

Poor Richard's Almanack Study Guide

Poor Richard's Almanack by Benjamin Franklin

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Plot Summary

This small book is a collection of sayings, most of which are the original thoughts of Benjamin Franklin. The sayings were originally published in a series of yearly booklets known as "Poor Richard's Almanack" between the years of 1732-1758. Franklin's sayings are often self-explanatory and are just as true today as they were when they were written. The difficulty in understanding Franklin's sayings comes mainly from his use of colloquial language and spelling.

While this collection of sayings may at first appear to be unrelated, closer study will uncover a series of themes which Franklin returns to often in his writings. These themes include ideas of what qualities one should look for in a friend, things to do to remain healthy, the importance of saving and not being wasteful, the glory of hard work, and the problems one's own self can cause. In his sayings, Franklin also shares his views of lawyers and preachers, sometimes even talks about political or governmental issues. Franklin also touches on the characteristics of wives and the challenges of married life.

One important facet to keep in mind while reading Franklin's quotes is the many literary elements he uses in his writing. One of his favorite elements is the use of personification, or the act of giving an inanimate object the qualities of a living being. For instance, in one of his sayings Franklin writes of the qualities of happiness and avarice noting that the two have never "seen" each other, an act impossible for these qualities which have no eyes. Franklin also offers his readers word puzzles and quotes that require thought to determine the true meaning. Remember that in this time period, people got most of their entertainment from media such as Franklin's almanac; therefore, they enjoyed his witty and thought provoking writing style.

Another detail that should be kept in mind when reading and interpreting these sayings is that Franklin wrote his almanac under the pen name of Richard Saunders. Because of the cloaked nature of his writing, Franklin felt more free to express his true feelings about certain subjects, such as government and the nature of wives. Franklin also used his almanac as a way to spotlight his sense of humor and intelligence.



Section One Through Page 20

Section One Through Page 20 Summary and Analysis

This small book is a collection of sayings, most of which are the original thoughts of Benjamin Franklin. The sayings were originally published in a series of yearly booklets known as "Poor Richard's Almanack" between the years of 1732-1758. Franklin's sayings are often self-explanatory and just as true today as they were when they were written. The difficulty in understanding Franklin's sayings come through his use of colloquial language and spelling.

Franklin begins his list of sayings with a suggestion to view each new year as a clean slate, leaving bad habits behind with the old year. In the final saying on page 6 Franklin presents his first quote about lawyers. The impression is given that Franklin does not care much for lawyers as he indicates a lawyer will pick a man to the bone, somewhat like a pair of cats will do to a fish. On the following page, Franklin presents a longer saying dealing with the need to attend to one's own business. He rebukes those people who meddle in areas they do not belong, especially those who do so to the extent they neglect their own duties. This neglect can lead to circumstances that injure others or cause them to be inconvenienced.

On page 7, Franklin introduces his first quotes that deal with keeping the body well. Franklin advises against eating late at night. He also suggests that milk and fish do not make a good mealtime combination. Also on page 7, Franklin presents a rhymed poem. This short poem features an enclosed rhyme and compares the personalities of death, a lawyer and a preacher. Although these three seem to be an unusual team, Franklin plays on their similarities.

In the final saying on page 8, Franklin gives advice on how to morally rise above others. If one seeks to injure others, he is morally below even those who are his enemies. Those who seek revenge are even with their enemies. The only way to morally rise above it all is to forgive those who do harm. On page 10 there is a string of quotes that refer to Franklin's opinion of money and the need to not waste money. Franklin feels the only good reason to have money is to use it. However, he also encourages saving money as well as the intelligent use of money. Along with his admonishment not to waste money, Franklin also advises his readers not to waste time.

Along the lines of wealth, Franklin writes on page 12 the qualities he feels really constitute a wealthy person. These wealthy people, Franklin writes, are those who are thankful for what they have. On page 13, Franklin shares a bit of insight on preachers. He fittingly compares these people to candles which are destroyed in their attempt to bring light, representative of God's word, to others.

