



## Period II

### The Literature of Reason and Revolution & Benjamin Franklin and *The Autobiography*

Mona



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# I. Historical Introduction

- In Economy:

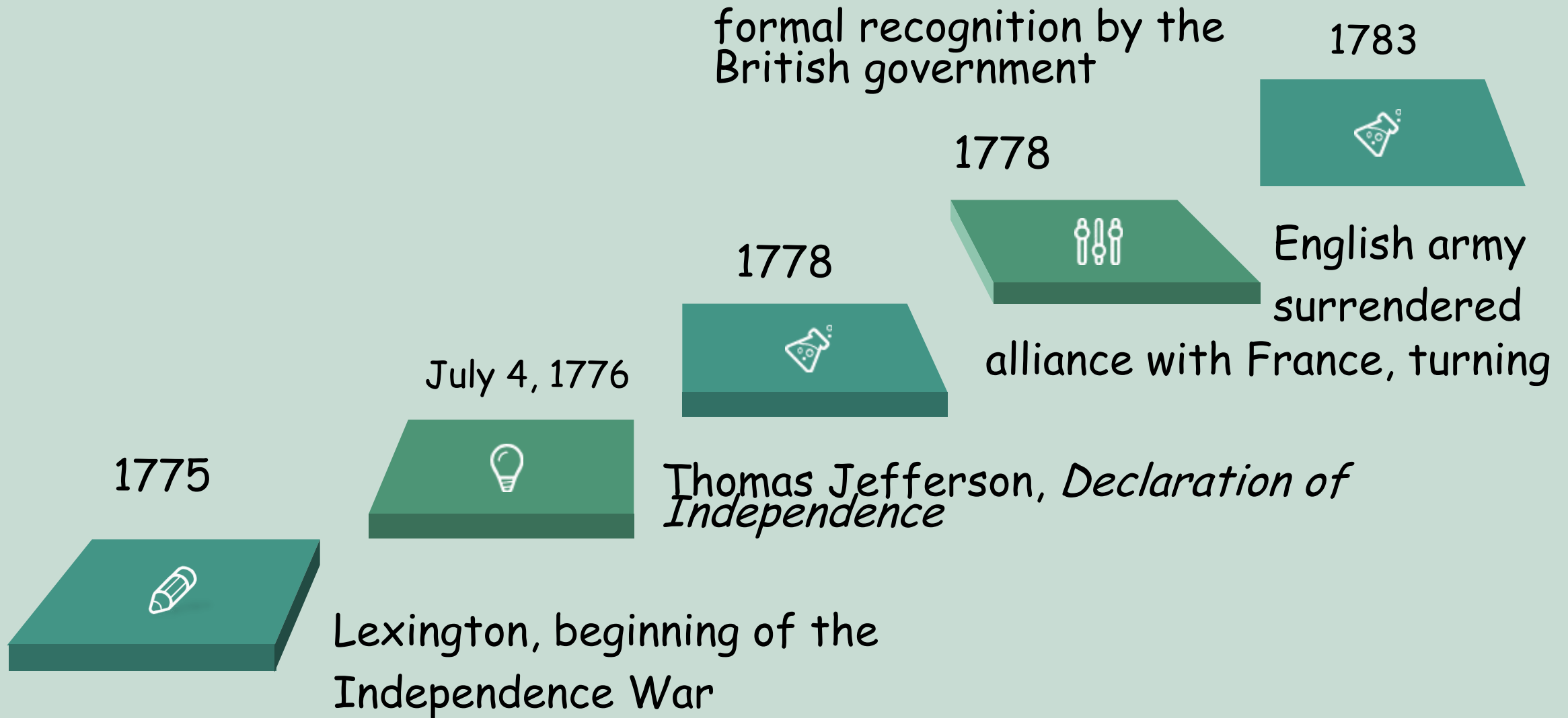
The Industrial Revolution; spurred the economy in American colonies.

