

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

本杰明·富兰克林

HUMANITIES IN ENGLISH

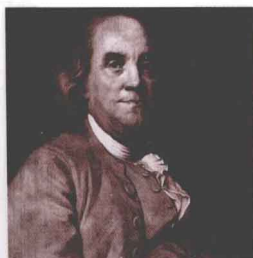
Benjamin Franklin [美]本杰明·富兰克林◎著  
李妍◎译

全


自 传

Benjamin

Franklin



世界上最伟大的自传之一，历经两百余年长盛不衰的励志奇书……

 经济科学出版社


  
人文英语  
双语读物  
HUMANITIES IN ENGLISH®



本杰明·富兰克林**自传**

**The Autobiography  
of Benjamin Franklin**

李妍◎译

 经济科学出版社

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# 前言

*Humanities in English*

## 培养人文素质 成就国际通才

若想精通一门语言，没有对其文化背景的深入了解恐怕永远难登大雅之堂。在全球化日益成为国际主流的今天，英语作为西方文化头牌语言的重要性已日益凸显——今日世界，恐怕在地球上的任何角落，人们都可以用英语问路、用英语聊天、用英语购物、用英语交友、用英语在跨文化间作深度交流。

正如许多西方人热切地想了解中国文化一样，中国的英语学习者对西方文化及人文的了解也处于热切的需求中。是的，如果对西方的历史、文学、艺术、宗教、哲学没有一个最基本的了解，就连好莱坞大片想要看懂都会成为一个问题；而西方文化贡献给社会的普世价值恰恰是它深厚的人文传统及“民主、自由、博爱”等现代理念，不了解这些，则与任何稍有层次和品位的西方人的交流都将难以顺畅。

另一方面，国内的英语学习及爱好者如再停留在日常生活的 *English In General* 的层次上，将难以适应深度沟通和交流的需要，因此，对专业英语及文化背景的深入了解及学习将是提升英语能力的必由之路。有鉴于此，我们编写了本套丛书——《人文英语双语读物》，为读者奉上原汁原味的人文阅读精华，其或选自原典正文、或选自专业教材、或选自网络热帖，由精研此业者掇菁撷

华，辑录成册，希望能帮助读者在学习英语的同时又能品味西方文化的独特魅力。

读万卷书行万里路，在我们无法踏上万里之路以愉耳目的时候，我们可以用阅读来滋养心灵，拓展人生版图。于某一日午后，抛开世俗的纷扰，挑一静谧之处，一杯香茗，几卷书册，品文化，长知识，学英语，在书页和文字之间触摸大千世界的真谛，在阅读中将知识内化成自己的修养，此为人生至乐。

文化共语言同飞，思想与阅读共舞。让我们的目光穿越时光、穿越语言，在原汁原味的英语阅读中品味人类文明共有的人文素质、人文素养、人文情怀、人文理念……并在此过程中成就自己的文化修养及完美人生。

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*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*





## Chapter One A Letter to My Son

**D**ear son:

I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes<sup>1</sup> 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 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<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup>, 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 was 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<sup>4</sup> 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

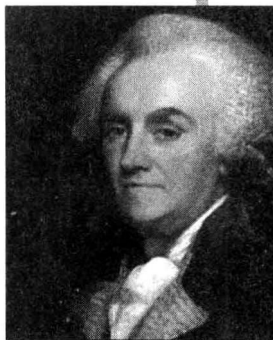
## 第一章 致儿子的信

亲爱的儿子：

你知道，我一向喜爱搜集有关祖辈的逸闻趣事。你也许还记得与我一起在英国的时候，我跋山涉水遍访家族中的老人的情景。我目前正在乡村休假，预计有一个星期来休闲享乐，我想你也许很愿意了解我的生活经历，其中有很多还是你所不熟悉的，因此我便安心坐下来，将它们写出来。此外，我这样做还有另一些原因。我从小生活在贫穷的家庭，身份低微，现在却衣食无忧，并且还在世界上享有一定的声誉。承蒙上帝的眷顾，我至今一帆风顺。我的子孙后辈或许愿意知道我的那些立身处世之道，发现有值得借鉴的地方。