Being able to conquer and control one's own self is another quality Franklin thinks highly of. On page 14 Franklin indicates that those who gain control over themselves are more



deserving of reward and respect than those who rule countries. On page 16 Franklin injects humor into his writing, advising his readers to "Make haste slowly." This statement is an oxymoron intended to encourage people to even make rushed decisions with a certain amount of care.

On page 18 Franklin shares his view of a long life. Franklin believes a life well lived regardless of its endurance is of more value than a long life in general. Franklin also uses his sayings to encourage those who feel they are up against a big job. For instance, the ninth quote on page 19 indicates that a big job can be completed, even by actions that seem small and insignificant.



Section Two Through Page 40

Section Two Through Page 40 Summary and Analysis

On page 21 Franklin lists the qualities that lead to wealth, or fortune. These qualities include industry, perseverance and frugality. On page 22 Franklin gives tribute to the poet Homer, a tribute that can be extended to include many other artists as well. Franklin indicates that during his life Homer, a blind storyteller, was virtually unknown, unappreciated and poor. After his death, however, there have been many wealthy people in high places fighting over the right to lay claim to Homer and his writings. Unfortunately, this is the way life is for many talented writers, authors and musicians—it is only after they die that their work is truly appreciated.

On page 23 Franklin shares a bit of advice about making promises. He writes that while making promises may bring friends, it is important to keep these promises, or these friends will turn into enemies. The fifth quote on page 24 gives Franklin's view of education. He believes that without an education even intelligent people are wasted resources, like silver buried in a mine. Franklin also spends a great deal of time warning against pointing out the faults of others without looking at the faults of self. This is seen on Page 25 where Franklin encourages his readers to examine themselves before they comment on the faults of others.

In the second quote on page 26, Franklin treats his readers to a play on words. In this quote, a man by the name of Fogg attempts to clear up an English saying by using Greek. By using a more complicated language to clarify a language known to his listeners, Mr. Fogg leaves his audience in a proverbial fog. In his first saying on page 27, Franklin muses on the nature of sin, rationalizing it is forbidden because it is hurtful, not vice versa. Also on page 27 Franklin scolds those who would be lazy. He admonishes idle people by writing that God gives these lazy people legs and arms, and intends for them to use these appendages in a useful way.

In his almanac, Franklin also writes several comments concerning women and their tongues. One example of this is found in the sixth quote on page 28, where Franklin indicates that in death a man's heart is the last organ to stop moving while in a woman it is her tongue. On page 29, Franklin discusses the anatomy of lies. A lie, he writes, stands on one leg, indicating that lies are easily pushed over and debunked, while the truth is planted firmly on two feet. On page 30 Franklin warns his readers not to overlook inexpensive and seemingly unimportant repairs as these may cause one's undoing. A popular modern quote indicates that the difference between men and boys is how much their toys cost. Ever wonder who was the author of this saying? On page 32 Franklin includes a saying very similar to the modern version.

Continuing his lawyer theme, on page 34 Franklin exclaims God does sometimes work wonders. The particular wonder he speaks of is the wonder of finding an honest lawyer. Next, on page 36, Franklin discloses the secret of serving God. He suggests the best



way to serve God is to do good to other people. Finally, in the fourth quote on page 38, Franklin shares with his readers the secret to living with ease, or peace. He writes that in order to live in peace, people should do what they know they should do, not just what they want to do.



Section Three Through Page 40

Section Three Through Page 40 Summary and Analysis

On page 41 Franklin makes a thoughtful observation of discontented men. He says these men cannot find an "easy chair," meaning they will be uncomfortable and ill at ease where ever they are. Also on page 41 there is a saying which refers directly to Bridget, the wife of Saunders. In this particular quote, Bridget is portrayed as a loud, overbearing woman. Finally, in the second quote on page 42, Saunders speaks of himself. He describes himself as being "poor and lame," qualities which endeared him to the American people. In his saying, Saunders warns the people not to act in anger, as these actions will bring nothing but shame.

On page 43 Franklin makes a comment on the affect riches can have on a person. Franklin aptly notes that a person generally does not have control of their wealth, but instead their wealth controls them. Another characteristic that many people share is their tendency to wish for things for themselves. Franklin notes on page 44 that if a person could have even half the things that he wished for, his troubles would be increased. One of Franklin's most popular quotes appears on page 45. The suggestions to go to bed early and then get up early to get a fresh start on the new day is Franklin's advice to others who want to gain health, wealth and wisdom.