- In Politics

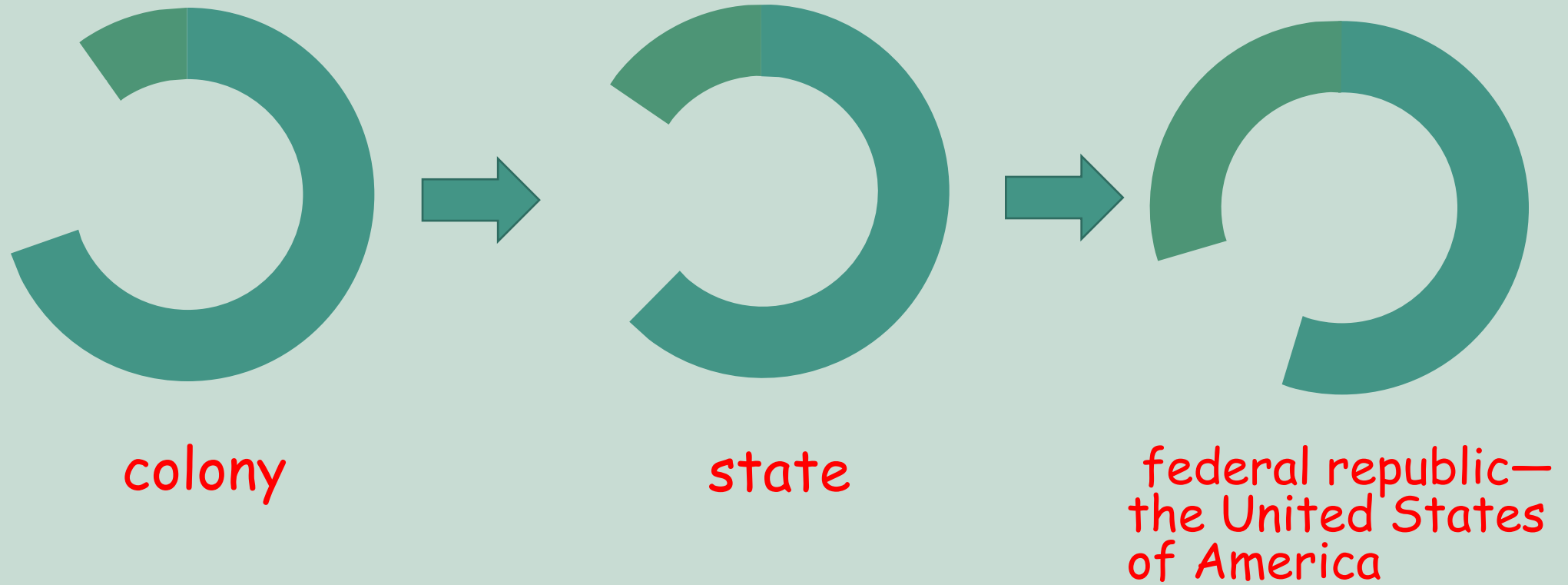
- **Independence War(1775-1783):**

The industrial growth led to intense strain with Britain. The British government tried to suppress their growth economically, and ruled them from abroad politically and levied heavy tax on them. These aroused bitter resentment in colonies. Constant conflicts resulted in American revolutionary war.

