

Autobiography of Ben Franklin

Benjamin Franklin

Why does Franklin tell the speckled-axe story immediately after describing his failure at perfect Order?

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	The speckled axe
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION	Plan for Attaining Moral Perfection
START	My scheme of Order gave me the most trouble;
END	a benevolent man should allow a few faults in himself, to keep his friends in countenance.
PASSAGE ID	sec-bf-04

THE MOVE

Use an anecdote to qualify an ideal

WHY THIS PASSAGE

The speckled-axe story appears just after Franklin admits that perfect Order defeats him. The anecdote gives him a humorous way to revise perfectionism: some remaining flaws may be tolerable if removing them costs more than the improvement is worth.

MARK

Underline Franklin’s frustration with perfect Order. Circle the details of the man polishing the axe and deciding to keep some speckles. Draw a line from the anecdote back to Franklin’s moral project.

NOTICE

- What ideal is the axe owner pursuing at first?
- Why does he stop before the axe is perfectly bright?
- How does the story help Franklin distinguish serious improvement from obsession with flawlessness?

THINK

Answer provisionally: Why does Franklin tell the speckled-axe story immediately after describing his failure at perfect Order? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: Why does Franklin tell the speckled-axe story immediately after describing his failure at perfect Order? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	The speckled axe lets Franklin revise perfectionism without abandoning improvement. The anecdote suggests that eliminating every flaw may cost more effort than the remaining imperfection is worth.
EVIDENCE	Use Franklin's difficulty with Order and the axe owner's decision to tolerate speckles rather than polish forever.
WATCH FOR	Do not interpret the story as permission to stop improving. It qualifies the ideal of perfection, not the value of effort.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

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Why does Franklin tell the speckled-axe story immediately after describing his failure at perfect Order?

START ANCHOR	My scheme of Order gave me the most trouble;
END ANCHOR	a benevolent man should allow a few faults in himself, to keep his friends in countenance.

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. MARK - Underline Franklin’s frustration with perfect Order. Circle the details of the man polishing the axe and deciding to keep some speckles. Draw a line from the anecdote back to Franklin’s moral project.
2. NOTICE - What ideal is the axe owner pursuing at first? Why does he stop before the axe is perfectly bright? How does the story help Franklin distinguish serious improvement from obsession with flawlessness?
3. THINK - Answer provisionally: Why does Franklin tell the speckled-axe story immediately after describing his failure at perfect Order?
4. WRITE - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.