Franklin states a simple fact on page 46 that is often overlooked by most people. If a person does not wish to be caught doing something, Franklin writes, then they should not do this thing. On page 48, Franklin makes a statement about the worth of things. He writes that it is not until something is gone that the worth of that thing is truly appreciated. Franklin uses the example of well water to illustrate this saying; however, the truth of the statement can refer to many different things.

On page 49 Franklin treats his readers to a word game, requiring the reader to remove letters from a word to discover the answer to the riddle. Next, on page 50, Franklin warns his readers to be very observant of their intended before marriage, but to learn to not see all that happens after marriage. This saying is another example of Franklin's views of marriage. Franklin also includes a word of warning about the delicate nature of the reputation on page 51. He writes that like glass or china, the reputation is easily damaged, and once damaged is never the same.

On page 53 Franklin encourages the virtue of patience. He writes that by practicing patience one can have what they want. This means that by being willing to wait for what something, one will be more likely to get it. Along with the virtue of patience, Franklin also encourages learning in his sayings. On page 55, for instance, Franklin writes that reading, meditation and discourse will make a man full, profound and clear. On page 56, Franklin turns the modern day idea of healthy eating on its head. He disagrees with the



idea that partaking of three square meals a day is a good eating habit. Franklin instead says these eating habits are an example of bad living.

On page 59 Franklin gives his readers something to think about. If a person's possessions and riches really belong to them, why are they not allowed to take these possessions with them after death? Franklin does not give the answer to this thought provoking question, letting his readers instead puzzle it out for themselves. Poetry is another form in which Franklin arranges his catchy sayings. On page 60 Franklin tells the story of a maiden in the form of a short poem arranged in rhyming quatrains.



Section Four Through Page 77

Section Four Through Page 77 Summary and Analysis

On page 61 Franklin warns his readers not to tell others all they know or all they owe. Those who talk constantly about all they know are irritating to those around them. To avoid this situation, Franklin writes, keep some matters private. On page 62 Franklin describes the characteristics of a truly great person. These people are those who will not hurt even the smallest and most insignificant creatures and will also not cower before those who are supposedly in a higher place than they. On page 63 Franklin writes about the need for people, and things, to serve in their proper places. As Franklin notes, a handsaw has a proper function, but its proper function is not that of a razor. Also, people have a proper function. Some people are called for places in ministry, others for manual labor or creative pursuits. It is important that everyone find their place in the world and in society, Franklin says.

On page 64 Franklin presents a short story about the way a person views a situation differently when it happens to them and when it happens to others. In his story, a farmer tells a judge that the farmer's bull has killed one of the judge's cows. When the farmer asks what is to be done, the judge replies the farmer must give the judge his bull, or else pay the price of the dead cow. However, when the farmer discloses that it was instead the judge's bull that killed the farmer's cow, the judge decides the case should be viewed from a different stance.

In his writing, Franklin often speaks of the dangers of overindulging in alcohol. One example of this appears on page 65 where Franklin warns that drinking wine will lessen one's truthfulness. Again, along the lines of his dislike for overeating, Franklin reports on page 66 that this habit will cause the brain not to function at its best. In the fourth quote on page 68, Franklin underscores the idea that what a person does is more important than what they say. Along with the idea that what a person does is important, Franklin also introduces the idea that having a trade or marketable talent is important. In the second quote on page 69, Franklin suggests that if a person has a trade, they have a way to earn both profit and honor.

On page 70 Franklin includes a simple bit of wisdom that every jury and judge should follow. By not punishing those who do what is wrong, Franklin writes, the punishment falls on those who do what is right. Next, on page 72, Franklin talks about ignorance. It is not shameful, Franklin says, to be ignorant. What is shameful, he writes, is the act of being unwilling to learn. On page 73, Franklin warns his readers to take care when making a business deal with a friend, as these deals can ruin friendships. Finally, on page 74, Franklin makes a sad, but true observation of the common man. It seems, he writes, that men would rather cover up their faults than correct them.

