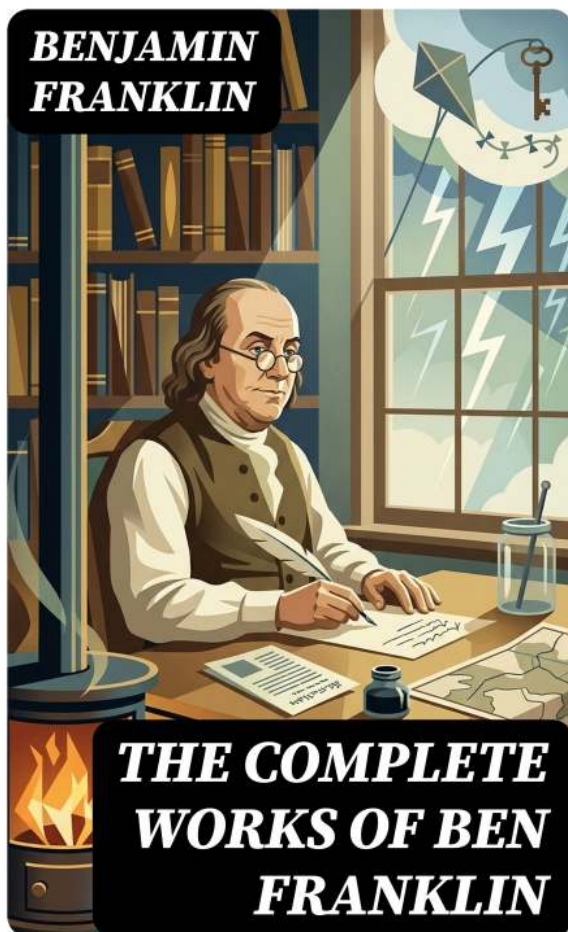


**BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN**



**THE COMPLETE
WORKS OF BEN
FRANKLIN**

Benjamin Franklin

The Complete Works of Ben Franklin

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Nora Caldwell

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Introduction

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This single-author collection, *The Complete Works of Ben Franklin*, assembles the principal writings of Benjamin Franklin as author, investigator, and statesman. Organized by subject and historical moment, it presents the Autobiography; Letters and Papers on Electricity; Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects; political papers of general scope; writings on American affairs before and during the revolutionary troubles; pieces descriptive of America after the Revolution; essays on moral subjects and the economy of life; and three appendices, including correspondence by contemporaries about Franklin's character. The purpose is not to summarize an era, but to offer Franklin's own words in their breadth, so readers may trace his thought across domains.

The volumes gather varied genres: a self-narrative of formation and public service; scientific reports and letters; philosophical notes; pamphlets and memoranda on public policy; diplomatic and civic correspondence; descriptive accounts of America; and moral essays offering practical counsel. Many texts first appeared as letters circulated among colleagues and learned societies, or as pamphlets and articles for a general readership. Together they show Franklin moving with ease between experimental science and civic argument, between personal reflection and public instruction. The set privileges primary documents, allowing the texture of eighteenth-century print culture—its periodicals, transactions, and pamphlet debates—to remain legible within a coherent arrangement.

The Autobiography anchors the collection with an account of Franklin's early years, apprenticeship, emergence as a printer, and gradual engagement in civic projects. Composed in stages and left unfinished, it offers an initial premise of self-examination: how a life shaped by reading, work, and public-spirited effort might be narrated for the use of others. Its hallmarks are plain style, humor, and a method of practical self-improvement. More than reminiscence, it demonstrates the interplay of private discipline and public opportunity that recurs across his writings, establishing a model of American life-writing attentive to industry, association, and experiment.

Letters and Papers on Electricity records Franklin's investigations during the mid-eighteenth century and the transatlantic correspondence they prompted. These pieces combine experimental reports, conjectures, and applications, including the practical problem of protecting structures from lightning. They show him testing causes, refining terms, and communicating results with clarity. The recognition accorded to this work, including the Copley Medal of the Royal Society, marks its significance within Enlightenment science. Yet the lasting value lies equally in method: careful observation, replicable trials, and an insistence that knowledge be shared in forms usable by artisans, officials, and fellow investigators.

Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects extends that experimental habit into natural philosophy broadly conceived. The topics range from meteorology and oceanic phenomena to materials, health, and devices, with attention to everyday experience as evidence. Readers encounter a mind that treats nature, society, and technology as interrelated fields open to incremental improvement. The prose favors demonstration over flourish, using examples, hypotheses, and modest inference. The volume reveals a

thinker for whom curiosity and utility are not opposites, and for whom the communication of results—clear, economical, and candid—is itself a civic undertaking.

Papers on Subjects of General Politics gathers arguments shaped for an eighteenth-century public sphere: essays on governance, public finance, legal arrangements, and institutional design. Franklin's political writing tends toward analysis rather than invective. He identifies practical obstacles, offers proposals, and situates local questions within imperial and international contexts. The texts' variety—memoranda, pamphlets, reports—reflects occasions of debate and decision. Across them runs a consistent commitment to public usefulness, an economy of style that seeks comprehension over ornament, and a confidence that reasoned writing, presented plainly, can inform deliberation beyond the circles of office-holders.

Papers on American Subjects Before the Revolutionary Troubles reflects Franklin's experience as a colonial representative and observer of imperial policy. The pieces address matters such as taxation, administration, postal systems, and the terms under which American provinces might be governed within a larger empire. They document a widening misunderstanding between policy-makers and colonists, while preserving Franklin's attempts at accommodation through argument and explanation. The value of these documents is historical and rhetorical: they enable readers to see how questions of authority and rights were framed before open conflict, and how reasoned persuasion was pursued as a means to avert rupture.

Papers on American Subjects During the Revolutionary Troubles presents writings from the years of crisis and transformation. Here are documents shaped by war, diplomacy, and the reconstitution of political authority.

Franklin's service in continental bodies and his diplomatic work abroad form the background to memoranda, letters, and public communications that explain, seek support, or clarify policy. The emphasis remains on intelligibility across audiences: colonists, allies, and officials. These pages convey the pressures of contingency while retaining the measured tone characteristic of his prose, showing how principles articulated earlier were adapted to the urgencies of alliance, finance, and international recognition.

Papers, Descriptive of America, or Relating to That Country, Written Subsequent to the Revolution assembles texts that present the new United States to readers at home and abroad. They include descriptions of social conditions, economic prospects, institutional arrangements, and practical advice for those considering emigration or investment. Comparative in spirit, these writings place American circumstances alongside European examples, inviting readers to weigh opportunities, constraints, and habits. The descriptive mode suits Franklin's strengths: concrete observation, preference for particulars over abstraction, and a belief that accurate depiction of conditions can itself serve public decision-making.

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life brings together essays concerned with conduct, habit, and the management of one's affairs. The themes are familiar—industry, frugality, temperance, sociability, and benevolence—but the treatment is distinctively Franklin's: aphoristic where it aids memory, anecdotal where an example clarifies a point, analytical where motives and outcomes must be disentangled. The goal is not perfectionism but attainable improvement, pursued steadily. These pieces have enjoyed a wide readership because they unite ethical reflection with practical counsel, aligning private virtue with public advantage in a manner consistent with the rest of his work.

The appendices collect materials that illuminate and supplement the principal texts. Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 provide additional documents, variants, and items that amplify topics addressed elsewhere, preserving context that might otherwise be lost. Appendix 3 offers letters by several eminent persons, illustrative of Franklin's manners and character, thus allowing readers to view him through independent testimony. By including these ancillary pieces, the collection acknowledges that an author's oeuvre is also a network of responses, recollections, and records that help situate the writings within lived relationships and institutional settings.

Across the volumes, unifying features emerge: a plain style hospitable to readers; a preference for experiment and example over abstraction; humor employed to disarm and instruct; and a steady orientation toward public usefulness. Franklin's writings link self-improvement to civic improvement, suggesting that knowledge, when clearly shared, becomes a common resource. Their significance endures because they show how scientific curiosity, moral reasoning, and political judgment can reinforce rather than oppose one another. The Complete Works of Ben Franklin invites readers to encounter a coherent practice—observe, test, explain, and apply—carried across a lifetime of writing to the lasting benefit of readers and institutions.

