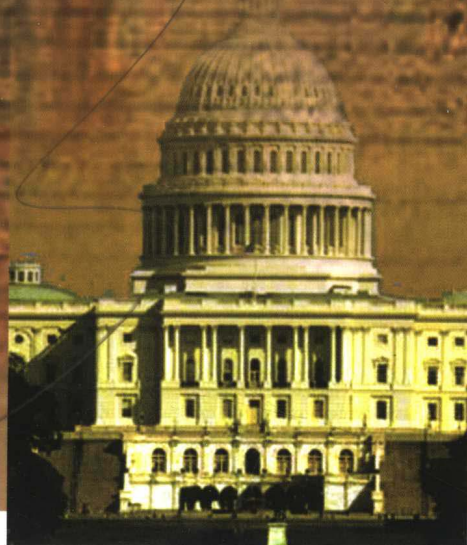


Selected Readings in American Literature

主编 王 蕾 刘著妍

美国文学选读



天津大学出版社
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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国文学选读/王蕾,刘著妍主编. —天津:天津大学出版社,2007.10

ISBN 978-7-5618-2556-3

I.美... II.①王...②刘... III.文学-作品-简介-美国 IV.I712.06

我国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2007)第 149626 号

出版发行 天津大学出版社
出版人 杨欢
地 址 天津市卫津路 92 号天津大学内(邮编:300072)
电 话 发行部:022-27403647 邮购部:022-27402742
网 址 www.tjup.com
短信网址 发送“天大”至 916088
印 刷 廊坊市长虹印刷有限公司
经 销 全国各地新华书店
开 本 169mm × 239mm
印 张 24.5
字 数 537 千
版 次 2007 年 10 月第 1 版
印 次 2007 年 10 月第 1 次
印 数 1 - 4 000
定 价 38.00 元

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前 言

《美国文学选读》是本科生英语拓展教程的组成部分,供非英语专业本科生公共选修课程教学使用,也可用作广大英语爱好者获取英美文学阅读能力的辅助教材。

本册教材编写的目的是为了全面贯彻教育部于2004年颁布的《大学英语课程教学要求(试行)》的教学方针和教学要求,适应新世纪全国大学英语教学改革的需要,以培养学生的英语综合应用能力,同时增强学生自主学习能力,提高其文化素养和文学鉴赏能力,培养社会需要的全面发展的的高素质人才。

英美文学选读系列教材,包括《英国文学选读》和《美国文学选读》两册书。

本册教材特色:

1. 覆盖面广,脉络清晰。本书以文学史为线索,介绍了从美国殖民地时期到第二次世界大战结束后的美国文学状况,涉及20余位主要作家及其代表作品近30篇,目的是使学生通过阅读此书对美国文学有一个粗线条的认识与把握。

2. 结构合理,重点突出。本书每章节主要内容包括不同历史时期文学综述、主要作家(附照片)生平和作品简介、作品情节简介、作品赏析、作品选读(含汉语译文)以及讨论题目。重点突出作品赏析与讨论部分,使学生通过对作家代表作的学习,对美国不同历史时期的主要文学流派、作家写作风格、写作特色及其语言特色有一定的了解。

3. 浅显易懂,有利自学。考虑到公共选修课程以及广大英语爱好者的学习特点,本书在每篇作品后附有英文注释,并收录了国内一些优秀译作者的部分汉语译文(节选),便于不同英语水平的学生进行课下自主学习,加深对作品的理解。因不便和译者取得联系,我们在此请译者谅解,关于版权及著作权问题,请相关人员直接与编者联系。

本书由天津医科大学、天津理工大学、天津城市建设学院、天津大学、南开大学、天津外国语学院、天津中医药大学、天津商业大学、中国人民解放军军事交通学院等高校教师参编,其所在院校外语系(部)领导均对此书给予了很大的关注与支持。在天津城市建设学院任教的美籍教师 Paul Ramsey 先生对教材的部分内容,特别是教材中的 Appreciation 部分认真作了审校。本书还承蒙在天津医科大学工作的英籍教师 Linda Perkins 女士和美籍专家 Wesley Daniels 先生的指导与帮助,谨此一并致谢。

由于编者水平有限,书中疏漏在所难免,欢迎读者批评指正。

编者

2007年8月

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Chapter One The Literature during the Colonial American Revolution

