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Zmienia życie, otwiera umysły

Benjamin Franklin – a model for our contemporaries?

Introduction

Benjamin Franklin was one of the most remarkable personages in American history. His unusually busy life, incredibly tough principles and indomitable political activity contributed to the founding of the United States of America. He left a great deal of valuable tips for people living in his time. The thesis pays tribute to Benjamin Franklin and tries to analyze whether and which of Benjamin Franklin's character traits would be valuable for present-day people. Benjamin Franklin was one of the greatest characters in American history. He was a man who faced plenty of challenges and only his hard life principles helped him to achieve many successes in many different areas. The times of his life were very hard and only thanks to his characters traits could he be so successful in such a difficult period of the American history.

Benjamin Franklin as self-made man and his virtues.

The idea of a *self-made man* is connecting the American democracy and pioneering traditions with the American dream of success. A self-made man is a symbol of possibilities of the American system which creates the same chances for everyone. The American system creates limitless possibilities of the social advance for its citizens.. The students of Primary School in Śmigiel describe character traits of a typical *self-made man* which were reflected in the person of Benjamin Franklin and his virtues. A *self-made man* is a symbol of a high flier and guarantees that it is possible to achieve everything thanks to hard work. Thousands of American millionaires who started from scratch are the evidence for it. Another example is millions of emigrants, who fleeing to America from their countries from poverty and crisis, were able to promote their generation to the middle class. Although Benjamin Franklin did not create this term, he became a great symbol of a *self-made man* for many generations of



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different people in the whole world. . In order to improve his own character, Franklin made a list of thirteen virtues which he regarded most important in life:

1. *Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.*
2. *Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.*
3. *Order. Let all things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.*
4. *Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.*
5. *Frugality. Make no expence but to do good to others or yourself; i.e. waste nothing.*
6. *Industry. Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.*
7. *Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly”.*
8. *Justice. Wrong none by doing injures, or omitting the benefits that are your duty”.*
9. *Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injures so much as you think they deserve”.*
10. *Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloath, or habitation”.*
11. *Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness ,weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation”.*
12. *Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable”.*

Students from The Primary School in Śmigiel found and described three examples

Mrs. Teresa Nowak (name and surname changed).



Teresa Nowak together with her husband, a baker, started her private bakery in 1985 during communism. The beginnings of self and private interest were not easy. The communist authorities knew that only private initiative could save the country from economic disruption, but it still did not make it easier for people. Mrs. and Mr. Nowak, however, decided to do their business despite these difficulties. The beginning was difficult: no flour, no regular customers, Nowak's marriage worked together for 20 hours. After several years, they earned a good reputation, their private bakery became known in the city. Unfortunately, in 1991, Mrs. Nowak's husband - Henryk began to get sick. The disease is incurable - it is a malignant cancer and Mr. Nowak dies of a serious illness at the beginning of 1992. Mrs. Nowak then has four small preschool children - two daughters and two sons, she is alone without help and no support from local authorities. Ms. Nowak decides to continue bakeries on her own. she employs one young baker and she also bakes bread. Children are growing up, Mrs. Nowak must be everywhere - in the kitchen, cook dinner, help children at school and run bakeries. The bakery is developing well, the children are growing up, Mrs. Nowak buys two trucks and takes her bread outside the borders of her commune. The business is going well, the children are growing up, the eldest daughter is getting married to a young baker who works in a bakery. His older son marries and his young wife also works in a bakery. Typical family business. Mrs. Nowak helps build two houses for her children. Everyone works together and today Mrs. Nowak is one of the most important figures in the industry in Śmigiel - an example of a man who did not give up and achieved success thanks to his hard work. Students from the Primary School in Śmigiel described the stories of Mrs. Nowak and selected her for the *self-made-man* award.