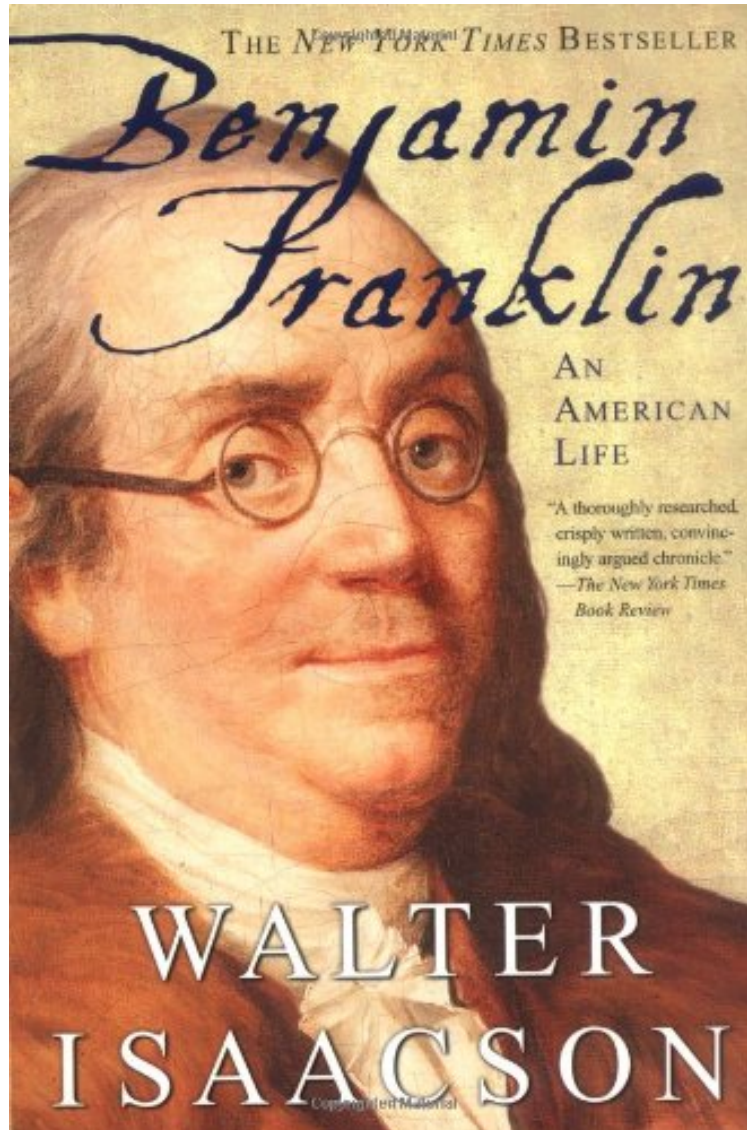


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## Benjamin Franklin: An American Life

Walter Isaacson

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#1033 in Books Walter Isaacson 2004-06-01 2004-06-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.25 x 1.60 x 6.121, 1.73 #File Name: 074325807X586 pages Benjamin Franklin An American Life | File size: 17.Mb

**Walter Isaacson : Benjamin Franklin: An American Life** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Benjamin Franklin: An American Life:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. starting up, 1700's style By Nikolai Yakovenko I like taking the other side of these things, so I still won't read the Steve Jobs book on principle. But Walter Isaacson's Ben Franklin biography is wonderful. The kind of popular history book that you don't want to put down. Old Ben was a prodigy, and recognized as such in early 1700's Boston. But he still experienced numerous setbacks, from his mid teens to his mid-20s. He kept being passed over, betrayed, and, at a time when you really needed other peoples'

