

中文导读英文版

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

# 富兰克林自传

[美] 本杰明·富兰克林 原著  
王勋 纪飞 等 编译

清华大学出版社



( 中 文 导 读 英 文 版 )

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## 内 容 简 介

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* 中文译名《富兰克林自传》，被公认为是世界上最伟大的自传之一，它由美国独立运动的杰出领导者、《独立宣言》的起草者本杰明·富兰克林编著。书中翔实地记述了本杰明·富兰克林不屈服于命运安排，艰苦奋斗的个人历程；以及不屈服于强权，依靠智慧和不屈不挠的精神为国家争取独立和自由的斗争历程。同时，还生动地讲述了本杰明·富兰克林的自学成才之路，以及通过勤奋工作取得辉煌成就的历程。

书中展现了一代伟人的一生奋斗并取得巨大成功的历程，及其不断追求真、善、美与个人奉献的精神境界。阅读本书，是一次与伟人心灵对话之旅，是实现美国梦的奋斗历程和达到完美道德境界的精神之旅。无论作为语言学习的课本，还是作为通俗的文学读本，本书对当代中国的青少年都将产生积极的影响。为了使读者能够了解英文故事概况，进而提高阅读速度和阅读水平，在每章的开始部分增加了中文导读。

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本杰明·富兰克林（1706—1790），美国独立运动的先驱者，美国民主精神的缔造者，杰出的政治家、科学家、外交家、哲学家和实业家，美国独立运动的领导人，参与起草并签署了《独立宣言》和《美国宪法》。

富兰克林 1706 年出生于美国波士顿，他在家中的 17 个孩子中排行 15。富兰克林少年时上过两年学，后因家境贫寒被迫辍学。12 岁时，他到哥哥的印刷厂里当学徒。学徒的日子虽然艰难，但他却利用闲暇时间刻苦自学，阅读了大量书籍，在政治、科学、历史、文学等方面打下了扎实的基础；同时，他还通过自学能熟练运用法语、意大利语、西班牙语和拉丁语。1726 年，富兰克林开始在费城独立经营自己的印刷厂。从此，富兰克林的事业蒸蒸日上，开始创造一个美国梦的传奇故事：他印刷并发行影响巨大的《宾夕法尼亚报》；发明了避雷针、两用眼镜、新式火炉和新型路灯等；率先提出了北美殖民地“不联合就死亡”的口号，争取法国的支持并代表北美殖民地与英国谈判，与杰斐逊起草了《独立宣言》。一个人在如此众多的领域成就斐然，这在美国历史上几乎无人能及。1790 年 4 月 17 日，富兰克林逝世于费城，美国人民为他举行了最隆重的葬礼，他静静地躺在教堂院子里的墓穴中，他的墓碑上只刻着：“印刷工富兰克林”。

富兰克林是美国精神最完美的代表，是人类道德与理性的最佳诠释者，是一个令人难以置信的通才。他的多重身份对此做了最好的诠释：他是一位杰出的政治家，是美国建国的创始者、美国独立运动的领导者、民主精神的缔造者、《独立宣言》的起草者；同时，他还是最杰出的科学家、外交家、出版家、作家和社会实业家，他像是“从天上偷窃火种的第二个普罗米修斯”，成为举世公认的现代文明之父。正因为如此，美国开国元勋、总统华盛顿甚至说：“在我的一生，能让我佩服的人只有三位：第一位是



本杰明·富兰克林，第二位也是本杰明·富兰克林，第三位还是本杰明·富兰克林。”

