

美國十二名人傳略

高等学校公共外语泛读教材  
高等教育自学考试英语教材

英 语 注 释 读 物  
美 国 十 二 名 人 传 略

TWELVE  
FAMOUS  
AMERICANS

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## 内 容 提 要

本书是美国麦克米兰出版公司专为学习英语的读者出版的一本读物。它通过美国独立以来许多科学领域的名人小传,形象地向中等以上程度的读者提供英语知识。本书语言规范、措词严谨,富有科学性、故事性和趣味性。

为帮助读者学习,在课文后附有译文,对语言难点进行了注释。原文所附的测试理解能力的练习和答案也一并收入。

本书已被正式列为高等教育自学考试英语专业必读教材,也被推荐为高等学校英语泛读教材。同时适合于科技人员、中学教师 and 高中学生使用。

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## 前 言

要学好英语，提高英语阅读能力，大量阅读是非常重要的途径。但这种阅读不是任意的，应该通过精选，才能收到良好的效果。一本好的读物，应该是语言规范、行文流畅、词汇丰富、内容生动，并且具有一定的思想性。这样的读物不仅能够引人入胜，而且有益于开发智力，陶冶情操。

《美国十二名人传略》堪称是这样一本读物。它是由美国麦克米兰出版公司专为学习英语的读者出版的。本书文笔流畅，措词严谨，寓科学性、知识性、故事性于一炉，受到各国读者的好评。它通过美国独立以来许多领域的名人小传，饶有情趣地介绍了十二位名人（其中包括科学家、企业家、政治家、哲学家、诗人、运动员、作曲家等）的奋斗生平。他们大部分是自学成才的。阅读这本书，不仅可以丰富词汇，扩大知识面，提高英语阅读能力，而且有益于培养青年们锲而不舍的进取精神。

为帮助读者特别是自学者学习，我们在课文后附有译文，并对语言难点进行了注释。原书所附的测试理解能力的练习和答案一并收入。

本书已被陕西省高等教育自学考试委员会正式列为英语专业自学考试“阅读与理解”课程的必读教材。它也可作为外语院校英语专业一、二年级学生的阅读教材。

1984年7月教育部主持制订的《大学英语教学大纲》明确要求：今后的公共英语课要逐步做到分科教学，除精读外，还要加强泛读和听说。为此，一些重点大学推荐将此书

作为高等学校公共英语课的泛读教材。它对于准备报考研究生的同学提高英语阅读能力尤为适用。此外，本书也适合科技人员、电大学生、中学教师和高中学生提高英语阅读能力使用。

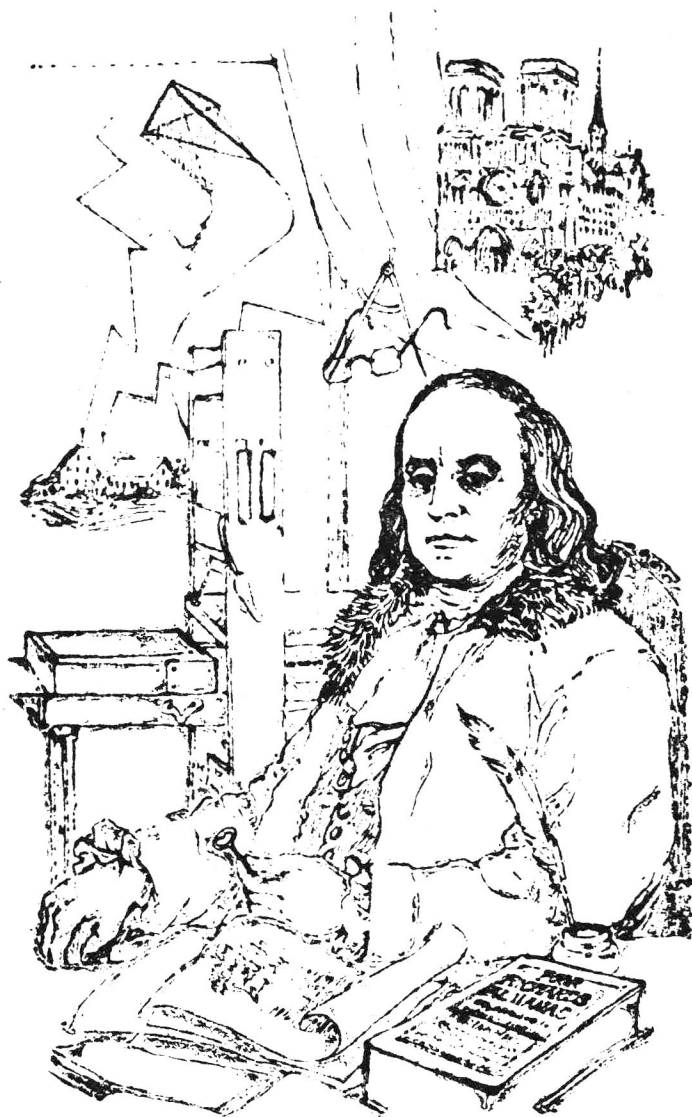
本书由西安交通大学郝克琦副教授校阅。在译注过程中，还得到陕西省翻译协会副理事长兼秘书长、西安外国语学院吕瑞昌副教授，西安交通大学施明德副教授，以及在交通大学外文系任教的美国专家 Kathy Dennis 女士与英国专家 Colin Painter 先生的具体指导和帮助。本书注释本的问世，得到西安交通大学出版社的热情支持。在此一并致谢。