Author Biography

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Introduction

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) stands as one of the most versatile figures in Atlantic history: printer, natural philosopher, civic founder, diplomat, and political thinker. The collection foregrounds his range through cornerstone texts such as the Autobiography and specialized groupings of letters and papers. His investigations into electricity, reflections on moral conduct and practical economy, and analyses of American society and politics reveal a unified commitment to experiment, utility, and public good. Read together, these volumes show how Franklin fused empirical inquiry with literary craft, shaping both the scientific republic of letters and the emerging civic culture of the United States.

The set is organized to follow the arc of Franklin's life and thought: Letters and Papers on Electricity and on Philosophical Subjects present his scientific method in action; political sequences address colonial controversies and revolutionary diplomacy; descriptive papers portray post-Revolutionary America; and moral writings distill his program for self-improvement. The appendices add documentation and contemporary testimony, while Appendix 3 gathers letters by eminent correspondents that illuminate his manners and character. The Autobiography anchors the narrative with a self-portrait of industry and prudence, against which the topical volumes demonstrate how his ideas were tested in laboratories, assemblies, and chancelleries.

Education and Literary Influences

Franklin's formal schooling in Boston was brief, after which he apprenticed in a printing house—an experience that made the press his lifelong instrument. He educated himself through wide reading and purposeful writing, shaping a plain, persuasive style evident across the collection. Early influences included periodical essays by Addison and Steele and widely read moral and practical tracts, which informed *Papers on Moral Subjects* and *the Economy of Life*. The habits of excerpting, paraphrase, and revision visible in the *Autobiography* emerged from this printer's workshop culture, where improvement, economy, and circulation—of texts and ideas—were daily disciplines.

Scientific influences arrived through transatlantic correspondence and learned societies. Franklin absorbed the experimental ethos associated with figures like Newton and Boyle, adapting it to accessible prose for *Letters and Papers on Electricity* and *Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects*. His method combined modest apparatus with careful inference, favoring replicable trials and public demonstration. Time in London and later in Paris widened his network of natural philosophers and political thinkers, shaping the cosmopolitan tone of his letters. The Junto he organized in Philadelphia encouraged debate on civic improvement, foreshadowing themes that recur in his political and moral papers throughout the collection.

Literary Career

The *Autobiography*, composed in stages over the latter half of his life, provides the template for Franklin's public persona: industrious printer, experimental philosopher, civic organizer, and negotiator. Within it he models a regimen of virtues, narrates the ascent from obscurity to influence, and

displays the clarity that marks his political and scientific prose. Although unfinished, it offers a framework for the collection's other volumes: a practical narrative of self-culture that supports the moral essays, a chronicle of public service that undergirds the political papers, and an intellectual itinerary that culminates in scientific correspondence and diplomatic statecraft.

Letters and Papers on Electricity demonstrates Franklin's most celebrated scientific achievements. Through letters that report apparatus, trials, and inferences, he advanced a theory explaining electrical phenomena as variations in a single fluid, clarified positive and negative charge, and argued that lightning is electrical. The lightning rod emerges here as an applied result of experiment serving public safety. The collection shows how hypotheses were tested by peers, how controversies were addressed in courteous prose, and how Franklin's talent for naming and analogy made complex concepts intelligible to readers beyond laboratories and academies.

Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects broadens the range to meteorology, ocean currents, materials, and domestic technology. Essays consider the Gulf Stream's utility for navigation, the behavior of storms, and practical improvements to heating and ventilation. Franklin's interest in causes is matched by a talent for application: the same curiosity that probed electrical theory also suggested ways to reduce smoke, conserve fuel, and standardize observations. The volume exemplifies his preference for modest theory tethered to reproducible effect, as well as his habit of circulating queries that invited collaboration—a literary mode as much as a scientific method.