除此之外，富兰克林的杰出成就还表现在 1771 年出版的改变无数年轻人命运的《富兰克林自传》。这本书生动地记述了富兰克林的成长历程，告诫年轻人要积极向上，该书在世界上影响深远。二百多年来，《富兰克林自传》影响了一代又一代的美国人及世界各国的年轻人。这是一部经久不衰的励志奇书，包含了人生奋斗与成功的真知灼见以及善与美的道德真谛，被公认为是改变了无数人命运的美国精神读本。在中国，《富兰克林自传》同样是最受广大青少年读者欢迎的经典自传之一。目前，在国内数量众多的《富兰克林自传》书籍中，主要的出版形式有两种，一种是中文翻译版，另一种是中英文对照版。而其中的中英文对照读本比较受读者的欢迎，这主要是得益于中国人热衷于学习英语的大环境。而从英文学习的角度上来看，直接使用纯英文的学习资料更有利于英语学习。考虑到对英文内容背景的了解有助于英文阅读，使用中文导读应该是一种比较好的方式，中文导读也可以说是第三种版本形式。采用中文导读而非中英文对照的方式进行编排，有利于国内读者摆脱对英文阅读依赖中文注释的习惯。基于以上原因，我们决定编译《富兰克林自传》，并采用中文导读英文版的形式出版。在中文导读中，我们尽力使其贴近原作的精髓，也尽可能保留原作风格。我们希望能够编出为当代中国读者所喜爱的经典读本。读者在阅读英文故事之前，可以先阅读中文导读内容，这样有利于了解故事背景，从而加快阅读速度。我们相信，该经典著作的引进对加强当代中国读者，特别是青少年读者的人文修养是非常有帮助的。

本书主要内容由王勋、纪飞编译。参加本书故事素材搜集整理及编译工作的还有赵雪、郑佳、刘乃亚、熊金玉、李丽秀、熊红华、王婷婷、孟宪行、胡国平、李晓红、贡东兴、陈楠、邵舒丽、冯洁、王业伟、徐鑫、王晓旭、周丽萍、熊建国、徐平国、肖洁、王小红等。限于我们的科学、人文素养和英语水平，书中一定会有一些不当之处，衷心希望读者朋友批评指正。



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# 第一章

## Part 1



(1771 年，富兰克林写给孩子们的信)

好比我渴望知道先人的生活，你们也会好奇我的生活状况，现在我就利用这休假的一星期讲给你们听。当然还有一个目的是，我经历了从一个出身贫贱的小男孩到财富和名誉双收的成功，希望你们也能从中找到与自身相适应的立身之术。

回首我的幸福，我总想既然生活不能重演，不幸不会被抹去，那我就欣然接受现在这恩赐于我的生活。回忆又是最接近重演的，为了让回忆成为一种永恒，我选择用笔记下来。

坦率地说，写这个自传对于我那虚荣心也是一种极大的满足。在我看来，感谢生活的美满后感谢上帝所赐予我们的虚荣心是无可厚非的。在此我以一颗真诚的心感谢上帝，感谢他给予我的幸福，并让我有足够的毅力去承担困苦。

从我一位伯父的手记中我大概了解到祖上的一些情况。我们家族在洛斯安普顿教区的埃克敦村住了 300 多年，除了 30 亩地以外还以打铁为副业，一般都是由家中的长子来接替打铁的生意。我祖父托马斯大部分时间都生活在埃克敦村做生意，他有托马斯、约翰、本杰明、乔赛亚四个儿子和一个女儿。长子托马斯一直住在埃克敦，原本被培养学习打铁，后因天性聪慧，经过学习成为一名书记员，积极推动公益事业，属于当地很有影响的人物；很多老人都说我和托马斯很像，就像人们所认为的转世投胎那





样——他去世后第四年的忌日就是我的生日。约翰是生活在牛津郡班伯里的一名洗染工，祖父暮年和他生活在一起并葬在那里。本杰明是染丝绸的染工，机灵、虔诚且关心政治，他不仅写过很多即兴的小诗，还创造了一套速记法；我父亲和他的感情很深，这就是为什么我名叫“本杰明”。