On page 75, Franklin makes a powerful insight about most people. This statement seems true of people even today. Franklin says that while all people will say they want



to live a long life, none want to become old. This quality is common to most people. While we may think we want a certain blessing, such as a long life, we do not want to have to deal with the negative aspects that come along with blessing, such as the hazards of old age. On page 76, Franklin also speaks of a common weakness of the ordinary man. Shame, Franklin writes, is a feeling that men should not have, especially when it comes to their background. In this case, Franklin writes that a person should not be ashamed of their background no matter how bad this background was. According to Franklin, the only cause for shame comes from being ashamed of an unfortunate background.

Franklin ends his almanac with a list of thirteen virtues and suggestions on how to achieve these qualities. The virtues Franklin lists include temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity and humility. In his final bit of advice, Franklin warns his readers not to let anything move them to do something they know to be evil. In this way, he writes, they will be able to live in peace and with a clean conscious.



Characters

Benjamin Franklin

Franklin is the creator, compiler and publisher of "Poor Richard's Almanack." At one point in his life, he even published a newspaper. Like the almanac, Franklin wrote articles for his paper under pen names. However, it is not for his almanac or even his newspaper writing and publishing that he is best known. Franklin is perhaps best known as one of the founding fathers of the United States of America. He assisted in drafting the Declaration of Independence. One of the signatures on the Declaration of Independence belongs to Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin is also known for his many inventions. During his lifetime, he invented many things, including the lightning rod, bifocals, a musical instrument called the Glass Armonica, swim fins and an efficient heating stove. Franklin is also well-known for his experiments with electricity, particularly his kite experiment.

Franklin was also very dedicated to public service and helping people live better. For this reason, he organized the first volunteer fire department and also created fire insurance. He also was the first to consider paving streets as well as lighting public streets. Franklin also organized America's first public library.

Richard Saunders

Richard Saunders is the fictitious character who writes the almanac for Franklin. Saunders was Franklin's pseudonym or pen name. Like Franklin, Saunders is a seeker of knowledge and an astrologer. However, Franklin generally keeps Saunders separate from himself and often has Saunders refer to Franklin as his printer. Saunders, along with his wife Bridget, were familiar and personable characters that readers of the almanac looked forward to reading about. Saunders was a poor man who wrote his almanac as a way to raise money to help care for his complaining wife.

Bridget Saunders

Bridget is the wife of Richard Saunders. She is referred to as a loudly speaking, overbearing woman.

David

David is a character taken from the Bible. In his saying about David, Franklin notes that "many princes sin with David, but few repent with him." It is recorded in the Bible that David sinned by having sexual intercourse with Bathsheba who was at the time of the encounter married to another man. When Bathsheba became pregnant as a result of



the encounter, David, thinking he would fix the mess he had made, arranged for her husband, a member of the military, to come home and spend a night with his wife. However, Bathsheba's husband refused to sleep with his wife while his fellow soldiers were on the battlefield. David then had Bathsheba's husband placed at the frontline in the next battle, an action which he knew would result in the man's death. After Bathsheba's husband was killed, David was then free to take Bathsheba as his own wife. After these treacherous actions, David is confronted by Nathan, a prophet of God who recounts to David all the sins David committed. As recorded in Psalm 21 in the Bible, David repents of his sins and receives God's forgiveness for his actions.

Homer

Homer is a blind storyteller who lived in Greece in the 8th century BC. He is believed to be the author of the epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Lubin

On his deathbed, this character included in Franklin's almanac shares tears with his wife. Public opinion, however, believes Lubin cries because he is afraid he will die, while his wife fears Lubin will not die.

Caesar

This term is a title given to a person in an imperial or ruling position. Use of the term was derived from the name of the famous Roman dictator Julius Caesar.

Jack

Jack is a character who appears in one of Franklin's sayings. Jack is generous with advice; however, he rarely takes advice from others.

William

Another character Franklin includes in one of his longer sayings. William, who throws his wife out of the house because she is sick, reasons his action is justified because he promised in his wedding vows to keep his wife in sickness and health. His view is that she should not return until she becomes either healthy or sick to the point of death.



