 per epidemic, during which his three children were struck but survived, Cotton Mather began to study the disease. A few years later, he was put into practice vaccinating his black slave, who underwent the procedure in Africa and showed Mather his scar. Mather checked with other	rcent of the population. During the 1702
is standard practice in some parts of Africa. Shortly before James Franklin's Courant debuted in 1721, HMS Seahorse arrived from the West Indies, bringing what would be a new wave of smallpox. Within months, nine hundred out of ten thousand Bostonians will be dead. Math a preacher, sent a letter to ten practitioners in Boston (only one of whom had a medical degree) summarizing his knowledge of African vaccination and urging them to adopt the practice. (Mazer was quite far from the superstitions that led him to support salem's witch hunt.) Mos	ner, who trained as a doctor before becoming
justification other than a desire to bash on the claims of preachers) also the New York Times's James Franklin. The first issue of Courant (August 7, 1721) contained an essay by James' young friend, John Chekley, a cheeky Anglican educated at Oxford. He singled out for his spracticing what is Orthodox, pray against disease, but preach smallpox! The issue also carried a diatribe by the city's only doctor who actually had a medical degree, Dr. William Douglas, who dismissed vaccinations as a practice of Greek old women and called on Mather and h	Sally the Puritan clergy, who, teaching and
gentlemen of piety and teaching deeply unaware of the issue. This was the first example, and reliable, that the newspaper attacked the ruling establishment in America.3º The Increase of Mather, the aging patriarch of the family, thundered, I can't help but feel sorry for poor Fra be fast he has to stand trial the place of God. Cotton Mather, his son, wrote a letter to rival paper denouncing a notorious, scandalous paper called Courant, full-freighted with nonsense, unmanliness, railery, and comparing its investors to a hell-fire club, a well-known clique of description.	anklin, who, though, but a young man, it may
cousin, a preacher named Thomas Walter, weighed in by writing a caustic piece called Anti-Courant. Knowing well that this public spat would sell the paper and want to make a profit on both sides of the argument, James Franklin quite happily took over the job of publishing and	d selling Thomas Walter's rebuttal. However,
the escalating personal nature of the dispute began to bother him. A few weeks later, he announced in an editor's note that he had banned Checkley from his newspaper for being feuding too vindictive. From now on, he promised, Courant would seek to be innocently distracting of graft disputes as long as they were free of malicious reflections. Benjamin Franklin managed to stay away from his brother's smallpox battle with the Mather family, and he never mentioned it in his autobiography or letter, a startling omission that suggests he was not proud a startly supported by account the nationage of influential elders, eventually became a fan of Cott	of the side of the paper. He later became an
ardent supporter of vaccination, painfully and keenly supporting the cause immediately after his 4-year-old son, Francis, died of smallpox in 1736. And he, as an aspiring boy and as an aspiring man who sought the patronage of influential elders, eventually became a fan of Cott acquaintance. BOOKS Printed trade was a natural calling for Franklin. I've loved it since I was a kid. he recalled: and all the little money that came into my hands was benjamin franklin an american life by walter isaacson free pdf	on maser and, a new years later, his

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