我们家族很早就开始信奉新教，而且直到查理二世王朝覆灭时都是英国国教教徒，其后本杰明叔叔和乔赛亚离开了国教。为了追求宗教自由，我父亲乔赛亚在朋友劝说下于1682年带着妻子和三个孩子来到新英格兰。父亲一共有17个子女，我在其中排行倒数第二，是最小的儿子，我出生在波士顿。我母亲叫阿拜雅·福尔杰，是我父亲的第二个妻子，为他生有10个子女。我的外祖父叫彼得·福尔杰，他很早便到新英格兰定居，是最早的移民之一，他常写一些即兴短诗以颂扬良心自由，《美洲基督大事记》中也曾记载过我祖父，并且称赞他善良又博学。

早在孩提时我就开始学习，父亲的朋友都认为我将来能成为一个大学者，父亲也希望我从事教会事业，因此8岁时便将我送到文法学校学习。一年后考虑到经费问题，我转至一所教授读写和算术的学校。在新学校里我很快学得一手漂亮字，但算术却不及格。10岁的时候父亲把我带回了家，做些剪烛芯、照看店面、跑腿送货的事情，帮助维持全家的生计。然而我一心向往航海，却遭到父亲反对。

你们可能对我父亲的一些事颇为好奇吧。他是个中等身材的人，但体格健壮，天资聪慧，对绘画、音乐等很多方面都有所涉猎，另外对机械也很在行。但父亲的超人之处更在于他极强的理解力和判断力，他似乎天生适合做裁决人。很多人都询问他许多棘手的事情的意见，他也常被邀请做裁决人。父亲与他那些思维敏锐的朋友们的充满智慧的谈话让我受益匪浅，它让幼小的我懂得应该去关心什么，不应该关心什么。这就是我为什么重视善良、公正与谨慎，而忽视那些生活中不必要的琐碎细节。父亲89岁去世。我母亲身体也很好，85岁去世，他们死后合葬于波士顿。

似乎是老了的缘故，话题扯得有点远，下面回到正题。我在父亲那儿做到12岁，但仍厌恶蜡烛匠人这一行当，父亲便带我去看一些木匠、瓦匠、铜匠，希望我能从中找到喜爱的工作。这种经历使我学到了很多，渐渐地实验兴致高涨，开始尝试做一些小机器。

我从小爱读书，零花钱都用在书上了，而父亲也终于因此让我从事印



刷这个行业。1717年，哥哥詹姆斯带着印刷机从英国回到波士顿，开始创业。相对于父亲的行业我更喜欢哥哥的印刷行当，12岁那年，我被说服签订了学徒合同。印刷工作给了我更好的机会去读书。那时我正着迷于诗歌，便在哥哥的鼓励下写了两首诗去卖钱。但父亲却不以为然，他说写诗的基本都穷得很，因此长大后的我尽量避免成为一个诗人。但散文写作对于我的一生却有着莫大的帮助。

约翰·柯林斯是镇上另外一个喜欢读书的年轻人，我们常在一起辩论。有一次我们辩得难舍难分，所以分开后我就将我的理由写下来寄给他，然后他再回复。如此往复三四次后父亲偶然发现了，他借此指出了我写作中的长处和短处，尤其指出我在写作的清晰明了和措辞优雅方面有待改进。这时我买了一本残缺的《旁观者》第三卷，我对这本书爱不释手，并开始想到去模仿它。我将其中几篇文章做了摘要，然后试着在不看原文的情况下复述原文，最后与原文对照，订正我的错误。我的词汇量贫乏，因此我又用把故事改写成诗的方法来扩充词汇量。一般我都是利用完工后的夜里或开工前的清晨来进行这种阅读和写作训练的。

16岁那年，我偶然碰到一本提议吃素的书，从此我便决心吃素。这种节制饮食的做法不仅给我提供了额外的买书钱，还节省出了宝贵的学习时间，使我常保持头脑清楚、思维敏捷。为弥补算术上的不足，我找来寇克的书自学了一遍；另外我还从有关航海的书上学到了很少的一些几何知识；《苏格拉底谈话录》则让我了解了该如何辩论。