The political volumes trace Franklin's transition from imperial reformer to American advocate. Papers on

American Subjects Before the Revolutionary Troubles collect memoranda and letters addressing colonial administration, taxation, and representation, reflecting his years as provincial agent and interlocutor with British officials. He framed American grievances in terms of rights, equity, and mutual benefit. Papers on American Subjects During the Revolutionary Troubles then display the pen of a diplomat: correspondence facilitating alliances, arguments for American credit and recognition, and logistical counsel. Across these documents, his style remains measured, avoiding invective while pressing for concrete remedies.

Papers on Subjects of General Politics and Papers, Descriptive of America present Franklin as a comparative analyst of societies. He assesses public credit, trade, immigration, wages, and land, often juxtaposing European constraints with American opportunities. Information to those who would remove to America and related pieces temper idealization with practical cautions. His prescriptions emphasize education, thrift, and civic moderation. These writings situate American experience within a broader Atlantic economy, revealing how his political imagination favored dispersed property, voluntary association, and public institutions designed for utility rather than display.

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life distill Franklin's program for conduct: cultivating habits, managing time and money, and aligning private improvement with public benefit. Essays such as Advice to a Young Tradesman and The Way to Wealth exemplify his fusion of wit and prudence, offering portable counsel rather than abstract doctrine. The Appendices reinforce the corpus: Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 supply documents and editorial scaffolding that clarify chronology and context, while Appendix 3 assembles contemporary letters that portray Franklin's sociability, tact, and steady humor—traits that readers can

trace back through the Autobiography and forward into the diplomatic papers.

Beliefs and Advocacy

Franklin's convictions centered on civic usefulness, toleration, and the public diffusion of knowledge. He favored institutions that multiplied access—subscription libraries, learned societies, and civic associations—that align with the practical orientation of his moral and political papers.

Religious views in the collection appear as commitments to ethical conduct and social harmony rather than sectarian dispute. His approach to science as a public enterprise underwrites advocacy for technologies like the lightning rod and improved stoves. The same ethos guides his writings on paper currency, credit, and taxation, where he treats finance as an instrument for communal prosperity and stability.

Public roles frame the political volumes: printer and postmaster fostering communication networks; colonial agent attempting imperial accommodation; revolutionary diplomat securing alliance and credit; and elder statesman contributing to constitutional deliberation. In later essays, he argued against slavery and supported organized abolitionist efforts, linking moral reasoning to policy proposals. His advocacy style—measured, empirical, and humane—pervades the collection, from experimental letters to diplomatic memoranda. By making arguments legible to non-specialists, he strengthened civic participation, exemplifying a belief that well-informed publics are essential to reform, innovation, and republican governance.

Final Years & Legacy

In his final decades, Franklin combined scientific correspondence, moral reflection, and statecraft. Papers written subsequent to the Revolution describe the new nation's prospects, cautioning against complacency while encouraging immigration suited to American conditions. His late antislavery writings and continued attention to public finance and education extend themes present throughout the collection. He died in Philadelphia in 1790, widely mourned at home and abroad. The Autobiography became a model of self-culture; the electrical papers shaped modern terminology and practice; and the political and descriptive writings informed generations of readers about the character of American society. The appendices preserve voices that confirm his enduring reputation.

Historical Context

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The Complete Works of Ben Franklin assembles writings that span the long eighteenth century, when the British Empire expanded, Enlightenment reason shaped public life, and colonial North America moved from provincial periphery to independent republic. Franklin (1706–1790) lived through these transformations as printer, natural philosopher, imperial agent, revolutionary, and statesman. The collection tracks shifting contexts: the bustling print culture of Philadelphia; transatlantic learned networks in London and Paris; the imperial crisis after 1763; the Revolutionary War; and the uncertain political economy of the early United States. Read together, the volumes document how institutions, ideas, and conflicts of the Atlantic world formed both Franklin’s career and the genres he used.

The Autobiography arose from within this transatlantic milieu. Drafted in stages at Twyford (1771), Passy (1784), and Philadelphia (1788–1789), it recounts an artisan’s ascent shaped by Protestant-inflected self-discipline, urban opportunity, and associational life. Franklin’s self-portrait was part of a broader Enlightenment genre of improvement narratives and civic exempla. Its Philadelphia scenes reflect a port city expanding through immigration, commerce, and craft production. Its emphasis on reading, apprenticeship, and the Junto echoes how voluntary societies and libraries supported social mobility. The work also registers the limits of imperial belonging, foreshadowing the political breaks that subsequent volumes chronicle.