The first settlers in America five hundred years ago were the Asians known as the ancestors of American Indians or Native Americans. In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered America which he mistook for a part of India at the time and so he called the natives he saw there "Indians". His discovery led to the settlement of European immigrants from Spain, Holland, Portugal, France and England on this fascinating, vast and rich land. The English settlement in the New World emerged especially after the arrival of the ship *The Mayflower* in 1620. The settlement was called Plymouth. Many early settlers were called Separatists or Puritans, who managed to escape to the land to avoid the religious persecution of the Church of England, wishing to "purify" their religious beliefs and practices. They became the founding fathers of America and carried with them to America a code of values, a philosophy of life which took root in the New Land and became what is known as American Puritanism. American Puritanism was a dominant factor and most influential in American thought and literature. Later more and more colonies grew up at last early in the seventeenth century, and the English settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts began the main stream of the American national history. From 1607 to 1733, English colonists established thirteen colonies along the Atlantic Coast. Actually, many colonies contributed to the forming of American civilization, however, the first United States was for the most part English, sustained by English traditions, ruled by English laws, supported by English commerce and so on.

In the eighteenth century, American history witnessed two great revolutions: one was the Enlightenment and the other was American Revolution of Independence. The Enlightenment, as an intellectual revolution, originated in the European continent and then made a tremendous impact on people in this new land. They widely read the works of English scientists, philosophers and writers such as Newton and Swift and the writers of the French Enlightenment such as Voltaire. The Enlighteners believed in the power of reason and considered "enlightenment" or "education" as the decisive way to the development of a

society. They began to oppose the prevailing Puritanism, the old colonial order and religious mysticism. Meanwhile, they energetically propagated the views of the social progress, humanism and the ideal of equality.

By the mid-eighteenth century, colonial America was no longer a group of scattered, struggling settlements but a series of flourishing colonies with rich and plentiful natural resources and remarkable industrial growth. On the other hand, the British government took various measures to make the colonies politically and economically dependent on the mother country. Finally, in the 1770s, the thirteen English colonies in North America rose in arms against the oppression of the greedy British rulers for political and economic independence. On July 4, 1776, the thirteen colonies published *The Declaration of Independence*. In 1783, after 7 years of fighting, the War of Independence ended in the formation of a Federative Bourgeois Democratic Republic—the United States of America.

It was in the above-mentioned background that American literature arose, which was known as the literature of colonial period and that of revolutionary period. Now let's take a look at the literature during the colonial period.

American literature may be among the youngest national literature in the world which emerged out of obscurity into history only some four centuries ago. Yet it is original in many respects. It is original because it mirrors the history of America, and epitomizes the development of political and economic, social and psychological instructions. It is original because upon it have played most of those great historical forces and factors that have molded the modern world: immigration, nationalism, industrialism, imperialism, religion, science, technology and democracy. In addition to its realistic and vivid reflection of the making of the distinctly shaped character of American people, it is original in variety and cultural colors. Such features of American literature may find expression in its products in the colonial period.

Basically the first American literature was neither American nor really literature. It was not really literature because it was not literature as we know it—in the form of poetry, essays or fictions, rather it grew out of humble origins. Actually, it was the personal literature in its various forms such as diaries, histories, journals, letters, commonplace books, travel books, sermons, and so on. It was not American because it was the work written by immigrants from England. The first writings that we call American literature were the narratives and journals of the first settlers which were about their voyage to the new land, about adapting themselves to unfamiliar climates and crops, about dealing with Indians, about the vast land with rich dense forests and rich soil and the like. The first American literature was written by John Smith, a British captain and thus he became the first

