



Eskimo Approach & Franklin Technique

Approaches to Literature

Section 1

Lesson 1 of 5

Eskimo children learn to carve ivory from whale and walrus tusks by observing and helping the elders (fathers and grandfathers) of the village. While yet a child, each boy sits beside his grandfather or father who selects the ivory, saws the pieces into manageable sizes, *rasps* out a rough shape, then scrapes, sands and polishes the piece into a fine and beautiful object of perhaps a bird, fish, moose, seal, whale, penguin, or otter. All the while, the youngster watches intently. His first “job” is to “finish” each piece by polishing, dusting and putting it on the display shelf.

One day the grandfather says, “Grandpa needs your help sanding.” So, the boy (who has been watching his grandfather’s hands at work) adds sanding to the list of polishing, dusting and putting the pieces on the shelf. The grandfather’s keen eye watches the lad’s *dexterity* and thoroughness, giving pointers and praise. One day the grandfather says, “Grandpa needs your help rasping this rough piece,” which the grandfather has shaped into a seal or whale. So, the boy adds rasping to his list of sanding, polishing, and dusting. The grandfather gradually requires the boy to increase his skill by rasping and shaping more difficult pieces like birds in flight or moose with bulging muscles. One day, the grandfather hands a rough block of ivory to the boy and asks, “What do you see in this piece of ivory?” Over time, the boy has watched his grandfather examine many pieces of ivory—turning them over, around and then up to the light to detect grain, veins and size, all the while explaining his actions to his apprentice.

The youth *emulates* his grandfather, then smiles as he says, “I see a great bull moose.”

“Good,” says the grandfather, “Release the moose.” And thus the young man becomes a skilled craftsman.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN’S WISDOM AND WIT MAKE HIM FAMOUS

In this course, you will apply not only the Eskimo Approach, but also the Benjamin Franklin learning style. Franklin was a self-taught man who became a publisher, scientist, postmaster, inventor, and patriot. He was one of the most influential Founding Fathers, greatly impacting the history and formation of the United States, including providing valuable insight during the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Franklin became an effective writer by reading well-written articles and papers on philosophy, science, theology, human nature, and logic. He would not only read literature, but he would assimilate them into his very person! His process of assimilation became known as the Franklin Learning Style: he would read the literary piece, then set it aside while he thought about it. Then, he would copy the first half, and read the second half again. He would do this several times. Then, he would

Eskimo: slang for a member of a native people group of northern Canada, Greenland, Alaska, or eastern Siberia

Rasp: to rub with a steel-toothed file

Dexterity: skill and ease in using the hands

Emulate: to copy, to act like

Meticulously: with excessive care in the treatment of details

Inquisitive: given to examination or investigation

Articulate: to express concepts clearly and effectively

Pseudonym: a fictitious name; especially a pen name

Cynical: an attitude of distrust of motives or sincerity in others

Almanac: an annual publication containing astronomical, statistical, tabular, and general information

Debut: (dā bū) first public appearance

Aphorism: a terse, concise saying stating a general truth or observation

Maxims: true, witty sayings about life

Eskimo Approach & Franklin Technique

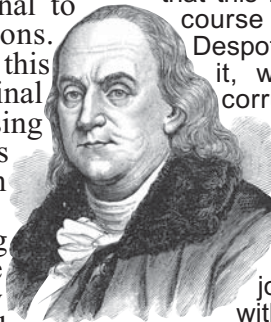
write the first half from memory, while copying the second half. Then, he would write the second half from memory. Finally, he would write the entire piece from memory. He would then compare his work to the author's original to detect omissions, errors, or deletions. Franklin worked *meticulously* through this process until he could replicate the original piece entirely from memory. By exercising self-discipline and diligence in this process, Franklin became a scholar and an excellent writer and thinker.

Franklin is credited with inventing bifocal lenses and the lightning rod. He also is credited with discovering how electricity works. While most colonial men were skilled in the labor of making candles, growing crops, building boats or crafting leather, Ben Franklin exercised an *inquisitive* mind and became an effective wordsmith. His skill with sentences enabled him to *articulate* concepts of freedom and personal responsibility that motivated colonists to develop the most unusual and effective system of self-government in world history—the government of the United States. When members of the Constitutional Convention were debating the adoption of the newly drafted Constitution, Franklin wrote a speech that he gave before the members in Philadelphia in 1787.

