

SUMMARY: This paper is about Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin Franklin achieved many things throughout his lifetime. He was a printer, moralist, essayist, civic leader, scientist, inventor, diplomat, and philosopher. During the American Revolution, he was the most famous American. He persuaded the British to repeal the Stamp Act, he convinced the French to side with the Americans, and he also helped to write the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution. Franklin was not absorbed in utilitarianism; he enjoyed truth and integrity, "a naive lustre," independently and successfully. This is all he wanted for the people, as well. He wanted them to hold close the belief in possibility in change, in both themselves and in their society.

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### **A Better People**

Benjamin Franklin said, "Break through the bounds in which a dependent people have been accustomed to think, and act, so that they might properly comprehend the character they assigned." I believe Benjamin Franklin meant a lot of things by this statement, but most of all, he meant that people should care about reaching decisions in a fair and equitable manner, and about the power of confederations and working together. This essay will further define Franklin's purpose and illustrate what he wanted for the people.

Benjamin Franklin achieved many things throughout his lifetime. He was a printer, moralist, essayist, civic leader, scientist, inventor, diplomat, and philosopher. During the American Revolution, he was the most famous American. He persuaded the British to repeal the Stamp Act, he convinced the French to side with the Americans, and he also helped to write the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

Benjamin was an American representative in Britain, and probably the most important one. He was made the London agent of several American colonies. He attempted to show that if the colonists were granted rights equal to the English, peace could be made. He did this by writing pamphlets and newspaper articles. After several years of talking about American Independence, he was made the first postmaster general of the colonies, and a member of the Second Continental Congress. In late 1775, Congress appointed Franklin to be one of the three men to meet George Washington, and discuss the problems of the Continental Army (Sellers, 1985).

However, it was not until late 1776 when Benjamin Franklin was given his most important mission. He was asked to persuade France to help America fight for its independence. He was successful, and the Treaty of Paris was signed on February 6, 1778. Without Benjamin Franklin's help, America might still be governed by England today. He was an amazing American patriot, and a model for a national character. An intelligence service led by Benjamin Franklin, one of the American commissioners in Paris, kept the Americans informed of events in Great Britain and France. As a result of these reports, Washington was convinced that British public opinion definitely was turning against continuing the American war. He believed that one more British military disaster such as that at Saratoga would bring irresistible pressure on the king and his ministers to make peace and recognize American independence. Franklin had impressed the importance on the French ministry of this idea. Fortunately for the Americans, French ministers were eager to avenge the loss of their colonial empire to Britain. They had labored to build the French navy to the highest level of efficiency in ships and in training for war.

What Franklin intended for the people was made clear in his speech on the very last day of the Constitutional Convention, September 17, 1787: “In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such; because I think a general Government necessary for us, and there is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered, and believe further that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in Despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall have become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other” (Sellers, 1985).

At the beginning of his Autobiography, Franklin states that if Providence allowed him the choice, “he should have no objection to go over the same life from beginning to the end, requesting only the advantage authors have of correcting, in a second edition, the faults of the first.” Franklin was always fond of such harmless and shrewd remarks which prevented his earnestness from being pathetic. Franklin knew what it meant to be both in government and to be a civilian. He wanted no less for the people than he wanted for himself. He wanted the people to be individuals and not just what government set forth for them (Sellers, 1985).

Throughout his lifetime, Franklin made strenuous efforts to perfect his mind and character. He regarded a lack of moderation as incompatible with human perfection, human dignity, efficiency, and success. “He regarded reason as the means by which life could be conducted intelligently.” Franklin summarized his experiences by eliminating the words “certainly” and “undoubtedly” from his vocabulary. In place of them, he adopted: “I conceive; I apprehend; I imagine a thing to be so; or so it appears to me at present.” He especially appreciated the “advantage of change,” whether it concerned his

own manners, or his relations to his fellow man. He formulated his creed by the words: “truth; sincerity, and integrity” as “of the utmost importance for the felicity of life” (Sellers, 1985).

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## References

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