American writer. He was then one of the leaders of the Jamestown colony and sent a letter to the Virginia Company, recording the merits of the new land and defending against the complaints made by the members who were dissatisfied with the handling of the settlement. In 1608, the greater part of this letter was published under the title *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as Hath Happened in Virginia Since the First Planting of That Colony*. The popularity of the little book made a reputation for its author and in 1612, Smith published his next book *A Map of Virginia; with a Description of the Country*. Later in 1624, his another book *General History of Virginia* was published. The American puritans, like their brothers back in England, were encouraged by their doctrine to struggle in their careers that one's life was only the course of moral training. Over the years the Puritans built a way of life that was in harmony with their somber religion, one that stressed hard work, thrift, piety, and sobriety. In addition to being true believers of their religious doctrines, the early Puritans generally had college education with a sound knowledge of the literary classics and learned much about the basic qualities of literature from the ancient and contemporary authors in the old continent. Such religious and cultural background of the Puritan writers was responsible for the two essential characteristics of the early American literature: their religious subject and imitation of English literary tradition. The Puritan values dominated much of the earliest American writing including the sermons, books, and letters of such noted Puritan clergymen as John Cotton and Cotton Mather. During his life, Cotton Mather wrote more than 450 works, an impressive output of religious writings that demonstrated that he was an example, as well as an advocate, of the Puritan ideal of hard work. The American poets of the 17th century adapted the style of established European poets. Anne Bradstreet (1612 - 1672) was one of such poets. She was the first American female poet and one of the most interesting early poets who complimented herself in her first published collection of poems as *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*. (In Greek mythology, the Muses were the nine daughters of Zeus. Each was the patron of a particular art such as poetry, dance, music, etc.) The best of the Puritan poets was Edward Taylor (1642 - 1729), who came from England as a young man and attended Harvard, later entered the major profession of the time, the ministry. Most of Taylor's work treated religious themes, with many poems based directly on the Psalms. It's a pity that Taylor did not publish any of his works. His poems were found in manuscript in 1937, more than two hundred years after his death. This discovery brought Taylor to immediate prominence in the colonial literature history and enriched American poetic heritage.

In short, the men who created the American literature were not professional writers.

They were the men who wrote about their life, so colonial literature was mostly of practical or religious nature.

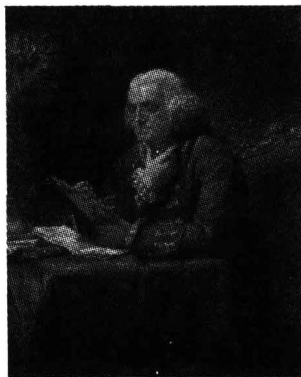
Then the revolutionary period witnessed the Enlightenment in the American literature stream of eighteenth century. American literature manifested an obvious transition from Puritanism to the Enlightenment. Although strong manifestation of Puritanism still existed in the New England consciousness, the latter half of the eighteenth century saw that the impact of the Enlightenment became dominant in American society. There was no exception to the field of literature. As a new breed of letters, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, emerged as the guides and spokesmen for the age, the great Puritans who had glorified the beginning of American literature with their writings withdrew from the literary scene, with the only exception of Jonathan Edwards. Generally speaking, the eighteenth century American literature, which was largely patterned on the writings of the eighteenth-century Englishmen, exhibited that men of letters were preoccupied with rationality and order as well as the classics, yet degrees and tastes ranged widely. For the Puritan writers, though they placed considerable value on the classics, they took the Bible as the exclusive ideal model and subordinated both their view of life and their literary style to the counterparts revealed in the Bible. Different from the Puritans, the letters of the Enlightenment found, in the humanistic and rational world of the ancient Greeks and in the sense of law and order of the ancient Romans, the ideals which were identical or similar to their own, and therefore showed a profound love for the order and beauty of classical art. As was the situation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English literature still exerted some influence on the development of American literature. For instance, the literary style that was characterized by clarity, order, and rationality, as was represented by the poetry of Alexander Pope, was dominant among the English letters of the eighteenth century. And the power of such a literary style also found an outlet in America and it led American writers, including many of the outstanding of the period, to imitate the precision and clarity of the Pope's heroic couplets as well as the elegance and decorum of his expression.