Squire Edward

Squire Edward is a character in one of Franklin's short stories. In the story in which he appears, Edward tells his friend he has never see the friend in want. True enough, when the friend finds himself lacking for money, Edward will have nothing to do with him.

Anne

Anne is a character in one of Franklin's poems who embodies the flighty nature Franklin seems to think all women have. Anne's husband is dying and he asks on his deathbed for Anne to promise him she will never remarry. Anne, however, has already promised herself to another man.

Jesus

In his listing of the thirteen virtues, Franklin suggests the reader imitate Jesus' example to gain humility. Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Despite His identity, Jesus allowed Himself to be put to death on a cross to save all people from their sins. While on Earth Jesus tried to serve others without drawing attention to Himself. He also taught others how to be better people.

Socrates

Socrates is another person whom Franklin suggests his readers model their behavior after. Along with Jesus, Socrates is listed as a person to mimic for his humility. Socrates' idea of humility is different from the modern meaning of humility which indicates meekness. According to Socrates, humility consists of the knowledge that no one person knows everything.

Tim

Tim is a character that appears in one of Franklin's sayings. Tim is so intelligent that he knows the name for a horse in several different languages. However, Tim is so lacking in common sense that instead of buying a horse to ride, he buys a cow.



Objects/Places

The Almanac

An almanac, spelled almanack in Franklin's time, is a yearly publication which contains information including sun and moon phases, recipes, weather reports and predictions. Many people use the information in an almanac to determine the best time to plant their crops, have surgery or even sell their homes. Along with the usual information, Franklin includes bits of wisdom and sayings in his almanac.

Arse

This British slang word refers to the part of the body that you sit on. This spelling is one example of Franklin's use of colloquial spellings.

Two Precious Jewels

The jewels Franklin refers to are time and good advice.

Groat

A groat is a silver coin worth about four English pennies.

Jole

A jole is a colloquial term for the jowl or lower jaw.

Tomtit

A Tomtit is a small but very active songbird.

Pelf

A term which refers to money or riches, especially if these riches are gained by dishonest means.

Scepter

A wand or staff used to represent the power or authority of a monarch. In his saying that includes the term scepter, Franklin says that a friend is a true scepter.



Whig and Tory Parties

The Whigs and Tories were two opposing English political parties. In one of his sayings, Franklin speaks of the blending of the Whig and Tory parties.

Dead Sea

A salt water lake located between Israel and Jordan. In one saying, Franklin compares the Dead Sea to the quality of idleness.

Rogue

A dishonest person, however, generally one who is very likable.

Steel and Diamonds

These are two things Franklin describes in one of his sayings as being very hard. He likens their hardness to the difficulty of truly knowing one's self.

Wealth

Franklin does not discourage his readers against gaining wealth, however, he does suggest that wealth is to be enjoyed, not simply hoarded.

Three Faithful Friends

Franklin identifies in one of his sayings three friends who will always be faithful. These include an old dog, an old wife and money at hand.

Books and Readers

Franklin uses these objects to represent the relationship between men and women.

Paintings and Fightings

Franklin insists these two things are best seen at a distance.

The Belly

It is this body part that the Franklin indicates will cause the most trouble for a person. By eating and filling the belly too full, people become lazy and fat. When a person ignores



the cries of the stomach and eats only what he needs to live, Franklin indicates the person will be more productive, healthy and wealthier.

The Philosopher's Stone

This particular stone is identified by Franklin as being content. He writes that all that is touched by contentedness will turn to gold.

An Honest Man

This type of man is described by Franklin as being one who will not take either money or praise that he has not earned.



Themes

Characteristics of Friends

One of the topics Franklin references often in his sayings is the endearing characteristics of friends. In one quote, he writes good friends are prudent and faithful. In another, he says that a man's best friends are an old wife, and old dog and easy money. Franklin also indicates that a true friend is one of the greatest possessions a person can have. He compares a good friend to the scepter of a prince. Franklin believes friends are such an important influence that he suggests his readers be slow and take their time about choosing who will be their friends. He also makes the suggestion that much thought should be put into any decision to change the people one calls friends.