Franklin’s early public influence unfolded through the press and the institutions that sustained a colonial public sphere.

As printer of the Pennsylvania Gazette and Poor Richard's Almanack, he blended practical instruction with satire, helping to normalize reasoned discussion of policy, commerce, and morals. He co-founded the Library Company of Philadelphia (1731), the American Philosophical Society (1743), and the Pennsylvania Hospital (1751), and he promoted an academy that evolved into the College of Philadelphia. His service as deputy postmaster general for British North America (from 1753) improved communication networks. These enterprises frame many papers in the collection, revealing how print and infrastructure anchored colonial civic life.

The Letters and Papers on Electricity reflect Enlightenment experimentalism and the circulation of knowledge through correspondence. Beginning in the late 1740s, Franklin's investigations into the Leyden jar, charge conservation, and pointed conductors traveled via letters to Peter Collinson and others, culminating in Experiments and Observations on Electricity (first published 1751, London). He popularized the positive/negative convention, coined "battery" for combined jars, and proposed the lightning rod, a technology adopted widely in Europe and North America. Recognition followed: the Royal Society awarded him the Copley Medal in 1753 and elected him a Fellow in 1756. These papers situate colonial science within metropolitan institutions.

Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects extend this applied empiricism beyond electricity. Franklin probed meteorology (storms and winds), oceanography (charting the Gulf Stream used by mariners), heat and cold, and public health, alongside essays in political arithmetic like Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind (1751). His satirical "Economical Project" (1784) on saving candles by rising earlier later figured in discussions of daylight saving. The range underscores a period when "philosophy"

encompassed natural inquiry, statistics, and social analysis, and when experimental knowledge aimed at public utility—clean chimneys, safer ships, more efficient labor—rather than purely theoretical explanation.

Papers on Subjects of General Politics register Franklin's long engagement with imperial administration, finance, and policy. His early pamphlet on paper money (1729) argued for provincial currency to support trade, part of ongoing debates about credit and scarcity in a world of bullion constraints. As Pennsylvania Assemblyman and later colonial agent in London (1757-1762, 1764-1775), he navigated disputes between elected assemblies and proprietors, and between provincial autonomy and imperial oversight. Pamphlets on taxation, land policy, and governance articulate how eighteenth-century political economy—mercantilism, public credit, population growth—shaped colonial arguments for equitable treatment within the empire.

The Seven Years' War (1754-1763) transformed that imperial framework. Franklin's Albany Plan of Union (1754) arose from frontier defense needs and Indigenous diplomacy, proposing coordinated colonial governance under Crown authority. Though not adopted, it previewed later federal ideas. During the war he organized wagons and supplies for General Braddock and confronted the costs of imperial defense in contested borderlands. Related papers discuss militia bills, alliances, and the strain of provisioning. The war's end left Britain with debt and new territories, prompting revenue measures that catalyzed the political crises documented in subsequent volumes.

Papers on American Subjects Before the Revolutionary Troubles trace mounting tensions after 1763. Parliamentary efforts to tax and regulate the colonies—the Sugar Act,

Stamp Act (1765), and Townshend duties (1767)—drew Franklin into transatlantic controversy. His 1766 Examination before the House of Commons, widely published, explained colonial objections to internal taxation without representation. The Hutchinson letters affair (1773), in which Franklin transmitted private correspondence revealing proposals for tighter imperial control in Massachusetts, led to his public reprimand before the Privy Council (1774). These documents show how disputes over constitutional principle and administrative reform hardened positions on both sides.

Papers on American Subjects During the Revolutionary Troubles capture diplomacy and statecraft under wartime pressure. After serving in the Second Continental Congress and helping shape measures for independence and alliance, Franklin sailed to France in late 1776 as commissioner. There he pursued loans, secured the 1778 treaties with France, managed maritime and consular issues, and cultivated support in salons and learned societies. The correspondence records complex negotiations with French ministers, coordination with American envoys, and the management of American credit and reputation abroad—key dimensions of a war waged as much through finance and diplomacy as through battles.