Mr. President

I confess that there are several parts of this constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgment of others. Most men indeed as well as most sects in Religion, think themselves in possession of all truth, and that wherever others differ from them it is so far error. Steele, a Protestant in a Dedication, tells the Pope, that the only difference between our Churches in their opinions of the certainty of their doctrines is, the Church of Rome is infallible and the Church of England is never in the wrong. But though many private persons think almost as highly of their own infallibility as of that of their sect, few express it so naturally as a certain french lady, who in a dispute with her sister, said "I don't know how it happens, Sister but I meet with no body but myself, that's always in the right—*Il n'y a que moi qui a toujours raison.*"

In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such;



because I think a general Government necessary for us, and there is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered, and believe farther that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in Despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other. I doubt too whether any other Convention we can obtain, may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our enemies, who are waiting with confidence to hear that our councils are confounded like those of the Builders of Babel; and that our States are on the point of separation, only to meet hereafter for the purpose of cutting one another's throats. Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they shall die. If every one of us in returning to our Constituents were to report the objections he has had to it, and endeavor to gain partizans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally received, and thereby lose all the salutary effects & great advantages resulting naturally in our favor among foreign Nations as well as among ourselves, from our real or apparent unanimity. Much of the strength & efficiency of any Government in procuring and securing happiness to the people, depends, on opinion, on the general opinion of the goodness of the Government, as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its Governors.

I hope therefore that for our own sakes as a part of the people, and for the sake of posterity, we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution (if approved by Congress & confirmed by the Conventions) wherever our influence may extend, and turn our future thoughts & endeavors to the means of having it well administred. On the whole, Sir, I can not help expressing a wish that every member of the Convention who may still have objections to it, would with me, on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.

On the lighter side, Franklin enjoyed “wise cracks” and humor. His witty writings charmed both the American public and foreigners abroad. Franklin’s most popular publication is *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, published from 1732 to 1757 under the **pseudonym** Richard Saunders or “Poor Richard”. It was an instant success, and these popular little books sold faster than Franklin could print them.

The **almanac** was an all purpose pamphlet that contained a calendar, descriptions of weather patterns, and information about the stars and planets. Franklin’s almanac, however, differed from others: it also contained Franklin’s witty, **cynical** sayings, **aphorisms**, proverbs, **maxims**, poems, and tips on ethical, thrifty, and courteous living. Many of Franklin’s catchy phrases made their way into American **vernacular**, such as, “A penny saved is a penny earned” and “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

Aristocratic Europeans presumed that no American could write anything worth reading, but Benjamin Franklin was a master craftsman with words. His clever articles and stories in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* revealed his genius. Franklin used the “play-on-words” technique as well as satire and irony to enhance his points of debate: after signing the Declaration of Independence, he quipped, “Indeed, we must all hang together, otherwise we shall most assuredly hang separately.”

Benjamin Franklin became one of the greatest writers and speakers of all time. In 1941, nearly a century and a half after Franklin’s death, Grey Castle Press published these words about Franklin: *Every day the hand press sent out armies of words that could make people laugh, cry, be angry or pleased. To be master of the words, that was the thing. That was the worthwhile thing: to use words as tools, weapons, trumpets, or comforters, to make people understand and be persuaded. It would be fine, he thought, to conquer the world and route the armies of darkness by writing and printing words.*

A popular article titled “Rules for Reducing a Great Empire to a Small One” by Benjamin Franklin was published anonymously in England as a warning to the king. The article was written before the colonists had declared war but were beginning to think about it. The article insinuated that the British government was making a terrible mistake in how it treated American colonists who were sincere in their efforts. The entire article is a satire on effective government in general.

“Rules for Reducing a Great Empire to a Small One”

An ancient sage valued himself upon this, that, though he could not fiddle, he knew how to make a great city of a little one. The science that I, a modern simpleton, am about to communicate, is the very reverse.

I address myself to all ministers who have the management of extensive dominions which from their very greatness have become troublesome to govern, because the multiplicity of their affairs leaves no time for fiddling.

1. In the first place, gentlemen, you are to consider, that a great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges. Turn your attention, therefore, first to your remotest provinces; that, as you get rid of them, the next may follow in order.
2. That the possibility of this separation may always exist, take special care the provinces are never incorporated with the mother country; that they do not enjoy the same common rights, the same privileges in commerce; and that they are governed by severer laws, all of your enacting, without allowing them any share in the choice of the legislators. By carefully making and preserving such distinctions, you will (to keep to my simile of the cake) act like a wise gingerbread-baker, who, to facilitate a division, his dough half through in those places where, when baked, he would have it broken to pieces.
3. Those remote provinces have perhaps been acquired, purchased, or conquered, at the sole expense of the settlers, or their ancestors, without the aid of the mother country. If this should happen to increase her strength, by their growing numbers, ready to join in her wars; her commerce, by their growing demand for her manufactures; or her naval power, by greater employment for her ships and seamen, they may suppose some merit in this, and that it entitles them to some favor; you are therefore to forget it all, or resent it, as if they had done you injury. If they happen to be zealous whigs, friends of liberty, nurtured in revolution principles, remember all that to

Eskimo Approach & Franklin Technique

their prejudice, and contrive to punish it; for such principles, after a revolution is thoroughly established, are of no more use; they are even odious and abominable.