# The War for Independence



# The procedures of the establishment of the new nation

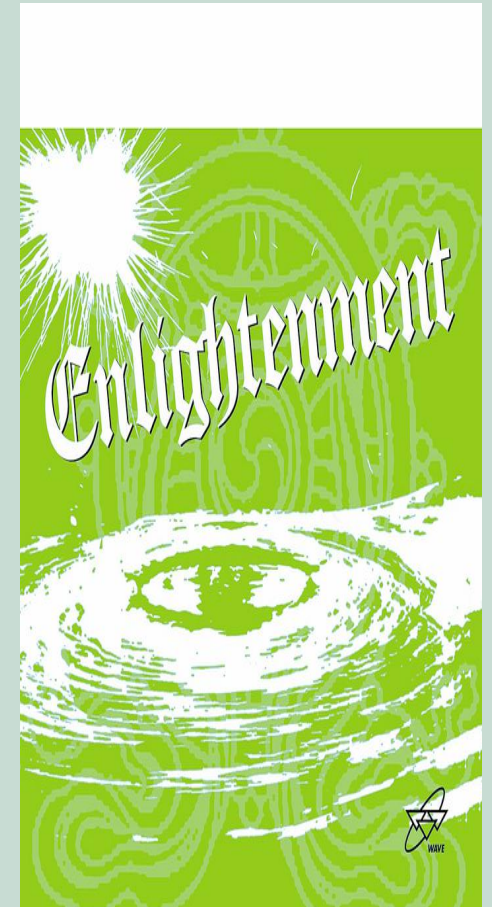




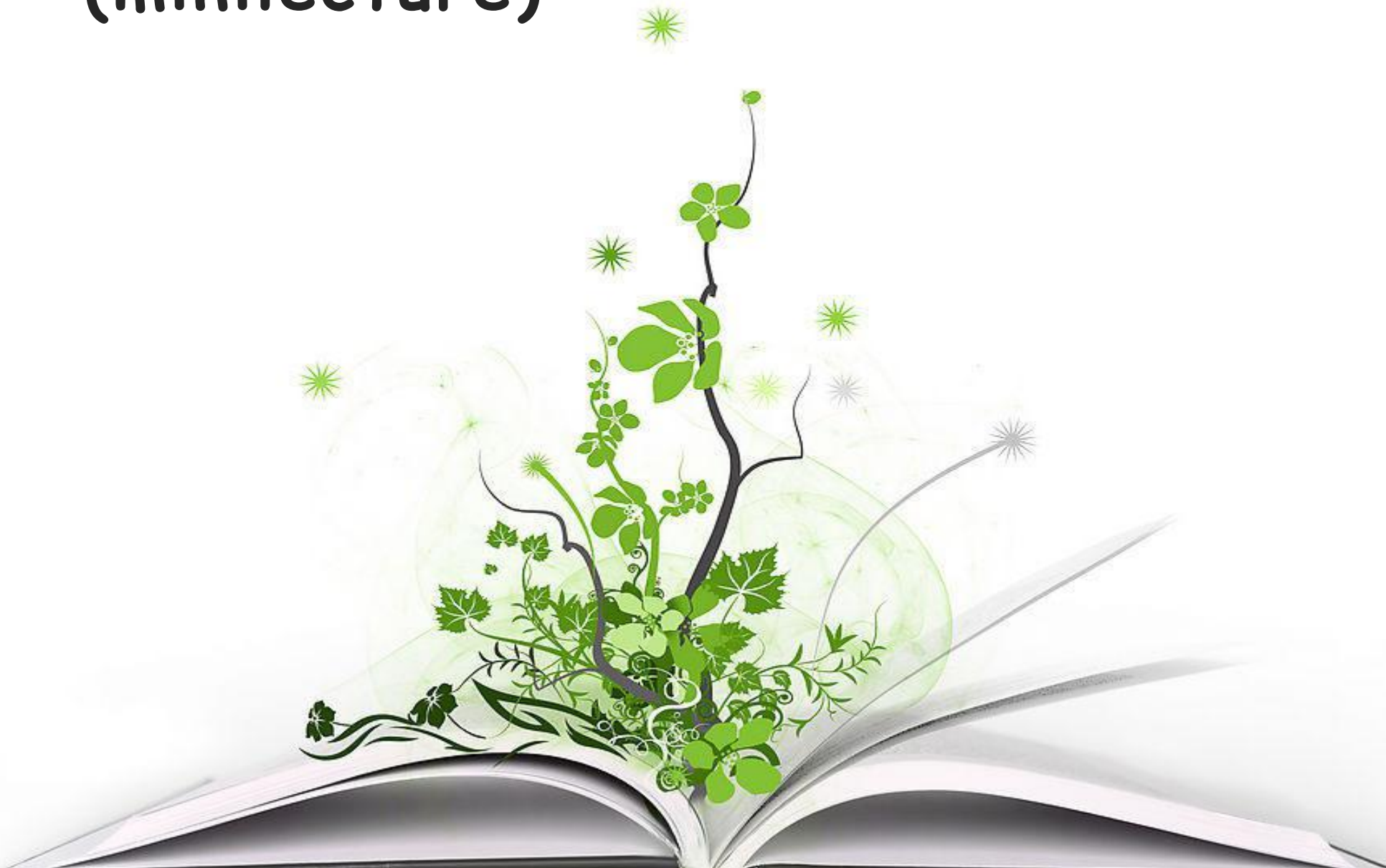
### GEORGE WASHINGTON

An authorized cast bronze by The Gutzman Foundry from the original by Jean Antoine Houdon (1743-1828) which stands in the State Capitol at Richmond, Virginia. It was purchased by The George Washington University in 1932 on the occasion of the George Washington Bicentennial. After standing in a number of locations on the campus, the statue found its permanent home in the University Yard and was dedicated at this spot on September 8, 1991. "George Washington" is part of The George Washington University Permanent Collection.

- In Ideology (Enlightenment)
- Spiritual life in the colonies—  
Enlightenment, a philosophical and intellectual movement.
- Advocated reason or rationality, the scientific method, equality and human beings' ability to perfect themselves and their society.
- In favor of the revolutionary ideas and took actively in the war.
- Opposed the puritan traditions and brought the secular education and literature to life.



## II. Enlightenment (minilecture)



### III. Literature



1. Call for America's independence in literature