每当回忆我的幸福时，我有时不禁会这样想：如果可以让我再重新选择一次自己的人生，我将乐意把这样的生活从头到尾再来一遍。我只要求像作家那样，再版时能够有机会纠正初版时的某些错误。如果可以，除了改正错误之外，我还要使一生中不愉快的经历变得更顺利一些。不过，即使这个要求被拒绝了，我还是愿意把现在的生活原原本本地重过一遍。但是由于这个愿望是不可能实现的，那么就只好回忆能使生活重演了。所以为了能将回忆久远地保留，我需要把它们记录下来。

据此，我将用一种老人固有的爱好来谈论自己和过去发生的种种。但我也不应令其他人生厌，他们也许是出于对老人的尊敬而听我的叙述。读与不读，是看个人喜好。最后（我还是坦白一点儿吧，即使我否认，估计也不会有人相信），我写自传也是为了满足自己的虚荣心。实际上，我经常听到或在一些自传



威廉·富兰克林，  
本杰明·富兰克林  
的儿子

- 1 Anecdotes  
轶闻
- 2 Obscurity  
身份低微
- 3 Felicity  
幸福,运气
- 4 Tiresome  
令人人生厌的

deal gratify my own vanity. Indeed, I scarce<sup>5</sup> ever heard or saw the introductory words, "Without vanity I may say", 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<sup>6</sup> if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life.

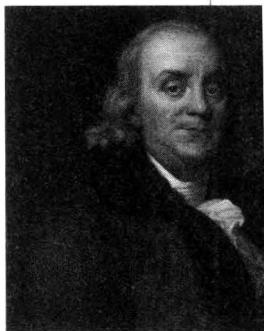
And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which lead me to the means I used and gave them success. My belief of this induces me to hope, though I must not presume, that the same goodness will still be exercised toward me, in continuing that happiness, or enabling me to bear a fatal<sup>7</sup> 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<sup>8</sup>, 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<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup> 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<sup>11</sup>. There my grandfather died

中看到，很多人在说了“我可以毫无虚荣地说”之后，又总紧接着说一大堆毫无意义的空话。大多数人都喜欢别人虚荣，无论自己多么虚荣。但是无论我在哪儿遇到它，我都会持一种公平的态度。因为我认为，很多时候虚荣对它的拥有者以及他身边的人都会有好的影响。所以，在大多情况下有人把虚荣当做生命的慰藉而感谢上帝，这都不能算荒诞可笑的事情。

现在既然谈到了感谢上帝，我愿意虔诚地承认，多亏上帝的仁慈保佑，我才能在过去时间里拥有这么多的幸福，并采用适当的方法获得了成功。这些信仰给了我希望，虽然我不应该擅自加以想象，想象着在将来上帝是否还能一如既往地眷顾我，无论是让我继续享受幸福，还是让我像其他人一样接受命中注定的逆境。我们未来的情况只有上帝知道，上帝甚至会通过苦难祝福我们。

和我同样爱好搜集家族中的奇闻逸事的伯父曾给我一些笔记，我从中了解到了关于我们祖先的一些事情。我们的家族在英国诺桑普顿郡的爱克顿教区至少住了300年，至于在这之前还有多少年，他就不知道了（或许从他们引用“富兰克林”这个姓的时候起，“富兰克林”在这以前是称呼某一个阶层的人的，当时各地的人们都在引用姓氏）。他们当时拥有30英亩的不动产和一个铁器作坊，并一直延续到我伯父这一代。家族的长子一般都被要求学习打铁，作为家族传统，我父亲和伯父都会叫长子去学习打铁这门手艺。我翻阅了爱克顿的户籍登记册，只找到了1555年以后出生、嫁娶和丧葬的记录，在教区里的之前的户籍册都已经没有了。从这个户籍登记册里我发现，我是五世以来小儿子的小儿子。我的祖父汤姆斯生于1598年，他一直住在爱克顿，直到他年纪大到不能再从事生产劳动。后来他去了牛津郡班布雷村，和他的二儿子约翰住在一块。约翰伯父是牛津郡班布雷村的一个染色工，我的父亲就是跟着他学习染色的。我的祖父在那里去世，并葬在那里。我们直到