需要说明的是，为了不影响原文的完整性，书中个别人物的某些政治观点尽管值得商榷，我们还是不作删节地译出了，请读者阅读时注意鉴别。另外，文内带有 \* 号的单词，在原著中附有词汇表。鉴于本书已有译文，而且附有中文注释，故原书的词汇表不再收录。

由于我们水平有限，错误在所难免，欢迎读者批评指正。

译 注 者

一九八四年十二月



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## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

### *Inventor and Statesman*

On January 17, 1706, Benjamin Franklin was born on Milk Street in the town of Boston, Massachusetts. He was the youngest son among the seventeen children of Josiah Franklin, a candle maker. The whole family worked in the little shop, making candles from the fat of sheep.

Young Franklin did not like the smell of candles and, when no one was watching, often left the shop to go down to the harbor. Because Boston was the largest port in the American colonies, young Ben was able to see ships from every nation. He tells us in one of his later writings that he had "a \*hankering for the sea." If his father had allowed it, he would have left Boston and become a sailor. Josiah Franklin grew very angry with this troublesome son. He refused to let him go to sea, but he gave him his choice between making candles and working in the shop of his brother James, a printer. Ben chose printing and signed a paper that required him to work for his brother until he had reached the age of twenty-two.

Ben was a very good printer. He learned very quickly how to manage the \*presses and put letters together to make words. He liked the printshop chiefly because by working there he could learn more about books. He became friendly with other boys of his own age who worked for owners of bookstores. These boys often lent him books at night, if he would promise to return them early the next morning before the shops opened. Many times, Ben sat up the whole night reading and studying because he was so eager to learn. Since he had not been able to go to school for very long, he had to be his own teacher.

James gave his brother a bed and his food, but very

little money. However, Ben did save a few pennies to buy books. When he had read these books, he sold them and bought others. When the other printers went out at noon to eat a heavy meal in a restaurant, Ben remained in the printshop eating very little and spending the rest of his lunchtime with a book.

In 1721, James Franklin began to publish a newspaper, the *New England Courant*. Ben had taught himself to write well by reading good authors. He would put down his own thoughts, copying the style of a famous writer, and then would read the author's books again to see how exact his imitation was. He began to write for the *Courant*, pretending to be an old woman called "Silence Dogood." James printed letters from Mrs. Dogood in the *Courant* during the spring and summer of 1722. These letters made fun of various people and things in Boston, and because of them James was put in prison. Even though he would not tell the authorities who had written the letters, James was released. Because Ben was afraid of being named as the author of the offensive letters, he decided to leave Boston and go to New York.

In those days, New York was such a small city that it did not have a newspaper. In fact, there was only one printer. When Ben asked him for a job, he said he did not need help and advised Ben to go on to Philadelphia, the largest city in the colonies at that time. Ben arrived in Philadelphia with very little money. The first thing he did was to buy three large loaves of bread. He put two of the loaves under his arms, and ate the other one, walking up the main street of Philadelphia and looking at all the buildings and people. A young woman who saw how strange and awkward he looked laughed at him. Ben remembered this meeting all his life; Deborah Read, the young woman, later became Mrs. Benjamin Franklin.