1720或1721年时，哥哥开始印刷报纸——《新英格兰报》——美洲出现的第二家报纸，报纸很受欢迎。我也跃跃欲试，但担心哥哥知道稿子是我这个小孩写的决不会发表，所以就开始匿名写稿。稿子在哥哥和他的朋友间得到好评，他们纷纷猜测文章作者是镇上某个博学之人。就这样直到我江郎才尽时我才把真相告诉哥哥。但哥哥并不高兴，也许是怕我过于骄傲。哥哥认为他是我的师傅，应该从我这里得到其他学徒一样的服务；而我觉得他对我要求太多了，作为一个兄长他给予我的应该是宠爱。就在我无比期待这讨厌的学徒生涯能缩短些时，机会来了。

我们报纸上的一篇有关政治问题的文章触怒了州议会，哥哥被监禁了

一个月，这期间由我负责报纸的管理。当局下令：禁止詹姆斯·富兰克林继续出版《新英格兰报》。最后哥哥他们商定用本杰明·富兰克林的名义继续发行。但几个月后，我和哥哥又发生了新矛盾：我趁火打劫地处处维护自己的自由，哥哥则经常对我大打出手。后来我意识到那时我可能是太没有礼貌了，这是我一生犯下的第一大错。

我准备离开哥哥，他便说服镇上的老板不要给我工作，另外由于我早已引起当局的憎恶，最后我决定去纽约。怕父亲发现，我在柯林斯的帮助下悄悄上了前往纽约的船，3天后，17岁的身无分文的我到了离家300英里的纽约。我向当地的印刷老板毛遂自荐，他便介绍我去他儿子在宾夕法尼亚州的印刷所做助手。

渡海时我们遭遇了狂风。我救了一位落水的荷兰乘客，而他有一本我钟爱的作家班扬的《天路历程》。后来我们上岸，徒步前行去50英里外的伯林顿。第二天晚上，我搭上一条前往费城的船。由于没有风，我们只能划船前行，午夜时登岸呆到天亮。第三天早上八九点，我终于到了费城。

*T*wyford, at the Bishop of St. Asaph's, 1771

DEAR SON,

I HAVE ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England, and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to some of you to know the circumstances of my life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with, and expecting the enjoyment of a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you. To which I have besides some other inducements. Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the conducting means I made use of, which with the blessing of God so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some



of them suitable to their own situations, and therefore fit to be imitated.

That felicity, when I reflected on it, has induced me sometimes to say, that were it offered to my choice, I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. So I might, besides correcting the faults, change some sinister accidents and events of it for others more favorable. But though this were denied, I should still accept the offer. Since such a repetition is not to be expected, the next thing most like living one's life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.

Hereby, too, I shall indulge the inclination so natural in old men, to be talking of themselves and their own past actions; and I shall indulge it without being tiresome to others, who, through respect to age, might conceive themselves obliged to give me a hearing, since this may be read or not as any one pleases. And, lastly (I may as well confess it, since my denial of it will be believed by nobody), perhaps I shall a good deal gratify my own vanity. Indeed, I scarce ever heard or saw the introductory words, "Without vanity I may say," &c., but some vain thing immediately followed. Most people dislike vanity in others, whatever share they have of it themselves; but I give it fair quarter wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of good to the possessor, and to others that are within his sphere of action; and therefore, in many cases, it would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life.

And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which lead me to the means I used and gave them success. My belief of this induces me to hope, though I must not presume, that the same goodness will still be exercised toward me, in continuing that happiness, or enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done: the complexion of my future fortune being known to Him only in whose power it is to bless to us even our afflictions.

The notes one of my uncles (who had the same kind of curiosity in collecting family anecdotes) once put into my hands, furnished me with several particulars relating to our ancestors. From these notes I learned that the family had lived in the same village, Ecton, in Northamptonshire, for three hundred years, and how much longer he knew not (perhaps from the time when the name of Franklin, that before was the name of an order of people, was assumed by them as a surname when others took surnames all over the kingdom), on a freehold of about thirty acres, aided by the smith's business, which had continued in the family till his time, the eldest son being always bred to that business; a custom which he and my father followed as to their eldest sons. When I searched the registers at Ecton, I found an account of their births, marriages and burials from the year 1555 only, there being no registers kept in that parish at any time preceding. By that register I perceived that I was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations back.