Although it is obvious Franklin thinks highly of friends, he also offers a few warnings about these people. He writes that an untrue friend is worse than an open enemy. Franklin also warns that while making promises may help one gain friends, failure to keep these promises will turn these friends into enemies. Also, in order to keep friends, Franklin suggests one should look more closely at his own faults than he does at the faults of others. Franklin also suggests to his readers not to choose a foolish person for a friend. In a final word of warning, Franklin writes that any business dealings between friends should be well notated since it is through these dealings that many friends are lost.

Lawyers

Remarks about lawyers also appear quite often in Franklin's writings. It can be inferred from his remarks about lawyers that Franklin does not care for people in this profession and feels most lawyers are dishonest. For instance, Franklin writes that two lawyers can tear a common man apart, somewhat like two cats do to a fish. He also indicates that lawyers do not make good neighbors. Franklin refers in one of his longer sayings to a lawyer who is near death and makes out his own will. The lawyer reasons that since he made his money from mad and frantic people, he should leave his riches to the same. At one point in his writings, Franklin also indicates that few lawyers actually follow the law. Finally, in one of his more humorous quotes about lawyers, Franklin exclaims that God does still work wonders—the wonder Franklin writes of is an honest lawyer.

Wives and Marriage

The topic of wives and marriage is the only one which Franklin seems to give a mixed view of in his sayings. For example, in one saying, Franklin will praise wives and the institution of marriage. He even goes so far as to say that the wife is the soul and life of a home. He also notes that unmarried men are not complete. In other quotes, however, Franklin is critical of wives. For instance, he criticizes women for their sharp tongues. In



fact, Franklin even portrays Saunders' wife Bridget as a loud woman with a sharp tongue.

However, Franklin does also admit in his sayings that the husband is also responsible for the happiness of the wife and the marriage. For instance, in one place Franklin writes that good wives are made by good husbands. Franklin also takes the opportunity to make fun of husbands. In one saying he indicates that good husbands are scarce and very hard to find. Franklin also pokes a bit of fun at the institution of marriage in general. In one of his quotes, Franklin defines marriage as being the only institution that exists where those who are not married want to be married and those who are married wish they were not married.

In some of his sayings and short stories, Franklin even addresses the subject of abuse between husbands and wives. His treatment of the issue is not one-sided—some quotes feature the husband being cruel to the wife while others talk about the wife being mean to the husband. Generally, these sayings address the matter in a lighthearted manner; however, these references let Franklin's readers know he is aware this type of abuse does occur. It is uncertain whether Franklin condones this type of abuse, but it is common during his time period.

Importance of Saving Money

Throughout his almanac, Franklin stresses the importance of not being wasteful. He is perhaps most critical of those who are lazy and those who do not make good use of both the time and resources they are given. For Franklin, it appears that money equals time and time equals money. Those who waste time also waste money. In fact, on page 10 there are a series of quotes that deal with the wise handling of money. These quotes describe how much a person can stand to lose by wasting what might seem to be a small amount of time or money.

Although Franklin encourages his readers to save money and not be wasteful, at the same time, he does not encourage or promote wealth. In some of his sayings, for instance, he describes the happiest people as those who are content with what they have. Franklin believes these happy people are those who have neither too little or too much. He also indicates that true wealth is found in being thankful for what one has, however much or little it is. If one does have wealth, however, Franklin encourages his readers to enjoy this wealth and not hoard it.

Problems with Self

In many of his quotes Franklin refers to the amount of trouble we humans give ourselves. He admits that conquering the self is perhaps the most difficult task any person faces. In some quotes, Franklin writes that all people have the ability to deceive themselves into thinking they are not as bad as they actually are or as bad as others around them. However, he challenges his readers to look more closely at their own faults than at the faults of other. He suggests that one would do better to correct their



one small flaw than to point out another person's large character flaw. Franklin warns his readers not to judge others more harshly than they judge themselves. It is better, Franklin writes, to mind one's own business and clean up one's own faults before pointing out the faults of others. This is because one's own shortcomings may be worse than those of others.