A principal feature of the eighteenth century American literature was its utilitarian tendency, as was summed up in Franklin's concise statement: "Nothing is good or beautiful but in the measure that is useful." Franklin was in the full conviction that literature ought to be utilitarian, moreover, he advised that literature should be presented "clearly, concisely, and naturally, without affected words or high-flown phrases", so that literature could be more comprehensible and effective for its purpose. In the revolutionary period, politics took central stage and most of the literary works could only be "pragmatic", urging social and political reform. Most of the writers in this period were active supporters or participants of

the American Revolution. Perhaps one of the most important American writers during the revolutionary period was Benjamin Franklin. He stood as the epitome of the Enlightenment and as the versatile, practical embodiment of rational man of the period. At the end of the 18th century in America appeared fiction and drama. Besides Philip Freneau's and Phillis Wheatley's poems, the significant prose works included Benjamin Franklin's *The Autobiography*, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, and Thomas Jefferson's *The Declaration of Independence*. Especially *The Declaration of Independence*, which was adopted on July 4, 1776, announcing the birth of a new nation, could be regarded as a typical embodiment of the literary preoccupation of the age with common sense as well as a direct and forceful expression.

Benjamin Franklin

(1706—1790)



The greatest man and ornament of the age and country in which he lived.

—Thomas Jefferson

Life and Works

Benjamin Franklin is a hero of Colonial America and remains the most famous, multi-talented figure in the nation's history. He is a blend of a philosopher, scientist, inventor, printer, musician, economist and statesman and is regarded as one of the founding fathers of America. Born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1706 into a poor soap and candle maker's family by the second wife of his father—"poor and obscure" as he says of himself in his autobiography, the tenth boy of 17 children, he only attended grammar school for two years and had very little formal education. By the time he was 10 years old, Franklin was working for his father. However, he did not enjoy the candle-making profession, and two years later, Franklin was apprenticed to his older brother, James, a printer. Franklin's formal schooling ended early but his education never did. He believed that "the doors to wisdom are never shut", and read every book he could get his hands on. During this time, he strove to make up for the deficiency by reading numerous classics. At 16, he began to publish essays commenting on social life in Boston. The essays were widely read and acclaimed for their satire. Next year,

after a quarrel with his brother, he left Boston for Philadelphia to make his own fortune. It was in this city that Franklin began his long success story. By 1730, Franklin had his own business. He began to publish *the Pennsylvania Gazette* (a newspaper). That same year, he married Deborah Read, a woman he met before his trip to England. Together they had a son, who died at four years of age and a daughter, who survived them both. Business alone could hardly absorb Franklin's energies. In 1731, Franklin founded what was considered the first public library. In 1732 he wrote and published his famous *Poor Richard's Almanac*, an annual collection of proverbs. It soon became the most popular book of its kind, largely because of Franklin's shrewd humor, and first spread his reputation. During the next several years, he founded the *Junto Club*, a club for informal discussions of scientific, economic and political ideas and so on. He established the first Fire Department, a police force, and the Academy of Philadelphia, which was to become the University of Pennsylvania. By 1748, at the age of 42, Franklin became so wealthy through his industry and thrift that he retired from business to devote the rest of his life to science, literature and diplomacy.

Benjamin Franklin was a man of many talents and interests, which were best revealed in his inventions. His inventions, besides the lightning rod, included the Franklin's stove, bifocal glasses, a miniature printing press and even a strange musical instrument called an "armonica". Franklin contributed to the theories of electricity and first applied the terms "positive" and "negative" to electrical charges. He was also the first man to study and to map the Gulf Stream. Franklin's scientific achievements won international acclaim, and he was elected to learned societies in England and France.

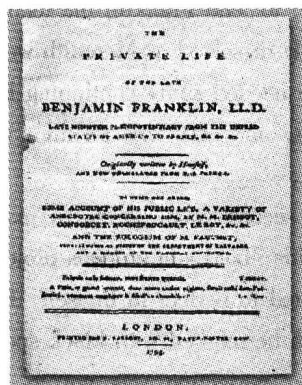
In the field of literature, Benjamin Franklin was one of the few good authors worth mentioning before the Revolutionary War. Franklin's claim to a place in literature owed much to his two masterpieces, *Poor Richard's Almanac* and *The Autobiography*. *Poor Richard's Almanac* was a successful attempt at non-theological literature in the 18th century America. It was the best seller during the twenty-five successive years. It had great influence on the Colonies in North America and Europe. The maxims such as "God helps those who help themselves", "Diligence is the mother of good luck", "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise" and many others are frequently quoted even today, because they either embody universal truths or praise the virtues of thrift and industry. *The Autobiography* reflected the author's unwavering determination in self-education, and embodied his firm resolution to fight for the progressive cause.