support to get anything started (no Kickstarter or AWS back then), help would often be offered, then not delivered. My favorite early story was about what it took for him to set up as independent printer in Philadelphia, after he ran away from indentured apprenticeship to his older brother in Boston. Even though Ben was already recognized as an excellent writer, as well as the man who (at age 17 or 18) ran James's entire printing operation while his brother served a short prison stint, after James came back from the pen, he put Ben back in his place as basically an unpaid intern. Knowing that his brother would not be in a position to enforce the indenture agreement, given the community's view of his brother, and also their respect for himself as a prodigy, Franklin snuck off on a midnight boat to New York, where he befriended another printer, who sent him along to Philadelphia, where his son could possibly use some help. After establishing himself in Philadelphia (again as a brilliant and interesting young man, and no longer an indentured apprentice, but still paid as a lowly worker), he became friends with the colonial governor of Pennsylvania. The gov'nor encouraged Ben to set up his own print shop, promising him government printing business, and saying things like "we need a first-rate printer here in town." He encouraged 19 year old Ben to go home to Boston, talk to his father, and provided a letter on government letterhead, asking his father to fund his young son, and detailing his promises to make sure that the new printer would get plenty of business. Franklin's family was happy to see him, and didn't sweat his absence nor him not writing home. They were happy to hear that he'd taken initiative, and done good in Philadelphia. However, after a few weeks of consideration, his father declined to fund the business, and instead wrote up a plan for young Ben to work hard for a few years, and save up enough for the 100 needed for a print shop, a dollar at a time. Much as those "path to retirement" commercials I mute during football games, that tell you how much you can save for old age, by putting away \$45 a day now. Josiah Franklin was a well-off artisan, and he could have put up the capital for his son. But he also had 17 children, and he preached frugality and self-sufficiency, as a card-carrying Puritan. So Ben went back to Philadelphia. The gov'nor said no problem. Ben should book the next passage to London, where he might purchase printing equipment (at the time not made in America). And the gov'nor would provide letters of credit. You can see where this is going. There was not credit when Ben got to London. But he found a job, and again was well liked and respected. People appreciated his intellect, his wit, and his company. Although he almost certainly was an introvert who preferred to stay up all night reading books tinkering with printing machines. As you'd expect, from America's first nerd. He also had an extroverted "poet" friend in tow, who drank more, worked less, and ended up falling out with Franklin, thus refusing to pay back the 27 that he'd borrowed from his roommate over the journey and subsequent stay in the city. Franklin made his way back to Philadelphia, better for the wear, but poorer for it. Or rather, back to where he started. Another year in, he found a young co-founder for his printing startup. Another man prone to drink and erratic behaviour, but also the son of a man wealthy enough to put up 100 (or rather 200, which was the real startup cost) for printing equipment. Franklin contributed his labor, and the boy's father was canny enough to appreciate the value of that. They also took on minority partners, but after a couple of years, Franklin was able to buy them all out, and become sole proprietor of Philadelphia's best print shop, by his early mid twenties. The rest is history. I find this rather inspiring. And Isaacson writes with a good deal of humor. No least because of Franklin's lifelong propensity to take shots at Harvard, and at Harvard men. Perhaps because he was denied admittance there, despite getting top marks as a student (in his early teens). The perception that Harvard grads are no smarter than anyone else, but their rich parents pay good money to have their sons' heads fixed firmly up their ass, was apparently a sentiment that's been had by some, for well over 300 years. And as a Harvard man himself, Isaacson finds this rather amusing.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. That Casual Guy on the \$100 Bill By Cluster Booker There are only two non-presidents on circulated United States currency: Alexander Hamilton on the \$10 bill and Benjamin Franklin on the \$100. I haven't read the Alexander Hamilton biography by Ron Chernow but can clearly see why Franklin made it on the coveted \$100 bill. Isaacson takes us all throughout Franklin's long, adventurous, migratory, industrious, scientific, social, eventful and interesting career. Pretty much any adjective can be used to describe it. I can only imagine that Isaacson spent a lot more time researching than he originally thought and I am really glad that he didn't give up. Franklin lived by his idleness maxim and always seemed to be doing something that was fun. He was always constantly trying to improve everything around him. That's just one little aspect of his life they don't teach you when you were learning about Franklin in elementary school and it turns out there are a whole lot more. The tome Isaacson wrote provides a lot more of that substance and fully encompasses that aura of greatness around Franklin's life. If Franklin were to print and publish this I am sure there would be some parts Franklin would choose to omit, but that aspect is also what makes this book a page-turner. You will be surprised to learn that Franklin did more than just sign a few important government documents and discover electricity.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Biography of the amazing Benjamin Franklin By Peter R. Divergilio This book is a long, comprehensive account of the life of American Founding Father Ben Franklin. It gave me a deeper insight into the man and legend, from the time he arrived in the Colonies as an indentured apprentice worker till he passed away at age 86 as a symbol of what an individual could accomplish in America. There were inventions, both practical and philosophical, that helped form the world as we now see it, emanating from a man who was flawed in many ways, inconsistent in others, but steadfast in his persistence to improve his lot and many others. It is not a "quick read", but was certainly worth the effort for me!!!

In this authoritative and engrossing full-scale biography, Walter Isaacson, bestselling author of *Einstein* and *Steve Jobs*, shows how the most fascinating of America's founders helped define our national character. Benjamin Franklin is the founding father who winks at us, the one who seems made of flesh rather than marble. In a sweeping narrative that follows Franklin's life from Boston to Philadelphia to London and Paris and back, Walter Isaacson chronicles the adventures of the runaway apprentice who became, over the course of his eighty-four-year life, America's best writer, inventor, media baron, scientist, diplomat, and business strategist, as well as one of its most practical and ingenious political leaders. He explores the wit behind *Poor Richard's Almanac* and the wisdom behind the Declaration of Independence, the new nation's alliance with France, the treaty that ended the Revolution, and the compromises that created a near-perfect Constitution. In this colorful and intimate narrative, Isaacson provides the full sweep of Franklin's amazing life, showing how he helped to forge the American national identity and why he has a particular resonance in the twenty-first century.