Despite that fact he encourages self improvement, Franklin also admits that most people have an inability to recognize or change their own faults. In fact, he writes at one point that a person who learns to conquer himself and can control himself is more worthy of praise and respect than those who conquer countries. Finally, on the theme of the problems people cause themselves, Franklin writes that people can be very self deceptive. This self deception is another way people cause problems for themselves.

Dealing with One's Own Business

There are many places in his almanac where Franklin writes about proper business practices. The main point Franklin seems to want to impress upon his readers is that each individual should mind their own business and not worry about the business of another person. For example, in one of his sayings Franklin speaks of people who become involved in government and forget to attend to their task at hand. He suggests that it is this action that causes others to be hurt or inconvenienced. This warning to tend to one's own business is one that relates to all people, both those running a place of business and those providing labor.

Along the lines of dealing with one's own business, Franklin notes that those who work will not know hunger. If a person does not do what he is supposed to, they will experience want. Franklin also points out that those who have a marketable skill, or a skill that can earn them money, have a constant source of income and a secure future. In conclusion, Franklin adds a final suggestion for those considering becoming involved in a public business. In short, Franklin warns that public business is a bad idea. However, he suggests that those who do choose to become business people should care for their business carefully so that it does not get the better of them.

Taking Care of the Body

Another topic Franklin writes about often is the topic of taking proper care of the body. Most of his advice centers on when not to eat and what not to eat. For instance, Franklin suggests not eating late at night. He also does not think that eating three square meals a day is a healthy way to eat. Franklin seems to believe that eating less is better and healthier; that one should eat only what one needs in order to live. Franklin's advice on living well also includes the suggestion that one not gorge themselves on either food or drink.

Sleep is another topic Franklin writes about in his sayings. For instance, in one quote he suggests his readers go to bed early and get up early in order to be healthy. Those who study the circadian rhythm know that Franklin's wisdom actually has a basis in scientific

knowledge. The body is designed to go to sleep when the sun goes down and wake up with the sun's first rays. People who follow this routine tend to be healthier and less sleep deprived than those who try to force their bodies to follow a different schedule. It follows that one who has had a good night's sleep and feels good in the morning will be more productive at work, and thus have the opportunity to be wealthy.

Style

Perspective

In general, Franklin was a person who loved learning and loved helping other people. Publishing his almanacs gave him a chance to share some of his wisdom with others in a way that was both thought provoking and at the same time humorous and casual. Although Franklin was not well-schooled, he spent much time reading and teaching himself in this way. Even in his time, Franklin was a well-known inventor and experimenter. Franklin invented several things that most people were very familiar with and used to make their daily lives easier. These things included the Franklin stove, street lights and bifocals. Franklin was also a well-known politician and one of the founding fathers of the United States of America. For these reasons, Franklin was respected and well liked by the people of his time.

However, one does need to consider that Franklin wrote his almanac using the pen name of Saunders. It is known that Franklin published the almanac each year. However, Franklin tried to separate himself and Saunders. For this reason, Saunders would often refer to Franklin as his "publisher." It is uncertain whether or not Franklin's readers were aware that Franklin was actually the author of the almanac. However, Saunders portrayed himself as an under-privileged working person, much the same as the people who enjoyed the almanac. For this reason, Franklin's audience related to Saunders and his misfortunes.

As a philanthropist, however, Franklin enjoyed helping people and wanted his publication to challenge his audience to become better people. For this reason Franklin included his sayings about how to conquer self and ways to enjoy a healthy life. Whether his readers believed the intelligent sayings included in the almanac came from Franklin or Saunders, it is known Franklin intended his readers to use the information in the almanac to better themselves.

Tone

The tone of Franklin's almanac is very subjective. The sayings and bits of wisdom are based solely on Franklin's personal opinion and his views. Although Franklin intended his wisdom to be used by his readers to better themselves, it is recognized that the sayings are only Franklin's personal opinion on any particular subject. The reader is allowed to come to his or her own conclusion about whether or not he accepts the ideas presented in the material.

It is because of this subjective tone that Franklin chooses to write his almanac under the pen name of Saunders. In this way, Franklin can give his honest view of his subjects while at the same time enjoying his anonymity. In modern times, it would probably be considered scandalous for a politician to write such sayings, especially ones referring to

business and government, under a false name. In Franklin's time, however, it was an accepted practice.

