

Benjamin Franklin and the Invention of America

By Walter Isaacson

"I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it.... This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts." (Benjamin Franklin)

This introduction from Walter Isaacson's 2003 book *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* is a good piece of writing, plain and simple. And among the many things Ben Franklin has taught us is the notion that we can become better writers by studying and imitating good writing. With that in mind, I would like you to read this chapter and, working backwards, turn it into an outline.

This will help you see:

- that effective writing is well organized;
- that transitions and topic sentences are of great importance;
- that each new idea, or sentence, or paragraph, should logically follow that which comes before it, and
- that good writers pose arguments, make assertions, explain the significance of the evidence at hand, and seek to make larger connections. Your writing should do the same.

Instructions:

1. Read the piece from start to finish without taking any notes or annotating the text.
2. Read it again; this time you should underline the topic sentences/transitions.
3. **Highlight** every sentence that poses an argument, makes an assertion, or makes a larger connection. Leave sentences that simply provide facts alone.
4. Write an outline for this essay. It should use the following format and include the following:
 - I. Topic Sentence/transition
 - a. elaboration on arguments
 - b. bulleted list of key facts
 - i. summary of the connection or claim he makes using above facts
 - c. transition (or final thought/claim of the paragraph)
 - II. Topic Sentence