These wartime papers also situate the American Revolution within a wider European conflict. France's entry in 1778, followed by Spain (1779) and the Dutch Republic (1780), globalized the struggle and constrained British options. Franklin's exchanges with Vergennes, and at times tense interactions with fellow American commissioners, reveal how alliance politics and competing national interests shaped strategy. As the war wound down, Franklin joined the peace commission in Paris, culminating in the 1783 Treaty of Paris that recognized American independence. Throughout,

monetary instability and debt underscore the importance of credit—a recurring topic since his early writings on currency.

Papers, Descriptive of America, or Relating to That Country, Written Subsequent to the Revolution reflect a republic defining itself to domestic and foreign audiences. Returning from France in 1785, Franklin presided over Pennsylvania's executive council and participated in debates on governance and civic institutions. Essays such as Information to Those Who Would Remove to America (1782) encouraged industrious immigrants while discouraging expectations of inherited rank. Papers from the Constitutional Convention era (1787) and the early federal period show concerns with federal union, revenue, western settlement, and international standing, presenting American society as pragmatic, mobile, and grounded in labor.

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life assemble reflections that gave the Franklin persona enduring appeal. Essays like Advice to a Young Tradesman (1748), The Way to Wealth (1758), and The Morals of Chess (1786) distilled a civic ethic of prudence, industry, and sociability. These texts grew from an associational culture—libraries, debating clubs, mutual aid—where moral improvement and economic conduct were considered mutually reinforcing. In the Protestant and republican climate of eighteenth-century America, such counsels linked private virtue to public prosperity, complementing the political writings with a microeconomics of character and time.

The collection also reveals Franklin's evolving views on Indigenous peoples and empire. During the Pennsylvania frontier crises, he condemned the 1763 Paxton Boys' violence in A Narrative of the Late Massacres. In Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America (1784), he contrasted European manners with Indigenous protocols to

challenge ethnocentric judgments. These pieces, alongside diplomatic documents from wartime negotiations, show how Native nations stood as independent actors in imperial and republican geopolitics. While Franklin often framed settlement in terms of progress, such writings register contested sovereignty and cultural exchange central to North American state formation.

The transatlantic scientific republic is a persistent backdrop. Franklin corresponded with figures such as Joseph Priestley and drew notice from Buffon and other French savants; his work entered European academies and salons through translation and reprint. The Letters and Papers on Electricity circulated widely, and his broader philosophical essays encouraged practical experimentation. This cosmopolitan traffic shaped the rhetoric of his political writings: appeals to common sense, utility, and statistical evidence were intelligible across borders. The collection demonstrates how colonial authors leveraged European recognition to influence imperial debates and, later, to legitimate a new nation.

Technological and civic reforms recur across genres. Franklin's designs for an improved stove, street lighting, fire companies, and postal routes belong to a century of infrastructural innovation that predated large-scale industrialization but laid groundwork for it. Papers on city improvement, public health, and education show how material betterment and administrative efficiency were political projects. In wartime, similar administrative tools—consular paperwork, loan certificates, exchange rates—became instruments of survival. The texts thus connect domestic tinkering with state capacity, illustrating how eighteenth-century practical knowledge migrated from workshop and newsroom to diplomacy and governance.

Religious pluralism and the era's evangelical revivals form another context. In tolerant Pennsylvania, Franklin collaborated with diverse denominations and maintained a friendship with the Methodist evangelist George Whitefield, whose sermons he printed. Essays on religious tests, charity, and education reflect a polity negotiating between confessional diversity and civic cohesion. Franklin's own broadly deistic outlook emphasized moral conduct over doctrinal uniformity, a view consonant with much Enlightenment thought and with constitutional protections for free exercise. These currents inform both the Autobiography's self-fashioning and various public papers on schools, philanthropy, and public order.