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5 Scarce

缺乏的

6 Absurd

荒谬的，荒唐的

7 Fatal

重大的，决定性的，灾难性的，致命的

8 Northamptonshire

北安普敦郡（英国英格兰郡名）

9 Surnames 姓

10 Parish

教区，郡以下的地方行政区；知识领域，职权范围，工作区域

11 Apprenticeship

学徒身份，学徒资格，学徒期；见习期

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.<sup>12</sup>: 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<sup>13</sup> 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<sup>14</sup>.”

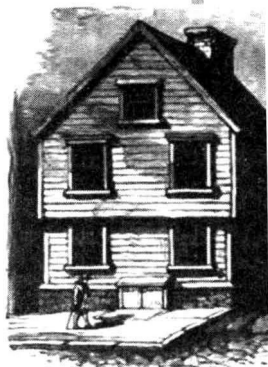
John was bred a dyer<sup>15</sup>, I believe of woolens. Benjamin was bred a silk dyer, serving an apprenticeship at London. He was an ingenious man. I remember him well, for when I was a boy he came over to my father in Boston, and lived in the house with us some years. He lived to a great age. His 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<sup>16</sup>. He had formed a short-hand of his own, which he taught me, but, never practicing 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 attendant 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<sup>17</sup>, relating to public affairs, from 1641 to 1717; many of the

1758年才看到他的墓碑。祖父的长子托马斯住在爱克顿，后来把土地留给了他唯一的女儿。托马斯伯父的女儿和她的丈夫（住在灵威波罗的一个名为费希尔的人）又把土地卖给了伊斯德先生， he 现在是土地的主人。我的祖父有4个儿子，即托马斯、约翰、本杰明和约西亚。现在，我手边没有任何的材料，但是我要把我还记得的都写出来送给你。如果我搜集的材料在我离家后还能保存完整的话，你将会从中看到更详细的记录。

托马斯伯父跟祖父学习铸铁，但是他生来聪颖过人，当地一个很权威的绅士伯麦老爷鼓励他要积极求学（他的兄弟们也都得到了鼓励）。后来，他获得了书记官的资格，成为当时地方上有声望的人，并且成为当地一切公益事业的主要推动者。不论是他自己的村子，还是有关诺桑普顿城郡的事务都与他有关。他颇受当时爱克顿教区的哈利法克斯勋爵的赏识和奖励。托马斯伯父于旧历1702年1月6日去世，离我的出生恰好有4整年。我记得当初我们从爱克顿教区的一些老人那里听到有关他的生平事迹时感到很惊讶，因为他跟我的性格和为人非常相像。

当时你还说：“他要是死在你出生的那一天，也许人家还以为这是灵魂转世呢！”

约翰伯父成了专染羊毛织品的染匠，而本杰明伯父却是一名丝织品染匠，后来又去伦敦当学徒。他是个非常聪明的人，我对他的印象很深刻。因为当我还是一个孩子的时候，他来到波士顿，和我们一起同住在我父亲那儿好几年。本杰明伯父很长寿，他的孙子塞缪尔·富兰克林现在还住在波士顿。他死后留下了两卷四开本的诗稿，内容是一些赠给亲友的即兴作品，这样的诗他也曾给过我。他自己还发明了一种速记法，并且教我使用。但是因为我从不练习，所以现在都忘光了。我是以这位伯父命名的，因为他和我父亲有着非常亲密的感情。他还是个虔诚的信教徒，只要是著名传教士的说教他从不错过，并且会用速记法将布道内容全部记下来，他身边有许多这样的笔记。他也是一位杰出的政治家，可从他的身份地位来说，他或许过分关心政治了。最近我在伦敦发现了他所搜集的从1641年到1717年间关于公共事务的重要的政论手册，



