



# Benjamin Franklin (Critical Insights)

*Jack Lynch*

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This title includes in-depth critical discussions of his life and works. Perhaps no figure is more central to the myth and promise of America than Benjamin Franklin. A true Renaissance man, Franklin conducted scientific experiments, wrote political satires and treatises, and is credited with numerous inventions. As volume editor Jack Lynch points out, Franklin's name 'is the only name that appears on the four most important documents in the establishment of the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris, the Treaty of Alliance with France, and the United States Constitution'. Edited and introduced by 18th century scholar Jack Lynch, Professor of English at Rutgers University, Newark, this volume examines several facets of America's most famous polymath. Lynch's introduction considers the essays collected in this volume as he tries to pin down the iconic and larger-than-life Franklin. Clark Davis provides a biography of Franklin after which Bradley Bazzle considers the Autobiography as a central part of the American creation myth, part memoir, part performance. Original essays by Neil Heims, Gurdir Panesar, Maura Grace Harrington, and Matthew Bolton collectively consider Franklin, his times, and his impact on American Culture. Heims examines the culture of 18th Century America and the very public figure of Franklin while Panesar considers the difficulties critics have had in painting a complete portrait of Franklin, due in large part to his multifacetedness. Maura Grace Harrington looks at the Autobiography through the lens of fatherhood, both personal and spiritual while Matthew Bolton offers an original interpretation of the so-called 'Lost Generation' as a response to Franklin's legacy. The selection of reprinted essays begins with Sherry Ann Beaudrea and Stanley Finger's examination of the legacies of Franklin and his Dutch-born medical correspondent Jan Ingenhousz. This essay is followed by one by Betsy Erkkila, who suggests Franklin was partially responsible for a new conceptualization of the body. A. Owen Aldridge provides both careful close reading and a thorough consideration of biographical contexts in his consideration of Franklin's "'The Elysian Fields'". Aldridge is followed by Jennifer Jordan Baker, who argues that it's impossible to make sense of Franklin's world without an understanding of the economic situation his country faced. Jennifer T. Kennedy's essay is a consideration of Franklin the printer confronting death, and his writing as a kind of repetition. In the volume penultimate essay, Christina Lupton examines artistic recycling in both Franklin and Laurence Stern while in the volume's final essay Ralph Frasca considers Franklin in the context of his support of the freedom and responsibility of the press. Each essay is 5,000 words in length, and all essays conclude with a list of 'Works Cited', along with endnotes.

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