- In 1783, Noah Webster declared, "America must be as independent as she is in politics, as famous for the arts as for arms". Yet throughout the century American literature was largely patterned on the writing of 18th century Englishmen.



## 2. The Development of Literature

- **Principal features**

- The men of letters were preoccupied with rationality and showed a profound love for the order and beauty of classical art.

- **In form**

of the 18th c English classical writers. It was derived from and dependent on the English literal style which was characterized by clarity, precision and order.

- **In content**

utilitarian tendency.



### 3. Features of Literature

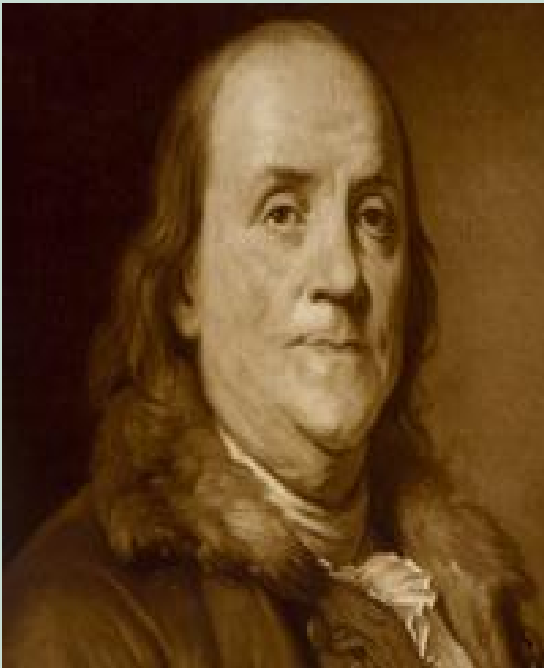
- ❖ The prosperity of journalism to spread ideas of Enlightenment.
- ❖ The American reading public at the time displays great interest in the works of English scientist, philosophers and writers.
- ❖ The secular ideals in Franklin's works.
- ❖ While imaginative literature in America remained derivative and dependent, the heroic and revolutionary ambitions of the age had created great political pamphleteering and state papers. Essayists and journalists had shaped the nation's beliefs with reason dressed in clear and forceful prose.