富兰克林出生之所

- 12 viz  
 <正,书,尤英>即;  
 就是
- 13 public-spirited  
 有公德心的,有爱国心的
- 14 Transmigration  
 轮回
- 15 Dyer  
 染工
- 16 Specimen  
 范例;样品;某种类型的人,家伙,怪人
- 17 Pamphlets  
 小册子

volumes are wanting as appears by the numbering, but there still remain eight volumes in folio, and twenty-four in quarto<sup>18</sup> and in octavo<sup>19</sup>. 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<sup>20</sup> 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 jointstool. When my great-great-grandfather read it to his family, he turned up the joint stool<sup>21</sup> 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<sup>22</sup> 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<sup>23</sup> 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

从书本上的卷号看来，有许多册已经丢失了，不过还保存了8卷对开本的、24卷四开本和八开本的。一位旧书商遇见了这些册子，因为我有时去他那里买书，他认识我，于是就拿给我看。看样子是我伯父在去美洲之前把它们留在了伦敦。这已是50年前的事情了。在书的空白位置上他还写了很多备注。

这个卑微的家族很早就参加了宗教改革运动，在玛丽女王统治时期他们一直都是新教徒，当时由于他们强烈地反对罗马天主教，所以常处于危险之中。他们曾拥有一本英文《圣经》，为了隐藏和保全它，他们便用带子把它反绑在一张折凳的下面和套子里面。当我的曾祖父对着全家人宣读经文时，他把折凳放在膝盖上，翻动带子下面的书页。他的一个孩子站在门口放哨，当有宗教法庭执行官走过来时便通风报信。在这种情况下，折凳又会被重新翻过来四脚落地，《圣经》就会像之前那样被隐藏起来。这段趣事是我从本杰明伯父那里听来的，这个家一直信奉着英国国教直到查理二世统治末。但是在那时，有一些阁僚因为追求不信奉国教而被开除，他们在诺桑普顿举行会议，本杰明和约西亚追随了非国教，并且一生信守不渝，家里其他的人仍然继续信奉着英国国教。

我父亲约西亚，很早就成家了，而后在1682年带着妻子和3个孩子搬到了新英格兰。非国教教会的秘密集会受到法律的禁止，而且经常受到干扰，我父亲的好友中有相当一部分人想移居到新大陆去，我父亲答应陪同他们前往美洲，他们期待着在那儿在那享受信仰的自由。在新英格兰他的妻子又生了4个孩子，后来他的第二个妻子又生了10个，所以他共17个孩子。记得有一次他的餐桌周围坐着13个孩子，他们都已经长大，各自婚嫁。我是他最小的儿子，比我小的只有两个妹妹，我出生在新英格兰的波士顿。我母亲是我父亲的第二个妻子，名叫阿拜亚·福尔杰，是彼得·福尔杰的女儿，外祖父是第一批新英格兰的移民者。可顿·马瑟在他的名为《基督在美洲的光辉事迹》的教会研究史中曾经获得荣誉奖，称他为“一个虔诚而有学问的人”，如果我记的正确的话。我听说他曾经写过各种各样的小诗，但是其中只有一



玛丽女王，英格兰统治者，1553~1558年在位，人称“血腥玛丽”

18 Quarto

四开，四开大的书本

19 Octavo

八开的纸；八开本的书

20 Protestants

新教徒

21 Joint stool

折凳

22 Apparitor

执行官，布告者，宫廷使者

23 Conventicles

非国教徒的非法或秘密集会





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<sup>24</sup> 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<sup>25</sup> 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<sup>26</sup>; but the purport<sup>27</sup> of them was, that his censures proceeded from good-will, and, therefore, he would be known to be the author.

“Because to be a libeler<sup>28</sup> (says he)  
I hate it with my heart;  
From 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<sup>29</sup> 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