Ben began to work for William Keimer, a printer. He soon became the best printer in Philadelphia. During his free time, he organized a club. Most of the members were workers, and the club was named for their working clothes,

“The Leather Apron.”

The members met every Friday evening and talked about science, politics, literature, and philosophy. At the end of each meeting the members decided what they would discuss the following week in order to be able to prepare by reading about the chosen subject. Ben proposed that “The Leather Apron” establish a public library to which people could belong by paying a small amount every month for the use of the library room and new books. This was the first public library in America.

Books were expensive in the colonies in those days, and there were no magazines. The closest thing to the modern magazine was the \*almanac, a type of book published every year giving information about the weather to expect and much good advice on planting and harvesting crops. The almanac also noted the days when the sun would be far north or south, when the moon would be full, and when the tides would be high or low. It included, too, amusing stories and news scattered among the items of information. Ben Franklin began to publish almanacs in 1732. He pretended that they had been written by a person called Richard Saunders. “Poor Richard,” as Franklin called him, and his almanacs soon were known all over the colonies. These little \*pamphlets have been translated into almost every known language.

Why was *Poor Richard's Almanac* so popular? First, Franklin was a scientist, and everything that he printed about the stars and planets was correct. In addition to dependable information, there were pieces of verse and many short, wise sayings. Poor Richard believed that people should work hard, save their money, live simply, and be honest. In all sorts of ways he taught the people of all the colonies that the way to build a prosperous country was to be absolutely honest and thorough in whatever they did.

Here are some pieces of advice from *Poor Richard's Almanac*:

A word to the wise is sufficient.

#### 4 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

The used key is always bright.

If you love life, do not waste time, for that's what life is made of.

One today is worth two tomorrows.

Keep your shop and your shop will keep you.

If you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself.

A small leak will sink a great ship.

If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some.

Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other.

Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

In 1737 Benjamin Franklin was named the official \*postmaster of Philadelphia. This was an important job because sending mail quickly and regularly would help to unite the people of the colonies. Franklin was postmaster for fourteen years, and for a while he was head of the postal system for all of the thirteen colonies. By 1751, when he gave up the job, the combined post offices were able to show a large profit. This was the first time the postal service in America had ever made any money.

At the same time, Franklin was clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, which made laws for the colony. Always thinking of ways to make life better for the citizens of Philadelphia, he planned a fire department, a police force, and a school which later became the University of Pennsylvania.

In a little book called *Proposals Relating To The Education Of Youth In Pennsylvania* Franklin described some of his ideas. Schools, he thought, should be built near the edge of towns, where there was plenty of room for play. The schools should be built near rivers so that pupils could swim every day. The pupils should eat simple, healthful meals together in one dining room.

Nature, as well as education, interested Franklin. He wanted men to apply the laws of nature in practical ways and to correspond with each other about what they had discovered concerning plants, animals, agriculture, and the weather. Franklin himself wrote many letters to other colonists about scientific matters. Later, he established the American Philosophical Society, now a great scientific organization with members all over the world. The group, when it began, included a geographer, a \*mechanic, a \*mathematician, and a scientist. Franklin offered to be the secretary. The members met every month and discussed letters that they had received from other members in various parts of the country.

The story of Franklin's \*kite is known everywhere. He had been experimenting with electricity, and in 1751 had published a paper saying that electricity and lightning were the same thing. Both were bright, both were the same yellow color, both made a noise, both made \*crooked flashes, and both would pass through metal.

In order to test his claim, he and his son took a kite made of silk (because it is stronger than paper), and added a long wire to the top and a piece of silk to the end of the string with which he controlled the kite. A metal key was hung where the silk and the string met. They flew the kite up into a thunderstorm, keeping themselves dry under a roof. When the kite reached the storm clouds, Franklin noticed that all the loose parts of his string began to stand up and shake. When the kite touched lightning, a spark ran down the string to the key; a rush of electric sparks began to appear on the key. As the string became wetter, the sparks came faster. They were sparks of electricity. Lightning was indeed electricity.

Franklin decided to use this knowledge in a practical way. He invented the lightning rod. This is a large piece of metal set on the highest part of a building, like the wire on the top of his kite. The rod is connected with the ground by a long wire. If lightning struck the building protected by the rod, it would be caught by the tall rod

and would run down the wire into the ground. There would be no danger of fire.

