Document based question:
From the writings and thoughts of Benjamin Franklin, mid to late 18th century.

Directions: The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that incorporates documents A-G and your knowledge of the period referred to in the question. High scores will be earned only by essays that cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge from the period.

Statement: Benjamin Franklin’s political position from the mid to late 18th century would place him at today’s political right.

Explain the degree to which you agree or disagree with the previous statement.

Question by: Bill Polson, NBCT Union Int. High School Broken Arrow, OK

**Document A**


... this operates then as a tax for the maintenance of the poor. -- A very good thing, you will say. But I ask, Why a partial tax? Why laid on us Farmers only? -- If it be a good thing, pray, Messrs. the Public, take your share of it, by indemnifying us a little out of your public treasury. In doing a good thing there is both honour and pleasure; -- you are welcome to your part of both.

For my own part, I am not so well satisfied of the goodness of this thing. I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion of the means. -- I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth I traveled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer.
The Court of the Popular Press

BY WHOM THIS COURT IS COMMISSIONED OR CONSTITUTED, Benjamin Franklin, 1789

. . . It is not by any commission from the supreme executive council, who might previously judge of the abilities, integrity, knowledge, etc., of the person to be appointed to this great trust, of deciding upon the character and good fame of the citizens; for this court is above that council, and may accuse, judge, and condemn it at pleasure. Nor is it hereditary, as in the court of dernier resort in the peerage of England. But any man who can procure pen, ink, and paper, with a press, a few types, and a huge pair of blacking balls may commissionate himself; and his court is immediately established in the plenary possession and exercise of its rights. For if you make the least complaint of the judge's conduct, he dabs his blacking balls in your face wherever he meets you; and, besides tearing your private character to flitters, marks you out for the odium of the public, as an enemy to the liberty of the press.
Petition of the Letter Z

Benjamin Franklin, from "The Tatler" No. 1778

He was always talking of his Family and of his being a Man of Fortune.

That your Petitioner is of as high extraction, and has as good an Estate as any other Letter of the Alphabet.

And complaining of his being treated, not with due Respect That there is therefore no reason why he should be treated as he is with Disrespect and Indignity.

At the tail of the Commission, of Ministers He was not of the Commission for France, A Lee being preferr'd to him, which made him very angry; and the Character here given of S, is just what he in his Passion gave Lee.

That he is not only plac'd at the Tail of the Alphabet, when he had as much Right as any other to be at the Head; but is, by the Injustice of his enemies totally excluded from the Word WISE, and his Place injuriously filled by a little, hissing, crooked, serpentine, venomous Letter called s, when it must be evident to your Worship, and to all the World, that W, I, S, E, do not spell or sound Wize, but Wice.

The most impatient Man alive Your Petitioner therefore prays that the Alphabet may by your Censorial Authority be reformed, and that in Consideration of his Long-Suffering & Patience he may be placed at the Head of it; that S may be turned out of the Word Wise, and the Petitioner employ'd instead of him;

And your Petitioner (as in Duty bound) shall ever pray,

Mr. Bickerstaff having examined the Allegations of the above Petition, judges and determines, that Z be admonished to be content with his Station, forbear Reflections upon his Brother Letters, & remember his own small Usefulness, and the little Occasion there is for him in the Republick of Letters, since S, whom he so despises, can so well serve instead of him.
Document D

**Rules by Which A Great Empire May be Reduced to a Small One.**
*Benjamin Franklin 1773*

XIX. *Send Armies into their Country under Pretence of protecting the Inhabitants; but instead of garrisoning the Forts on their Frontiers with those troops, to prevent incursions, demolish those forts, and order the troops into the Heart of the Country, that the Savages may be encouraged to attack the Frontiers, and that the Troops may be protected by the Inhabitants: This will seem to proceed from your Ill will or your Ignorance, and contribute farther to produce and strengthen an Opinion among them, that you are no longer fit to govern them.*

Document E

**A Letter to A Friend in London, Benjamin Franklin 1774**

Tell our good friend Dr. Price, not to be in any pains for us, (because I remember he had his doubts) we are all firm and united. As I know he is a great calculator I will give him some data to work upon: ministry [England’s colonial ministry] have made a campaign here, which has cost two millions, they have gained a mile of ground; they have lost half of it back again, they have lost fifteen hundred men, and killed one hundred and fifty Yankees. In the meantime we have between sixty and seventy thousand children born. Ask him how long it will take for England to conquer America?
III. A Lion’s Whelp was put on board a Guinea Ship bound to American as a Present to a Friend in that Country: It was tame and harmless as a Kitten and therefore not confined, but suffered to walk about the Ship at Pleasure. A stately, full-grown English Mastiff, belonging to the Captain, despising the Weakness of the young Lion, frequently took its Food by Force, and often turned it out of its Lodging Box, when he had a mind to repose therein himself. The Young Lion nevertheless grew daily in Size and Strength, and the Voyage being long, he became at last a more equal Match for the Mastiff; who continuing his Insults, received a stunning Blow from the Lion’s Paw that fetched his Skin over his Ears and deterred him from any future Contest with such growing Strength; regretting that he had not rather secured its Friendship than provoked its Enmity.
A Rising People: Ben Franklin and the Americans
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