Structure

This book is simply a collection of sayings and quotations compiled by Franklin. There are no chapter divisions or any other types of divisions or separations in the text. There are no indications when any of these quotes were written or which issues of Franklin's almanac they were published in. The quotes are also not grouped according to any particular theme or topic; they are just a variety of listed quotes.

The major benefit of this format is that it allows the reader to come to his own conclusion about the meaning of each of Franklin's sayings. It also allows the reader to discover for himself themes contained within the quotes as well as the meanings of the sayings themselves. However, the structure is difficult because each quote stands alone as one small section. It would be impossible to try to summarize the entire work without simply rewriting each quote.

Individual quotes or sayings generally consist of just a line or two of text. However on a few occasions, Franklin tells short stories in the form of poems. These poems generally have a simple rhyming sequence and sometimes the reader must alter their pronunciation of a word or two in order to make the rhyme scheme work. Another feature of the structure of Franklin's writing that some readers may have a difficult time with is his use of colloquial spellings and phrases. For instance, Franklin sometimes uses the word "thee" instead of "you." He also inserts capital letters in his writing in odd places, such as the middle of sentence or a line of poetry. These capitals sometimes indicate a personified quality, and sometimes just give emphasis to a certain word or phrase.



Quotes

"Who has deciev'd thee so oft as thy self?" p. 6.

"Be slow in chusing a friend, slower in changing," p. 11.

"In a discreet man's mouth a publick thing is private," p. 14.

"If your head is wax, don't walk in the Sun," p. 24.

"Pay what you owe, and you'll know what is your own," p. 31.

"Eat to live; live not to eat," p. 34.

"Lost time is never found again," p. 41.

"Haste makes waste," p. 45.

"There is no Man so bad but he secretly respects the Good," p. 51.

"Blessed is he that expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed," p. 60.

"Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead," p. 73.

"These Blessings, Reader, may Heav'n grant to thee;
A faithful Friend, equal in Love's degree;
Land fruitful, never conscious of the Curse,
A liberal Heart, and never-failing Purse;
A smiling Conscience, a contented mind;
A temp'rate knowledge with true Wisdom join'd;
A life as long as fair, and when expir'd,
A kindly death, unfear'd as undesir'd," p. 74.

"To-morrow you'll reform, you always cry;
In what far country does that morrow lie,
That 'tis so mighty long ere it arrive?
Beyond the Indes does this morrow live?
'Tis so far-fetched, this morrow, that I fear
'Twill be both very old and very dear," p. 12.

"He that is of Opinion Money will do every Thing may well be suspected of doing every Thing for Money," p. 46.



"Let no pleasure tempt thee, no profit allure thee, no ambition corrupt thee, no example sway thee, no persuasion move thee, to do anything which thou knowest to be evil; so shalt thou always live jollily; for a good conscience is a continual Christmas. Adieu," p. 77.



Topics for Discussion

Consider Franklin's disguise of Saunders as he writes his almanac. In today's culture, if a person such as Franklin wrote similar sayings, how would the public react? Would it be acceptable? Why or why not?

In your opinion are Franklin's sayings as timely today as they were when they were written? Explain your answer.

Search Franklin's sayings for examples of his view of good business practices. Using these quotes, formulate what Franklin would have considered a good business.

Consider Franklin's descriptions of friends and the characteristics of good friends. Are these characteristics you would want in a friend? Why or why not?

Find examples of literary elements, such as simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, oxymoron and symbolism, in Franklin's sayings. Discuss how Franklin uses these elements to make his point in a humorous way.

Consider Franklin's views of both lawyers and preachers as portrayed in his sayings. Does Franklin appear to think highly of the men who practiced these careers? Give reasons for your answer.

Consider Franklin's views of wives and marriage. Why does he deliver such mixed messages on this topic?

Generally, an almanac is a yearly publication that contains information about moon phases and charts that tell which crops or plants should be planted at what times during the year. Franklin's almanac, however, is a bit different in that he also included bits of wisdom, poems and sayings. Discuss Franklin's reasons for including these sayings or proverbs in his almanac.