



Quicklet - Walter Isaacson's Benjamin Franklin: An American Life

Steven John

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ABOUT THE BOOK

In the study of Benjamin Franklin's life, one travels through a historical period in which the prosperous colonies of a mighty empire grow in anger from discontent to empowerment, finally rising in arms. Then from the ashes of war, there rose our nation. So surely, an equally acceptable title for this authoritative biography could have replaced *An*, with *The*. To attempt to tell the tale of America's beginnings without speaking at length of Ben Franklin would be as great a folly as to attempt to tell Franklin's life story without mentioning America: both are simply intertwined.

In this biography of Franklin not the first, but perhaps the finest Walter Isaacson comes tantalizingly close to laying out the whole tapestry of the man's life, all while laying it down atop the tableau of the times. This is no easy feat. At just shy of 500 pages, Isaacson's book is no mere primer but that shouldn't scare off the more casual reader.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Steven John is a writer living and working in Los Angeles, by way of Washington DC, originally. His first novel will hit shelves on 3/27/12 and when not working on books, he fills his time with various freelance writing work, hiking, mumbering at his pets and thinking up more interesting activities he can tell his wife he has been involved with.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

As this is, of course, a biography of a man's life, it follows that Walter Isaacson has chosen to tell that life's story chronologically. Fortunately for his reader, though, he opens the book with a few intriguing insights into Benjamin Franklin's character:

He was, during his eighty-four-year-long life, America's best scientist, inventor, diplomat, writer, and business strategist and he was also one of its most practical, though not most profound political thinkers....the most interesting thing that Franklin invented, and continued to reinvent, was himself.

And just then, when we want to know more to know it all Isaacson takes us back; takes us away to a land across the ocean. In so doing he lays down the framework upon which B. Franklin would live his life and offers us a much greater understanding of our subject.

Isaacson takes us to the 16th Century, the earliest point in time when a direct ancestor of Benjamin Franklin can be found (largely due to the fact that before such time, the surname Franklin did not even exist). The author explains, in a quick primer, the changing nature of the populace in Western Europe in this Renaissance-cum-Elizabethan era, as commoners and peasants began to emerge from the veil of feudalism in England, as the merchant class arose and as, slowly, merit began to surpass bloodline in dictating one's future. This change would not come into fruition until the founding of the American state, and is arguably a line of thinking that strongly informs much of the American identity to this day.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Quicklet on Walter Isaacson's Benjamin Franklin: An American Life
- Walter Isaacson's Benjamin Franklin: An American Life
 - About the Book
 - About the Author
 - A Summary, in Brief
 - The Junto, Poor Richard, Meanwhile & The Fire Department
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