Images and the Self-Image of Benjamin Franklin
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Grade level: 9 – 12

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and explain characteristic elements and themes in images of Benjamin Franklin.
2. Identify and explain major themes in the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.
3. Analyze continuities and contrasts in Franklin’s depiction of himself in a literary text and images of Franklin created by others.
4. Express the results of literary and pictorial texts in a clear, persuasive essay.

Materials:

1. Internet access to https://www.harrisburg.psu.edu/teachingfranklin/images.cfm (Franklin Image Collection)
2. Internet access to http://www.earlyamerica.com/lives/franklin/ (text of the Autobiography)

Lesson:

1. After introducing Franklin’s life and the Autobiography in a preliminary lecture, have students read a selection from the Autobiography of their own choice.
2. Have students browse the image collections of Franklin at TeachingFranklin.org. Have them note characteristics that appear regularly in these images.
3. Students should locate images of Franklin that illustrate the themes of their chosen section of the Autobiography, and makes notes on why these images correlate well to what they have identified as characteristics or themes in their selection (at least four images).
4. Students should also choose at least two images whose elements do not correspond to their section’s themes or characteristics.
5. In a 750-1000 word essay, they should justify their choice of images in relation to the text, explaining the common elements and why the divergent images do not help support the “image” of Franklin presented in their text.