

---

## *Literary Autobiography*

---

### **Benjamin Franklin**

#### **Benjamin Franklin's Life**

Born on January 17, 1706 in Boston, Massachusetts, in the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin was a renowned author, political theorist, printer, scientist, inventor, postmaster, statesman, diplomat, and civic activist. He is also known as one of the prominent founding figures of the United States.

Benjamin was the son of a soap maker, Josiah Benjamin. His mother, Abiah Folger, was his father's second wife. Benjamin was the eighth of their ten children. He also had seven stepbrothers and stepsisters from Josiah's marriage to his first wife, Anne Child.

Josiah wanted Ben to become a clergyman. However, Josiah could hardly afford to send him to school for even a year, whereas a clergyman needs several years of schooling and training. Ben's official schooling ended at the age of ten, after two years at Boston Latin School. As Ben loved reading, he became an apprentice to his elder brother, James, a printer by profession. After serving James in composing pamphlets, which was a demanding task, as a 12-year-old boy Ben started selling products in the streets.

When Ben turned 15, his brother James started his first newspaper "The New England Courant" in Boston. There were already two papers in Boston before Courant, but they merely reprinted the news from abroad. James's paper included opinion pieces and articles written by his friends, news of ship schedules, and advertisements. As Ben was gifted with writing talent, and he wanted to write in a paper, he began writing his own letters under a pseudonym. He disguised himself as a widow, Mrs. Silence Dogood, as he feared his brother would not publish his letters if he revealed their true authorship. His writing became popular, and readers were interested to know the real name of the author. When Ben revealed his identity as the true writer of those letters, James was furious and started harassing him. This made him to run away to New York in 1723, from where he left for New Jersey. He finally reached Philadelphia via boat, which is where he met with his future wife, Deborah Read. Ben started living as a paying guest in her father's house.

In 1723, at the age of seventeen, Ben proposed Deborah Read. Deborah was merely 15 years old then. Her mother was not in the favor of their marriage, because Ben was not financially stable. She was also concerned that he was going to London at the request of Governor Sir William Keith. Nevertheless, everything was sorted out, and Ben married Deborah Read in September, 1730. They brought up Ben's young illegitimate son, William Franklin. The identity of William's mother was not made known, but Ben later acknowledged his son publicly.

Gradually, Ben began publishing his works, including "Poor Richard's Almanack," under the fictional name Richard Saunders. His authorship of the book remained a secret. Ben received great fame in writing and also worked in several government posts. Due to his overcommitment in so many fields, his health

deteriorated. His obesity further contributed to bad health, which led to him catching gout. Benjamin succumbed to a pleuritic attack on April 17, 1790.

### **Benjamin Franklin's Works**

Ben wrote profusely. In 1728, he became the publisher of his own printing house by collaborating with Hugh Meredith, and published a newspaper "The Pennsylvania Gazette." In 1733, he published "Poor Richard's Almanack" that contained popular proverbs like "A penny saved is two pence dear." In 1758, Ben printed "Father Abraham's Sermon." He also wrote his autobiography that was published after his death. With the passage of time, Ben became the United States's most prominent literary journalist. He also edited and published his own essays "On Simplicity" and "Lying Shopkeepers" in "The PennsylvaniaGazette."

### **Benjamin Franklin's Style and Popular Poems**

The writing style of Benjamin Franklin was pragmatic, clear, and plain with a self-deprecating tone. He used declarative sentences as Puritan writers did. He also wrote several poems. Some of his most popular poems include "On the Freedom of the Press," "Equivocation," "Death is a Fisherman," "The Benefit of Going to Law," "Wedlock," "Epitaph in Bookish Style," and "He who'd Please All."

### **More about Him**

In 1753, Yale University and Harvard University awarded Benjamin honorary degrees for his contribution to literature. In 1762, Oxford University awarded him with an honorary doctorate for his scientific inventions. He was elected as a foreign diplomat by the Pennsylvania Assembly, and continued working for the colonial union. He also worked as a postmaster general to the Second Continental Congress for the colonies.