My grandfather Thomas, who was born in 1598, lived at Ecton till he grew too old to follow business longer, when he went to live with his son John, a dyer at Banbury, in Oxfordshire, with whom my father served an apprenticeship. There my grandfather died and lies buried. We saw his gravestone in 1758. His eldest son Thomas lived in the house at Ecton, and left it with the land to his only child, a daughter, who, with her husband, one Fisher, of Wellingborough, sold it to Mr. Isted, now lord of the manor there. My grandfather had four sons that grew up, viz.: Thomas, John, Benjamin and Josiah. I will give you what account I can of them, at this distance from my papers, and if these are not lost in my absence, you will among them find many more particulars.

Thomas was bred a smith under his father; but, being ingenious, and encouraged in learning (as all my brothers were) by an Esquire Palmer, then the principal gentleman in that parish, he qualified himself for the business of scrivener; became a considerable man in the county; was a chief mover of all public-spirited undertakings for the county or town of Northampton, and his own village, of which many instances were related of him; and much taken



notice of and patronized by the then Lord Halifax. He died in 1702, January 6, old style, just four years to a day before I was born. The account we received of his life and character from some old people at Ecton, I remember, struck you as something extraordinary, from its similarity to what you knew of mine. "Had he died on the same day," you said, "one might have supposed a transmigration."

John was bred a dyer, I believe of woolens. Benjamin was bred a silk dyer, serving an apprenticeship at London. He was an ingenious man. I remember him well, for when I was a boy he came over to my father in Boston, and lived in the house with us some years. He lived to a great age. His grandson, Samuel Franklin, now lives in Boston. He left behind him two quarto volumes, MS., of his own poetry, consisting of little occasional pieces addressed to his friends and relations, of which the following, sent to me, is a specimen.

*To my Namesake upon a Report of his Inclination to Martial Affairs, July 7th, 1710*

*Believe me, Ben, war is a dangerous trade.  
The sword has marred as well as made;  
By it do many fall, not many rise—  
Makes many poor, few rich, and fewer wise;  
Fills towns with ruin, fields with blood, beside  
Tis sloth's maintainer and the shield of Pride.  
Fair cities, rich today in plenty flow,  
War fills with want tomorrow, and with woe.  
Ruined states, vice, broken limbs, and scars  
Are the effects of desolating wars.*

He had formed a short-hand of his own, which he taught me, but, never practising it, I have now forgot it. I was named after this uncle, there being a particular affection between him and my father. He was very pious, a great attender of sermons of the best preachers, which he took down in his short-hand, and had with him many volumes of them. He was also much of a politician; too much, perhaps, for his station. There fell lately into my hands, in

London, a collection he had made of all the principal pamphlets, relating to public affairs, from 1641 to 1717; many of the volumes are wanting as appears by the numbering, but there still remain eight volumes in folio, and twenty-four in quarto and in octavo. A dealer in old books met with them, and knowing me by my sometimes buying of him, he brought them to me. It seems my uncle must have left them here, when he went to America, which was about fifty years since. There are many of his notes in the margins.

This obscure family of ours was early in the Reformation, and continued Protestants through the reign of Queen Mary, when they were sometimes in danger of trouble on account of their zeal against popery. They had got an English Bible, and to conceal and secure it, it was fastened open with tapes under and within the cover of a joint-stool. When my great-great-grandfather read it to his family, he turned up the joint-stool upon his knees, turning over the leaves then under the tapes. One of the children stood at the door to give notice if he saw the apparitor coming, who was an officer of the spiritual court. In that case the stool was turned down again upon its feet, when the Bible remained concealed under it as before. This anecdote I had from my uncle Benjamin. The family continued all of the Church of England till about the end of Charles the Second's reign, when some of the ministers that had been outed for nonconformity holding conventicles in Northamptonshire, Benjamin and Josiah adhered to them, and so continued all their lives: the rest of the family remained with the Episcopal Church.