- Benjamin Franklin(1706-1790)  
*Poor Richard's Almanac*  
*The Autobiography*
- Thomas Paine(1737-1809)  
*Common Sense*  
*American Crisis*
- Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)  
*Declaration of Independence*
- Philip Freneau (1752-1832)  
*The Wild Honey Suckle*





## IV. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)



Introduction to Benjamin Franklin  
(minilecture)

Literary Career

Analysis of *The Autobiography*

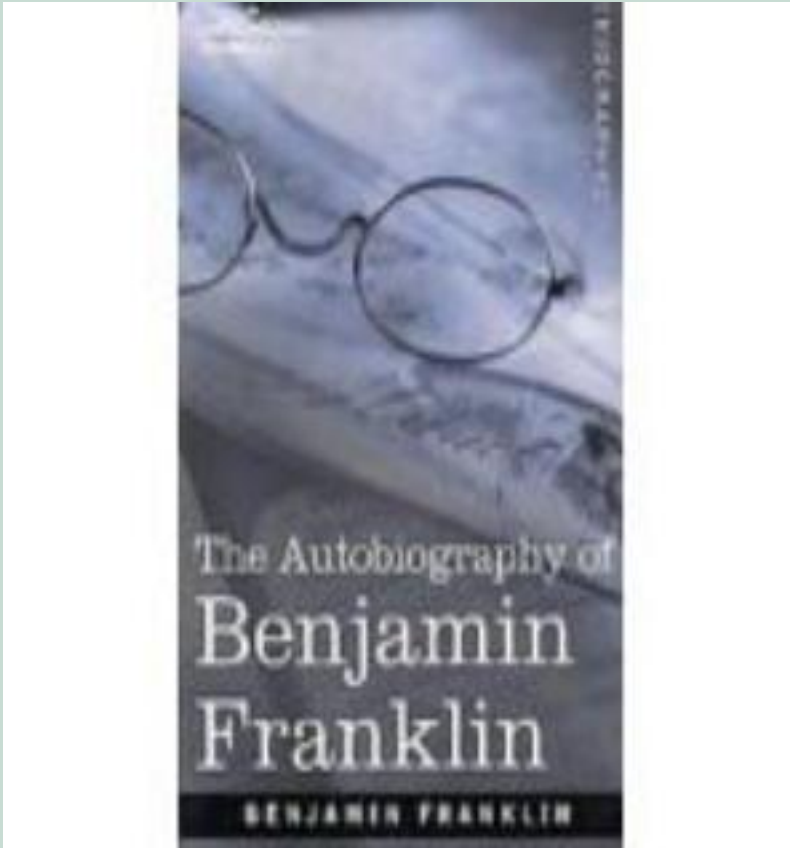
Summary

God helps those who help themselves.

# Topics for Presentation

- Do you think Benjamin Franklin is a Puritan writer? Why?
- What influence has Puritanism exerted upon him?





- In *The Autobiography* we will be able to notice:
- 1) **Puritanism's influence**, such as self-examination and self-improvement (timetable, thirteen virtues, life style)
- 2) **Enlightenment spirits** (man's nature is good, rights of liberty, virtues include "order")

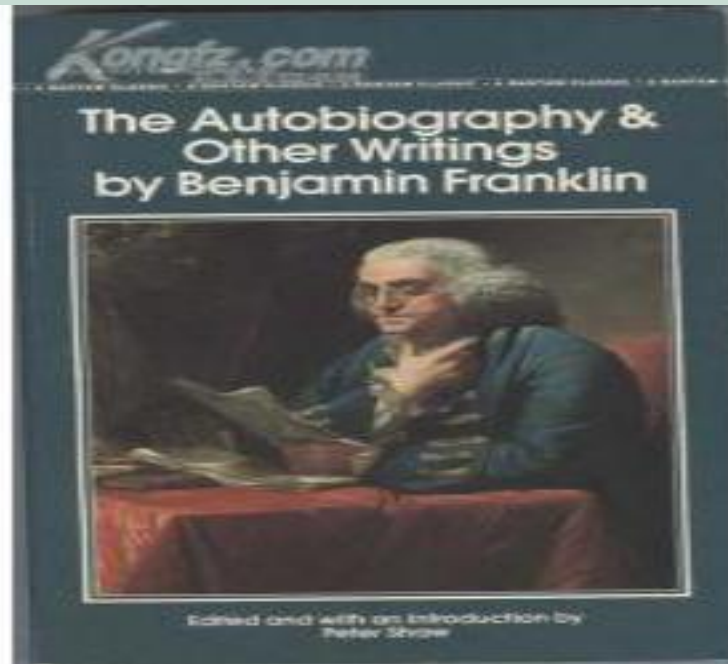


- Style: simple, clear in order, direct, concise and humorous ("Nothing should be expressed in two words that can as well be expressed in one.")
- Influence
- First of its kind in literature and set the autobiography as a genre.
- Popular, still well-read today.
- His values and style influenced lots of Americans