The appendices and the section titled Appendix 3, with letters by eminent contemporaries, document how others perceived Franklin's manners and character, and how editors curated his reputation. Such materials—testimonials from Royal Society fellows, diplomats, and American statesmen—situate his writings within networks of patronage, controversy, and acclaim. Nineteenth-century compilers organized and sometimes abridged texts to fit didactic purposes, helping to canonize Franklin as model citizen and inventor. Later scholarship has reread the same documents to probe complexities: his early ownership of enslaved laborers and his late-life antislavery advocacy, his imperial service, and his role in dispossession, alongside undeniable contributions to science and statecraft.

Synopsis (Selection)

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Autobiography

A self-portrait tracing Franklin's path from modest beginnings through work, study, and public service, framed as a record of self-improvement. He pairs recollection with practical lessons about habits, industry, and civic engagement. The tone is candid and methodical, foreshadowing the collection's recurring emphasis on useful knowledge, virtue, and public-spirited action.

Scientific and Philosophical Papers (Letters and Papers on Electricity; Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects)

These letters and papers assemble experiments, observations, and reasoned explanations of natural phenomena, with particular attention to electrical effects. Franklin favors clear exposition and testable claims, balancing curiosity with restraint. The work showcases an empirical temperament that also informs his civic and political reasoning, uniting inquiry with utility.

Papers on Subjects of General Politics

Essays and memoranda consider governance, commerce, law, and international affairs on a broad canvas. The arguments stress pragmatic reform, proportional liberty, and institutional design that aligns private incentives with the common good. The prose is measured and persuasive,

distilling complex issues into workable principles and proposals.

Papers on American Subjects: Before and During the Revolutionary Troubles (Papers on American Subjects Before the Revolutionary Troubles; Papers on American Subjects During the Revolutionary Troubles)

These writings track the passage from efforts at reform within an imperial framework to firmer advocacy amid escalating conflict. Franklin analyzes representation, taxation, and colonial rights, proposing remedies while warning about policies that undermine consent. The tone evolves from diplomatic and analytic to more urgent and strategic, marking a shift in both stakes and stance.

Papers, Descriptive of America, or Relating to That Country, Written Subsequent to the Revolution

Post-revolution pieces survey the new nation's conditions, customs, resources, and prospects. Franklin evaluates institutions and habits with an eye to improvement and international perception, blending civic pride with sober appraisal. The work extends his practical ethos into nation-scale self-understanding.

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life

Reflections on conduct, frugality, labor, and social relations foreground everyday usefulness and character formation. The pieces link personal discipline to public welfare, suggesting that private virtue underwrites collective prosperity. The style is concise and witty, echoing the self-improvement program evident elsewhere in the collection.

Appendices 1-3 (Appendix 1; Appendix 2; Appendix 3: Containing Letters by Several Eminent Persons, Illustrative of Dr. Franklin's Manners and Character)

These appendices supplement the main corpus with materials that contextualize Franklin's life and writings; notably, Appendix 3 gathers letters by eminent contemporaries that illuminate his manners and character. Together they broaden perspective on the arguments and the person behind them, offering corroboration, reflection, and reception. The tone is curatorial and reflective, rounding out the collection with external vantage points.

The Complete Works of Ben Franklin

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Autobiography

Letters and Papers on Electricity

Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects

Papers on Subjects of General Politics

Papers on American Subjects Before the Revolutionary
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Country, Written Subsequent to the Revolution

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3: Containing Letters by Several Eminent
Persons, Illustrative of Dr. Franklin's Manners and
Character

performative dimensions of clarity and civility, suggesting that method and manner were as integral to influence as any specific argument.

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 assemble materials that broaden context for the collection's central threads without displacing them. When considered alongside Papers on Subjects of General Politics and the American papers, they illuminate the networks, occasions, and constraints that conditioned argument. This framing helps readers discern how recurring themes—prudence, utility, tolerance for complexity—adapt across settings. In Letters and Papers on Electricity and on Philosophical Subjects, the appendices' contextual textures echo the collaborative nature of inquiry, situating individual insight within circulations of correspondence. The effect is to refract Franklin's voice through situational lenses, revealing consistency not as uniformity but as adaptable coherence.

