CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Autobiography and Poor Richard's Almanack

Benjamin Franklin · *1791 / 1732–1758 · original English text*

Dear Son: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. The hosted volume is Franklin's complete Autobiography, together with The Way to Wealth and a 1914 selection from Poor Richard. Map the life; flag the almanack as a selection, not a complete run of the yearly books.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What kind of life does a self-made printer tell his son, and what do the maxims of Poor Richard add—or fail to add—to that telling?

"Dear Son: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors."
The Autobiography, the opening address

The hosted text is a combined volume: the complete Autobiography (Harvard Classics, ed. Charles W. Eliot, 1909; PG #148), The Way to Wealth / Poor Richard Improved (PG #43855), and a 1914 selection from Poor Richard's Almanack. The site header itself calls the almanack portion a selection. Map the Autobiography as complete; flag The Way to Wealth and the 1914 selections as companions, not a complete run of every yearly Almanack. The opening is exact, including "had pleasure" (not "had a pleasure"). A practical, sometimes proud American life, for a wide older band, of work, invention, and civic forming.

KEY CHARACTERS

Benjamin Franklin
The printer, writer, and civic man who addresses his son at the opening.

the Son
The addressee of the Autobiography, for whom the anecdotes are gathered.

Poor Richard
The almanack voice of the companion pieces, not a second narrator of the life.

the Philadelphia circle
The friends, clubs, and civic partners of the middle life.

DEAR SON

> *"Dear Son: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors."*
> The Autobiography, the opening address

Grades 8–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
Dear Son
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, THE OPENING

Written at Twyford, at the Bishop of St. Asaph's, 1771, the life opens as a letter. Franklin has had pleasure in obtaining little anecdotes of his ancestors, and he will tell his own.

- The address is exact: 'Dear Son: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors.'
- Do not include the footnote mark after 'St. Asaph's' in a quotation of the place-line.
- This is the complete Autobiography in this volume.

> *"Dear Son: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors."*
> The Autobiography

02
A Printer's Education
THE EARLY LIFE

Boston, a runaway, Philadelphia, and the forming of a tradesman who reads. The life is already a curriculum of work and self-command.

- The plan of virtues, if taught, should be taught as Franklin wrote it, not as a cheap scheme only.
- The early scrapes are part of the telling.
- A wide older band can read this with help.

03
Civic Work, and a Public Man
THE LATER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Clubs, a library, civic schemes, and the unfinished later years. The Autobiography does not tell every public act; it tells what Franklin chose to leave his son.

- The life is incomplete as a late-life record; it is complete as the book Franklin left.
- Do not invent later chapters this file does not have.
- Quote this typography.

04
The Way to Wealth
THE FIRST COMPANION

Poor Richard Improved and The Way to Wealth follow in this volume (PG #43855). They are a set of maxims in a frame, not the whole of the Autobiography.

- Flag this companion clearly.
- The maxims are witty and worldly; teach them as counsel to be weighed.
- Do not quote them as if they were the life-story.

05
A Selected Almanack
THE LAST COMPANION

The 1914 Poor Richard selection is not a complete run of the yearly Almanacks. The site header calls it a selection. Map the volume as labeled; say what is complete and what is not.

- Complete Autobiography; Way to Wealth; selected Almanack.
- A practical American life, for a wide older band.
- Quote stretches that appear in both witnesses, and say which part of the volume they come from.

A Life Told to a Son | Work and Self-Command | Civic Forming | Maxims | A Combined Volume

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 8–12

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2. The opening is exact: "Dear Son: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors." (had pleasure, not had a pleasure). Do not include footnote marks in a quotation. A practical American life, for a wide older band.
3. Quote stretches that appear in both the hosted text and the site EPUB, and say which part of the volume they come from.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #148/#43855; Internet Archive poorrichardsalma00franrich, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/franklin-autobiography-and-poor-richard/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.