His shadow lies heavier than any other man's on this young nation



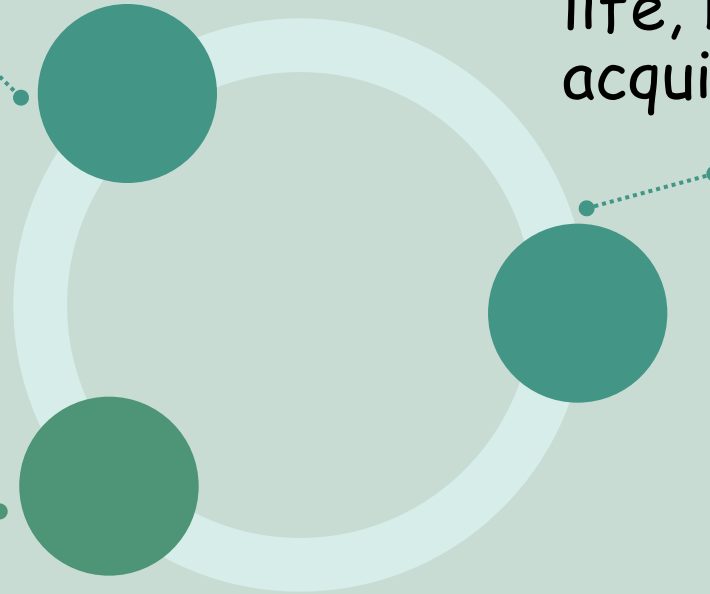
## V. Analysis of *The Autobiography*



**Autobiography:** inspiring account of a poor boy's rise to a high position. It is a how-to-do-it book, one on the art of self-improvement.

**Significance:** It presents a prototype of American success which inspired generations of Americans. It is an embodiment of Puritanism and enlightening spirits.

**Contents:** It covered Franklin's life only until 1757 when he was 51 years old. It described his life as a shrewd and industrious businessman and narrates how he owned the constant felicity of his life, his long-continued health and acquisition of fortune.



# Questions for Consideration

## (小组讨论)

- 1. Why did Franklin write his Autobiography? ( 为什么弗兰克林写《自传》 )
- 2. What features do you find in the style of the above selection? ( 《自传》选段的文体特色如何？ )
- 3. Why say Franklin is the representative of American Enlightenment? ( 为什么弗兰克林是美国启蒙运动的代表人物 )
- 4. Why Franklin is admired and read widely? ( 为什么弗兰克林广受尊重和爱戴？ )



## Analysis of Selected Parts



01

a . H e w a s  
i n t e r e s t e d i n  
r e a d i n g a s a c h i l d .



02

b. Being an apprentice  
to his brother, he  
began writing.



03

c. How he improved  
his argumentation.

**Summary:** Franklin was thirsty for knowledge and improved his writing with practical methods. How he gained success through one's consistent effort and hard working. (self-improvement/education)

## More Analysis

a. The way of learning language.

b. Practice makes perfect---a piece of advice on how to teach language.

c/d. Relations with his relatives. Life experience.

e. Learning Club: devoted on the improvement of young man, influence public opinion.

### Summary:

Franklin was a practical, diligent man. In learning language, he had a great power of endurance and clever mind. He always tried his best to achieve his goal.

# Why say Franklin is the representative of American Enlightenment?

01. He **believed in reason or rationality**, the scientific method, equality and human beings' ability to perfect themselves and their society.

03. He **avored the education**. Self-education, educating and disseminating knowledge among people by his newspaper and Autobiography, establishing learning club, college and library.

02. He **opposed** intolerance, restraint, spiritual authority and revealed religion.

04. He **avored freedom of thoughts**. He set up the ideas of democracy in the USA.



# Why Franklin is admired and read widely?

01.