Josiah, my father, married young, and carried his wife with three children into New England, about 1682. The conventicles having been forbidden by law, and frequently disturbed, induced some considerable men of his acquaintance to remove to that country, and he was prevailed with to accompany them thither, where they expected to enjoy their mode of religion with freedom. By the same wife he had four children more born there, and by a second wife ten more, in all seventeen; of which I remember thirteen sitting at one time at his table, who all grew up to be men and women, and married; I was the youngest son, and the youngest child but two, and was born in Boston, New England.



My mother, the second wife, was Abiah Folger, daughter of Peter Folger, one of the first settlers of New England, of whom honorable mention is made by Cotton Mather in his church history of that country, entitled *Magnalia Christi Americana*, as 'a godly, learned Englishman, "if I remember the words rightly. I have heard that he wrote sundry small occasional pieces, but only one of them was printed, which I saw now many years since. It was written in 1675, in the home-spun verse of that time and people, and addressed to those then concerned in the government there.

It was in favor of liberty of conscience, and in behalf of the Baptists, Quakers, and other sectaries that had been under persecution, ascribing the Indian wars, and other distresses that had befallen the country, to that persecution, as so many judgments of God to punish so heinous an offense, and exhorting a repeal of those uncharitable laws. The whole appeared to me as written with a good deal of decent plainness and manly freedom. The six concluding lines I remember, though I have forgotten the two first of the stanza; but the purport of them was, that his censures proceeded from good-will, and, therefore, he would be known to be the author.

*Because to be a libeller (says he)*

*I hate it with my heart;*

*Form Sherburne town, where now I dwell*

*My name I do put here;*

*Without offense your real friend,*

*It is Peter Folgier.*

My elder brothers were all put apprentices to different trades. I was put to the grammar-school at eight years of age, my father intending to devote me, as the tithe of his sons, to the service of the Church. My early readiness in learning to read (which must have been very early, as I do not remember when I could not read), and the opinion of all his friends, that I should certainly make a good scholar, encouraged him in this purpose of his. My uncle Benjamin, too, approved of it, and proposed to give me all his short-hand volumes of sermons, I suppose as a stock to set up with, if I would learn his character. I continued,

however, at the grammar-school not quite one year, though in that time I had risen gradually from the middle of the class of that year to be the head of it, and farther was removed into the next class above it, in order to go with that into the third at the end of the year. But my father, in the meantime, from a view of the expense of a college education, which having so large a family he could not well afford, and the mean living many so educated were afterwards able to obtain—reasons that he gave to his friends in my hearing—altered his first intention, took me from the grammar-school, and sent me to a school for writing and arithmetic, kept by a then famous man, Mr. George Brownell, very successful in his profession generally, and that by mild, encouraging methods. Under him I acquired fair writing pretty soon, but I failed in the arithmetic, and made no progress in it. At ten years old I was taken home to assist my father in his business, which was that of a tallow-chandler and sope-boiler; a business he was not bred to, but had assumed on his arrival in New England, and on finding his dying trade would not maintain his family, being in little request. Accordingly, I was employed in cutting wick for the candles, filling the dipping mold and the molds for cast candles, attending the shop, going of errands, etc.

I disliked the trade, and had a strong inclination for the sea, but my father declared against it; however, living near the water, I was much in and about it, learnt early to swim well, and to manage boats; and when in a boat or canoe with other boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially in any case of difficulty; and upon other occasions I was generally a leader among the boys, and sometimes led them into scrapes, of which I will mention one instance, as it shows an early projecting public spirit, tho' not then justly conducted.

There was a salt-marsh that bounded part of the mill-pond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharff there fit for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone, I assembled a number of my play-fellows, and working with them diligently like