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life can read as formulaic when isolated, yet the appendices complicate that impression by documenting how manners and decisions resonated with observers. Practical aphorisms gain depth when seen as responses to concrete circumstances described elsewhere in the collection. The Autobiography supplies narrative scaffolding, while appendicial materials supply corroboration or tension, together forming a triangulated view of motives and outcomes. This reframing shifts attention from the authority of maxims to their durability under varied conditions, emphasizing iterative calibration rather than fixed doctrine and encouraging attention to implementation as the true test of counsel.

Taken with Papers, Descriptive of America, the appendices invite reconsideration of audience. Descriptive passages aim to inform distant readers; appendicial materials reveal how

such readers, or similarly positioned contemporaries, might have interpreted Franklin's stance. The interplay clarifies choices of tone and detail across the collection, from scientific explanations to political appeals. Letters and philosophical papers signal a trust in communicability, and the appendices test that trust through independent reception. The result is not a revisionist portrait but a stereoscopic one, where self-description and external testimony converge to show how style, substance, and setting combine to produce credibility and lasting influence.

Question 5

Where do Franklin's philosophical inquiries meet his conception of civic virtue across genres?

Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects reveal an intellectual temperament that values clarity, disciplined doubt, and proportional inference. These habits translate into civic virtues when applied to collective decision-making: patience, fairness to evidence, and willingness to revise. Papers on Subjects of General Politics show these traits in action, structuring proposals that seek balance between principle and feasibility. The alignment suggests that Franklin understood philosophy less as abstraction than as training for public reasoning. By calibrating conclusions to the strength of support, he modeled a civility grounded in method, positioning careful inquiry as a foundation for trustworthy participation in institutional life.

Papers on Moral Subjects and the Economy of Life articulate virtues as practices embedded in routines, narrowing the gap between thought and habit. The Autobiography traces the effortful construction of such routines, presenting moral attention as a craft. When those habits encounter the arguments in the American papers before and during the

Revolutionary Troubles, the result is a portrait of civic virtue under stress, where steadiness prevents overcorrection. The connection to philosophical letters is structural: both domains elevate incrementalism, testable claims, and pragmatic language. Virtue becomes a capacity to maintain proportion between conviction and the evolving facts of circumstance.

The scientific posture in Letters and Papers on Electricity exemplifies public-minded inquiry, circulating techniques and observations that others can use. That communicative ethic is a civic virtue in itself, building common reference points. In Papers, Descriptive of America, the same communicative impulse appears in accessible depictions of conditions, encouraging informed judgment rather than deference. Across these works, virtue is inseparable from intelligibility: the more shareable the reasoning, the more cooperative the outcomes. The philosophical meets the civic when methods invite participation, transforming specialized knowledge into a common asset that can guide policy, commerce, and everyday conduct with minimal friction.

Appendix 3's letters about manners and character give civic texture to philosophical virtues by showing how they register in relationships. Civility, punctuality, and generosity of interpretation become recognizable as corollaries of careful thought. Appendices 1 and 2, by expanding contexts, reinforce how Franklin's methods operated within networks rather than isolation. When set against Papers on Subjects of General Politics, these perspectives indicate that civic virtue, for Franklin, scales from correspondence etiquette to institutional design. The meeting point is a disciplined attention to consequences and communication, where the philosopher's restraint and the citizen's responsibility converge in practices that others can verify and trust.

Memorable Quotes

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1q "By this means he turned our attention to what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life;"

2q "I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection."

3q ""That there is one God, who made all things."

4q ""That the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man."

5q "For the fire must come out the same way it went in."

6q "Thus, common matter is a kind of sponge to the electrical fluid."

7q "I have in a former paper compared common matter to a sponge, and the electric fluid to water:"

8q "It is a subject that still affords me pleasure, though of late I have not much attended to it."

9q "A fluid, moving from all points horizontally, towards a centre, must, at that centre, either ascend or descend."

10q "This is then a matter to be determined by experiment."

11q "In order to this, it is necessary to understand well, some few of the properties of air and fire, viz."