Franklin also invented the "open" or "Franklin" stove. Most people in his time cooked food and heated their rooms with open fires. This was not a good system, however, because most of the heat went up the chimney instead of out into the room. A person standing close to a fireplace in order to get warm would be hot on one side, cold on the other, and would prevent the heat from reaching other people. Franklin's stove was an open box made of iron. The fire was built inside the box and a pipe carried the smoke up the chimney. The \*flues were arranged so efficiently that Franklin's stove would heat a room with only one-fourth as much coal or wood as a fireplace. It could be put either against the wall or in the middle of the room.

Franklin is remembered especially for his work in the formation of the United States of America. When the Revolution began, a committee of five men was asked to write a paper explaining to the world their reasons for the war with England. Franklin was one of the members of the committee. In 1776, he and the other members of the committee wrote the famous Declaration of Independence.

Very soon after the Revolution began, Franklin was sent as Minister to France. He was asked to persuade the French king to help the American cause. This was a difficult task, for the Americans had been defeated again and again during the first year of the war. In 1777, when the English General Burgoyne was forced to surrender his whole army to the Americans, the French government decided to enter the war. Franklin, representing the new United States, signed the "Treaty of Commerce and \*Alliance" with France. In this treaty, France recognized the United States as an independent country and agreed to send an army to America to help defeat the English.

In 1781, Lord Cornwallis surrendered to the French and American armies at Yorktown, Virginia. After the war Franklin stayed in Europe to make the peace treaty with

England. This treaty, signed in 1783, was very favorable to the United States. Franklin was glad the war was over. He believed that there was "never a good war or a bad peace."

John Adams, also from Massachusetts, and the second President of the United States, may have been right when he said that Franklin's reputation was greater than that of the famous philosophers and scientists Leibnitz and Newton; the warlike King of Prussia, Frederick the Great; or the reformer and writer, Voltaire.

In March, 1785, Congress recalled Franklin, who had served his country abroad for eight years, and appointed Thomas Jefferson American Ambassador to France in Franklin's place. In accepting the appointment, Jefferson said that though he might follow Franklin, neither he nor any man could really replace him.

Almost as soon as Franklin returned to Pennsylvania, he was elected President of the Executive Council of that new state. This office resembled that of governor today. He did not want to work in public service any more, but he felt that he could not disappoint those who wished him to serve in this way, and so he accepted the position.

During this time, Franklin organized one of the first anti-slavery societies in the world. He wrote and signed the first protest against slavery ever sent to the Congress of the United States.

Franklin was an honored member of every important scientific society in the world. He exchanged letters with such famous philosophers and scientists as David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, Dr. Joseph Priestly, the English scientist; and Edmund Burke, the English statesman.

As an old man, Franklin remained active in his own country's government. When a convention met in Philadelphia to write a constitution that would more closely unite the thirteen quarreling states, he helped to guide these meetings, even though he was then eighty-one years old.

Franklin was successful in many fields. He contributed a great deal to the development of science, he was a

brilliant journalist, and he was always interested in improving the welfare of mankind. He encouraged public education, and was one of the greatest statesmen of his country. He did more than any other American of his day to make America respected in the old countries of Europe. When he died in April, 1790, he was universally mourned.



## HENRY DAVID THOREAU

### *Naturalist and Philosopher*

*Th* The small town of Concord, Massachusetts is famous as the scene of one of the first battles in the American Revolutionary War. There Thoreau was born in 1817 and there he spent most of his life, seldom traveling very far away. Concord later became famous as a home for philosophers, but Thoreau was the only real native among them; the others came there from different places.

Thoreau's father was part French; his mother was the daughter of a New England minister. Young Thoreau was tough and strong, but not handsome; he had a short body, long legs, and a big nose; his manners were extremely awkward.

— Though the family wasn't wealthy, they sent young Henry to the local Concord Academy, where, as he said, he was "fitted, or rather made unfit, for college." However, he successfully completed his education at Harvard College in 1837, at the early age of twenty. He did not like to follow an organized course of study but preferred to spend many hours in the library where the careful reading of books became the basis of his education. Even as a young man, he showed love for a free, simple life. In some of his college papers he wrote against the "blind love of wealth," and stated that a man should work only one day during the week and "keep the rest of it for joy and wonder"—not for getting money, property, or power. He considered work a poor way to spend one's time, and believed that such effort was foolish when compared with enjoyment of nature.

Thoreau's father earned his living by making pencils. After college Thoreau assisted his father for a while in the