

English 2130/Small Group Work Assignment

1. Provide two specific instances or scenarios where Franklin adapts and modifies his behavior, language, or philosophy in order to change his circumstances. What specific "tools" does he appropriate to achieve his success? How is language a vital tool in manipulating, governing, even creating an image of power?

What is the Franklinian dream? What specific virtues does Franklin extol in Parts I and II that have become entrenched in our national consciousness as being essential to the American dream? Give several examples from our contemporary culture (i.e., icons, movies, advertisements) that extol or exemplify the virtues described by Franklin that, in theory, lead to success. Do you/we as a culture subscribe to the Franklinian dream?

Benjamin Vaughan refers to Franklin's autobiography as an "efficacious advertisement" of the American experience. In what ways does Franklin exemplify/typify/epitomize the American experience? What is there in Franklin's life story that makes him, as we say, characteristic? Be specific, pointing to examples in the text – both Parts I and II.

4. Franklin says in Part I of *The Autobiography*, "one does not dress for private company as for a publick ball." With this statement in mind, consider the shift in tone from Part I to Part II. Is there a sense in which Franklin manipulates our (the readers') view of him as he assumes a "publick" dress (this question assumes, of course, that Franklin is very much aware that he is setting himself up as a representative type of the American experience)? In what ways does Part II read like an "efficacious advertisement" of the American experience?
5. In what ways can Franklin's view of religion and morality be described as utilitarian (He stresses, for example, the importance of religion having a certain social "utility" – what does "utility" mean?). Provide some examples in Parts I and II that intimate a view of religion as having a pragmatic, useful value. According to Franklin, is having the *appearance* of virtue more important (or useful) than the actual *reality*? Support your answer.
6. Examine Franklin's list of virtues in Part II. As a reader, how do you react to this list? Is this list credible? Probable? Think through his virtues carefully – consider specific examples where Franklin – however unintentionally – doesn't live up to, (even undermines his own credibility

in demonstrating these virtues? How does Franklin's view of self-perfection contrast with the Puritan perspective that stresses man's innate depravity and need for God-given grace?