

## Franklin's *Autobiography* (Book II)

### \*\*Lecture Notes

- 1) Franklin as an example of all people in that area (278)
  - a. Self-educated man
  - b. Wise man
  - c. Obeys rules of prudence in ordinary affairs
  - d. \*\*proves that origin is not related to happiness, virtue, and goodness
- 2) Franklin as an example of great virtue and patience
  - a. Frugality, diligence, and temperance (279)
  - b. Loved justice, liberty, and concord (280)
- 3) Franklin's view of religion
  - a. Public/private (283,291)
- 4) Franklin's Rectitude of Conduct (285)
  - a. "Everyone's interest is to be virtuous, who wish'd to be happy even in this world" (291).

### Contextualizing *The Autobiography*

- I. Historical Overview
- II. Rhetorical Mode and Genre: Is *The Autobiography* a work of literary value?

\*\*Expectations of the autobiography as a genre? How do our expectations shape how we view Franklin's text: as a historical document (purely factual and informant), an inner exploration/personal narrative (probing existential questions: Why am I here? What is my purpose?), a moral tale of emulative worth, and/or a literary work (style, tone, persona, organization, language are very consciously driven?)

### Analyzing *The Autobiography*: The Making of an American Character

Style: Part I as a type of picaresque novel; a style compatible with practical tasks and ambition but also a style governed to control emotion

Tone: Part I: buoyant, humorous, smug; Part II, the "I" contracts into a public voice

Persona: In the socially fluid and unfixed space of early America, one could create and invent a self. How does Franklin accomplish this?

Organization: arranged in a methodical fashion as to secure his purpose as a writer

Language: There is a rhetorical strategy at the core of Franklin's self-presentation; Franklin grasped that mastering rhetoric was a key to competing successfully for the prizes the world offers: power, influence, authority