4. However peaceably your colonies have submitted [cuts] to your government, shown their affection to your interests, and patiently borne their grievances, you are to suppose them always inclined to revolt, and treat them accordingly. Quarter troops among them, who by their insolence may provoke the rising of mobs, and by their bullets and bayonets suppress them. By this means, like the husband who uses his wife ill from suspicion, you may in time convert your suspicions into realities.

WORD CHOICE AND TONE

Words are important and powerful. What a person says has impact. Every day words are spoken without careful consideration of their influence. Using the right words when communicating with others is important. Many of America's early writers, like Benjamin Franklin, chose their words carefully and left a legacy of valuable literature. Tone is the manner, pitch and quality of how a person says something. Tone reflects the speaker's attitude toward the topic. In writing, tone is the mood or feeling of a literary work. Tone can be deciphered by the types of words used and how they are used. The tone of Franklin's almanac was witty and humorous. In his speech before the Constitutional Convention, however, Franklin's tone was serious, reflective, and thoughtful as he encouraged the others to approve the Constitution.

VOCABULARY

Vernacular: terms and language particular to a group or culture

Satire: the use of irony, sarcasm, or ridicule in speech and literature

Irony: the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning

Antithesis: the direct opposite; a stark contrast

WHAT IS SATIRE?

Satire exposes follies in logic and is often used to mock religion, politics, society, or governments. The language of satire appears serious on the surface, but has an underlying tone of **irony** and sarcasm used to attack someone or something by making it look ridiculous or worthy of scorn. Another identifying mark of satire is that the article itself contains follies in logic or style. One of the most popular satires of all time was written by Jonathan Swift who was disturbed by the apathy of the English toward Irish citizens. Swift suggested in his essay, "Modest Proposals", that the best way to get rid of the Irish problem was for the children to be eaten or sold into slavery. This of course horrified the public, but got Swift's point across. Even though Swift's tone was serious on the surface, the underlying tone of his argument was sarcastic, and his logic, of course, was purposely flawed to reveal the illogical behavior of the British.

Benjamin Franklin was a popular satirist. Franklin wrote "Rules By Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One" to sound humorous, but his underlying tone was one of warning to the British against mistreating the colonists. In order to poke fun at the logic of the English, Franklin's article itself contains errors in logic (purposely so)—he is telling them how to destroy themselves, rather than improve themselves. Anyone who governs a nation would not want to destroy it. This was the point Franklin was trying to get across.

Another American satirist was Samuel Clemens (A.K.A. Mark Twain) in the 1800s who used his novels to satirize the ideals and mannerisms of the American South. Twain's main character in several books, Huckleberry Finn, was the **antithesis** of a "Southern gentleman", constantly saying and doing things unacceptable in southern culture. Modern examples of satirists are Jay Leno and David Letterman who satirize certain people in society, such as politicians, celebrities, and criminals. Read the following excerpt from Jonathan Swift's satire "Modest Proposal".

A Modest Proposal (excerpt)

For Preventing The Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being A Burden to Their Parents or Country, and For Making Them Beneficial to The Public

By Jonathan Swift (1729)

...It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin doors, crowded with beggars of the female sex,

followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants: who as they grow up either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars; it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in the streets.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled...

WHAT IS PARODY?

A parody is a humorous or sarcastic imitation of a legitimate literary piece or production. Parodies mock the original work, or the subject or author of the work, or use the format of the original work to mock another topic, idea, philosophy, belief, or lifestyle. One of the first parodies in American literature was the imitation of a British song titled “Hosier’s Ghost”. Americans made a parody, using the tune to mock the British about the Boston Tea Party. A modern parody uses the tune of the ballad “Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho” to mock Muhammad, the founder of Islam. Another modern parody by Life Messengers used the format of Psalm 23 to poke fun at Americans who “worship” television and become useless couch potatoes. Read excerpts from those parodies next.

