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The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747

J. A. Leo Lemay

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Named "one of the best books of 2006" by *The New York Sun*

Described by Carl Van Doren as "a harmonious human multitude," Benjamin Franklin was the most famous American of his time, of perhaps any time. His life and careers were so varied and successful that he remains, even today, the epitome of the self-made man. Born into a humble tradesman's family, this adaptable genius rose to become an architect of the world's first democracy, a leading light in Enlightenment science, and a major creator of what has come to be known as the American character. Journalist, musician, politician, scientist, humorist, inventor, civic leader, printer, writer, publisher, businessman, founding father, philosopher, Franklin is a touchstone for America's egalitarianism.

Volume 2 takes Franklin from his marriage in 1730 to his retirement as a printer at the beginning of 1748, examining the mysteries of the illegitimate William Franklin's birth and mother and Franklin's increasing civic activities—starting the Library Company in Philadelphia in 1731, forming Pennsylvania's first volunteer fire company, and becoming an advocate for a clean Philadelphia environment. J. A. Leo Lemay assesses Franklin's numerous writings, attributing to him for the first time a deistic Indian speech, remarking on his use of the second African American persona in journalism, and analyzing his publishing sensation of 1747, *The Speech of Miss Polly Baker*. These belletristic works are complemented by Franklin's religious, political, and scientific writings, which he produced prodigiously.

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