Franklin's public career began in the early 1750s. He was one of the leading founding fathers of the United States of America. He signed *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Constitution of the United States*, and served as the new nation's ablest diplomat. Franklin

himself served the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the new United States of America, in one way or another, for most of his life. He ended his public life as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Franklin had a simple formula for success. He believed that successful people worked just a little harder than other people. Benjamin Franklin certainly did. To Benjamin Franklin, there was no greater purpose in life than to “live usefully”.

The Autobiography

Plot



A year after Benjamin Franklin's death, his autobiography entitled *Memoires De La Vie Privee* was published in Paris in March of 1791. The first English translation was published in London in 1793. It was regarded as the greatest autobiography of the colonial America. Franklin began writing his autobiography in 1771, at the age of sixty-five. He finished the four parts of the writing in four different periods of time. The first part of 68 pages was composed in Hampshire, England, in 1771, covering the explanation of why he wrote the book, remarking on his family apprenticeship and his attempts at becoming an independent printer. This part was addressed to Franklin's son William, the Royal Governor of New Jersey at that time (1771). While in England at the estate of the Bishop of St. Asaph's in Twyford, Ben Franklin began by saying that it might be agreeable to his son to know some of the incidents of his father's life, so with a week's uninterrupted leisure, he was beginning to write them for William. He started with some anecdotes of his grandfather, uncles, and father and mother. He dealt with his childhood, his fondness of reading, and his serving as an apprentice to his brother James. After improving his writing skills through study of the *Spectator* by Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele, Franklin wrote an anonymous paper and slipped it under the door of the printing house by night. Not knowing its author, James and his friends praised the paper and it was published in the *Courant*, and this encouraged Franklin to produce more essays which were also published. But when a fresh disagreement arose between the brothers, he chose to leave James.

Franklin found work in London until an opportunity of returning to Philadelphia as a merchant's assistant came to him. But when the merchant took ill, he returned to manage Keimer's shop. Keimer soon came to feel that Franklin's wages were too high and provoked a quarrel which caused the latter to quit. At this point, a fellow employee, Hugh Meredith, suggested to Franklin that they go into partnership and start a printing shop of their own. This was subsidized by funds from Meredith's father, though most of the work was done by Franklin as Meredith was not much of a press worker and was given to drinking. They established their business, and planned to start a newspaper, but when Keimer heard of this plan, he rushed out a paper of his own, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. This publication limped along for three quarters of a year before Franklin bought the paper from Keimer and made it "extremely profitable". The partnership also gained the printing for the Pennsylvania assembly. When Hugh Meredith's father experienced financial setbacks and couldn't continue backing the partnership, two friends separately offered to lend Franklin the money he needed to stay in business. Finally, the partnership amicably dissolved as Meredith went to North Carolina, and Franklin took from each friend half the needed sum, continuing his business in his own name. In 1730 he married Deborah Read, and after this he drew up proposals for a "Subscription Library"—the first public library.

Franklin wrote 14 more pages in France in 1784, the second part, giving a more detailed account of his public library plan. He then discussed his "bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection", listing thirteen virtues he wanted to perfect in himself. He created a book with columns for each day of the week, in which he marked with black spots his offenses against each virtue. He eventually realized that perfection was not to be attained, but felt himself better and happier because of his attempt.

In August 1788 Franklin added a third section of 117 pages in Philadelphia. The author said he would not be able to utilize his papers as much as he had expected, since many were lost in the recent Revolutionary War. He had, however, found and quoted a couple of his writings from the 1730's that survived. In 1732, Franklin first published his *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which became very successful. He also continued his profitable newspaper. Franklin studied languages, reconciled with his brother James, and lost a four-year-old son to smallpox. Franklin's club, the Junto, grew and broke off into subordinate clubs. Franklin became Clerk of the General Assembly in 1736, and in the following year became Comptroller to the Postmaster General, which made it easier for him to get reports and fulfill subscriptions for his newspaper. He proposed improvements in the city watch and fire prevention.