Original Ballad

You may talk about your kings of Gideon,
You may talk about your men like Saul,
There's none like good old Joshua
At the battle of Jericho.

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho,
Jericho, Jericho,
Joshua fought the battle of Jericho,
And the walls came tumblin' down.

Parody

They try to tell me my religion is wrong
They try to tell me to follow Islam
They said their prophet was a righteous dude
But I found out none of their words were true

Ain't gonna follow no bloody beheader,
sex offender, prophet pretender.
Ain't gonna follow no greedy monger,
Islam is not for me.

The 23rd Channel (parody excerpt)

The T.V. set is my shepherd. My spiritual growth shall want.

It maketh me to sit down and do nothing . . . ,
because it requireth all my spare time. It
keepeth me from doing my duty . . . , because
it presenteth so many enticing shows that I
must see.

Yea, though I live to be a hundred, I shall keep
on viewing my T.V. as long as it will work, for it
is my closest companion. Its sound and its
picture, they comfort me.

It presenteth entertainment before me, and
keepeth me from doing important things with my
family. . .

Surely, no good thing will come of my life,
because my T.V. offereth me no time . . .

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

In this course you will walk in the steps of craftsmen and statesmen as you learn the skills of polishing, drafting, and shaping sentences, paragraphs, articles, stories, speeches, and essays into effective literary pieces. When you complete this course, you will reflect the skills of a wordsmith. Because this is a literature course, you will study the lives and works of many authors from various cultures and countries. On tests and quizzes, you will be required to recall the individual authors, their works and national origins.

Throughout this course, you will be required to write various lengths of responses, including many on separate paper. You are expected to respond in sentences and paragraphs of appropriate length in order to answer the question satisfactorily and effectively. All such responses are to be complete sentences, not word or phrase “tid bits” or “sound bites”. All responses on separate paper, are to be kept in a notebook by you throughout the duration of this course as you form your writing portfolio. On quizzes and

Eskimo Approach & Franklin Technique

tests, the more you write (the more in-depth your answer is), the higher your success rate will be.

Some of the texts in this course are complex and difficult. In order to comprehend them and answer the questions, follow the steps below. These will help you identify trouble spots when your understanding breaks down and will help you regain control of the material.

Learning and Comprehension Strategies

1) Circle words you do not know or understand. Look them up in the vocabulary or in a dictionary. This is important. If you do not understand what you are reading, you will not be able to answer questions about the reading selection.

2) As you read, write notes about the text: who the text is about; what the text is about; where the events took place; when the events took place; why the events took place; how the events took place. These are the basic questions to ask yourself in order to understand any text.

3) Reread any part of the text that does not make sense to you. Ask yourself why it does not make sense to you. Then, eliminate the problem. For example, if you do not understand the text because of unfamiliar words, then find out what those words mean. If an idea or concept mentioned in the text causes your understanding to break down, then stop reading and find out what that idea or concept means by discussing it with your teacher or peers or by researching it in an encyclopedia or on the Internet. Once you understand, then continue reading the text.

4) Find **key words** in the question, then find the same words in the text. To find the words in the text, look for titles and subtitles where the information is provided. For example, If the question asks you to explain the Eskimo learning style and the Benjamin Franklin learning style, you know that the **key words** are *Eskimo learning style*, and *Benjamin Franklin learning style*. Find where these terms are explained in the text, then answer the question.

5) Identify WHAT the question is asking you to do. For example, if the question asks you to compare and contrast the Eskimo learning style with the Benjamin Franklin learning style, you must first explain what each style is, then compare them, then contrast them. By the time

you do this, you will probably have enough paragraphs to satisfy the requirement.

6) If a question asks you to answer multiple questions, follow these steps: identify what the question is asking you to do; identify the key words; answer each question in the order it was asked. For example, a question may ask you to explain the Eskimo learning style and then to apply it to a situation in your own culture. First, identify what the question is asking: It is asking you to **explain**. Next, identify what you are supposed to explain. Find the key term: *Eskimo learning style*. Now you know that you are supposed to **explain** the *Eskimo learning style*. Next, you are asked to **apply** the Eskimo learning style to a situation in your own life. You can do this by describing an event in your own family, such as learning how to cook or sew with your mom or building a tree house or working on a car with your dad or grandpa.

Now you are equipped to tackle this course! This first chapter is the most difficult and demanding on your time, intellect, and study skills. Once you master this chapter, you will be able to “glide” through the remaining three chapters. Continue to the Activities, and succeed!

LIFE PRINCIPLE



“The noblest question in the world is, ‘What good may I do in it?’” —Ben Franklin