As Franklin continued to succeed, he provided the capital for several of his workers to

start printing houses of their own in other colonies. He made further proposals for the public good, including some for the defense of Pennsylvania, in which he had to contend with the pacifist position of the Quakers. In 1742 he invented the Franklin stove, refusing a patent on the device. After helping Dr. Thomas Bond establish a hospital, he helped pave the streets of Philadelphia and drew up a proposal for Dr. Fothergill about doing so in London. In 1753 Franklin became Deputy Postmaster General. The next year, as war with France was expected, representatives of several colonies, including Franklin, met with the Indians to discuss defense. At this time, Franklin drew up a proposal for the union of the colonies, but it was not adopted. Then *The Autobiography* discussed “the Rise and Progress of Franklin’s Philosophical Reputation.” He started experiments with electricity and wrote letters about them, which were published in England as a book.

Written sometime between November, 1789 and Franklin’s death on April, 17, 1790, the fourth section was very brief. After Franklin and his son arrived in London, the former was counselled by Dr. Fothergill on the best way to advocate his cause on behalf of the colonies. Franklin visited Lord Granville, president of the King’s Privy Council, who asserted that the king was the legislator of the colonies. He then met the proprietors. But the respective sides were far from any kind of agreement. The proprietors asked Franklin to write a summary of the colonists’ complaints and when he did so, their solicitor, for reasons of personal enmity, delayed a response. Over a year later, the proprietors finally responded to the assembly regarding the summary with a “flimsy Justification of their Conduct.” The assembly during this delay had prevailed on the governor to pass a taxation act, and Franklin defended the act in English court so that it could receive royal assent. While the assembly thanked Franklin, the proprietors, enraged at the governor, turned him out and threatened legal action against him.

Appreciation

The *Autobiography* is generally accepted as a classic of its kind, and it inspires and delights readers everywhere. It is a simple yet immensely fascinating record of a man rising to fame and wealth from a state of poverty and humble origins, a faithful account of the colorful career of America’s first self-made man. The work portrays a fascinating picture of life in Philadelphia, as well as shrewd observations on the literature, philosophy and religion of the time. His story proves that with determination and dedication, success is within anyone’s grasp. Numerous critics have often called Franklin the “first American”. His autobiography provides a good example of why this is so.

The *Autobiography* is, first of all, a typical embodiment of Puritanism and the

Enlightenment which were prevailing in 18th century America. It is a Puritan document which puts great emphasis on self-examination, self-analysis, self-improvement and on moral and ethical values. The Enlightener's stress on rationalism, order, and education is found with full expression in the writings. In reading *The Autobiography*, one sees an old man serene and cool, casting a backward glance as he looks intensely into his past life. With pen in hand, he carefully notes down his experience as if in this way, he could communicate with God. The meticulous chart of thirteen virtues he sets for himself to cultivate to combat the tempting vices, the stupendous effort he makes to improve his own person, the belief that God helps those who help themselves and his idea that every calling is a service to God—all of these indicate that Franklin is intensely Puritan. Then, the book is also a convincing illustration of the Puritan work ethic. In order to do well in the world, one has to be industrious, frugal, and prudent.

The Autobiography establishes in literary form the first example of the fulfillment of the American Dream. Franklin demonstrates the possibilities of life in the New World through his own rise from the lower middle class as a youth to one of the most admired men in the world as an adult. Furthermore, he asserts that he achieves his success through a solid work ethic. He proves that even undistinguished persons in Boston can, through industry, become great figures of importance in America. The book demonstrates Franklin's belief that the new world of America is a land of opportunities. These opportunities may be reached through hard work and wise management. Franklin believes that "one man of tolerable abilities will work great changes and accomplish great affairs among mankind". Thus Franklin's rags-to-riches experience becomes the prototype of the American dream of success. Self-reliance, faith in the progress of society and the ideals of the future, practical and optimistic attitude towards life, have all been ideas that have inspired generations of Americans ever since.

The Autobiography also tells us today what life was like in 18th century America. Naturally, the story is told from the perspective of only one person, but in an age when literacy is low and writings are not widespread, any surviving documents are of value to historians who wish to learn how people live from day to day. Specifics of life in colonial America abound in the book, and this is invaluable information to anyone wishing to learn more about that period. Of course, one must always keep in mind that life for Franklin is not like life for everyone else, he represents only one person out of many thousands.

Still, Franklin's *Autobiography* is a reflection of the 18th century idealism. Often called the Age of Reason, the 18th century is the age of men such as Locke and Isaac Newton. Intellectualism flourishes along with scientific inventions and advances in political