He is a typical American, model of the self-made man, a cultural hero whose life exemplified the American dream of the poor boy who made good.

02.

He stressed the importance of working hard to make money, happiness depending in the first place on economic success and optimistically believed that every American could do so.

03.

He was convinced that no man could be virtuous or happy unless he did his best to improve the life of his society and his own life.



# Benjamin Franklin

1

American politician, scientist, inventor, and educator.

2

He was a typical example of the so-called American Dream. He helped draft the "Declaration of Independence".

3

He conducted the difficult negotiation with France that brought financial and military support for America in the war.

4

He founded the college that was to become the University of Pennsylvania.

5

He is the **prototype of the American Dream.**



LOGO

Summary : "firsts"  
There are a number of  
"firsts" associated with  
*The Autobiography*.

01

It is considered **the first popular self-help book.**

02

It was **the first major secular American autobiography.**

03

It is also **the first real account of the American Dream in action** as told from a man who experienced it firsthand.



# Style

He developed  
a **utilitarian**  
and didactic  
style.



His style is  
characterized by  
**simplicity, frankness,**  
**wit, clarity, logic and**  
**order, directness,**  
**concision, flexibility.**



It is **plain,**  
**precise,**  
**short, smooth,**  
**well-balanced,**  
**graceful.**



# 思政启发



# 高校历年考研真题与模拟练习

- 殖民地和独立革命时期是美国文学的起始阶段，本阶段的考点主要集中在对其历史背景和以下流派、作家和作品的分析上：
- I. Define the following terms.
- 1. The literary form of autobiography (北京第二外国语学院2008年考研题)
- American Puritanism
- Poetry
- The Declaration of Independence
- American Enlightenment



- II . Fill in the blanks with proper information.
- In his \_\_\_\_\_, Benjamin Franklin creates the image of a boy's rise from \_\_\_\_\_ to riches and demonstrates his belief that the new world of America was a land of opportunities which might be met through hard work and \_\_\_\_\_.
- III. Multiple choice
- It is a critical commonplace now that American literature is based on a myth, that is , \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (北京第二外国语学院2008年考研题)
- A. the ancient Greek myth of Zeus     B. the British myth of the Saint Grail
- C. the Biblical myth of the Garden of Eden     D. the Legend of the Sleepy Hollow

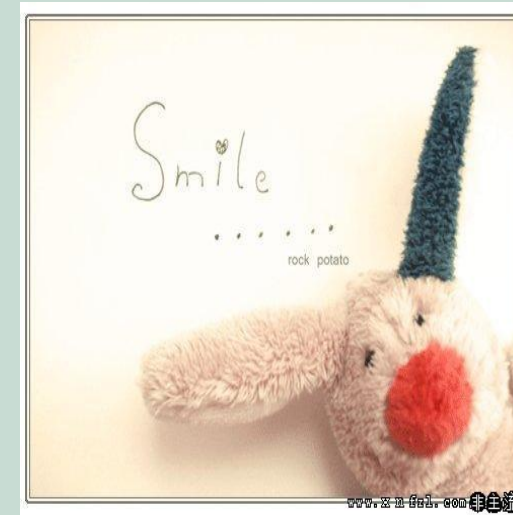


- 2. The first settlers who became the founding fathers of the American nation were quite a few of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(北京第二外国语学院2008年考研题)
- A. Quakers B. Anglicans C. Catholics D. Puritans
- 3. The first permanent English settlement in North America was established at \_\_\_\_\_. (北京第二外国语学院2008年考研题)
- A. Jamestown B. New York C. Boston D. Concord
- 4. The first symbol of self-made American man is \_\_\_\_\_.  
(北京第二外国语学院2008年考研题)
- A. George Washington B. Washington Irving C. Thomas Jefferson D. Benjamin Franklin
- 5. American Colonial literature is longer than any other literary period, which started when the first settlers kept diaries and sermons and developed till \_\_\_\_\_. (北京第二外国语学院2008年考研题)
- A. the mid of 18th C. B. early 17th C. C. the end of 17th C. D. the end of 18th C.

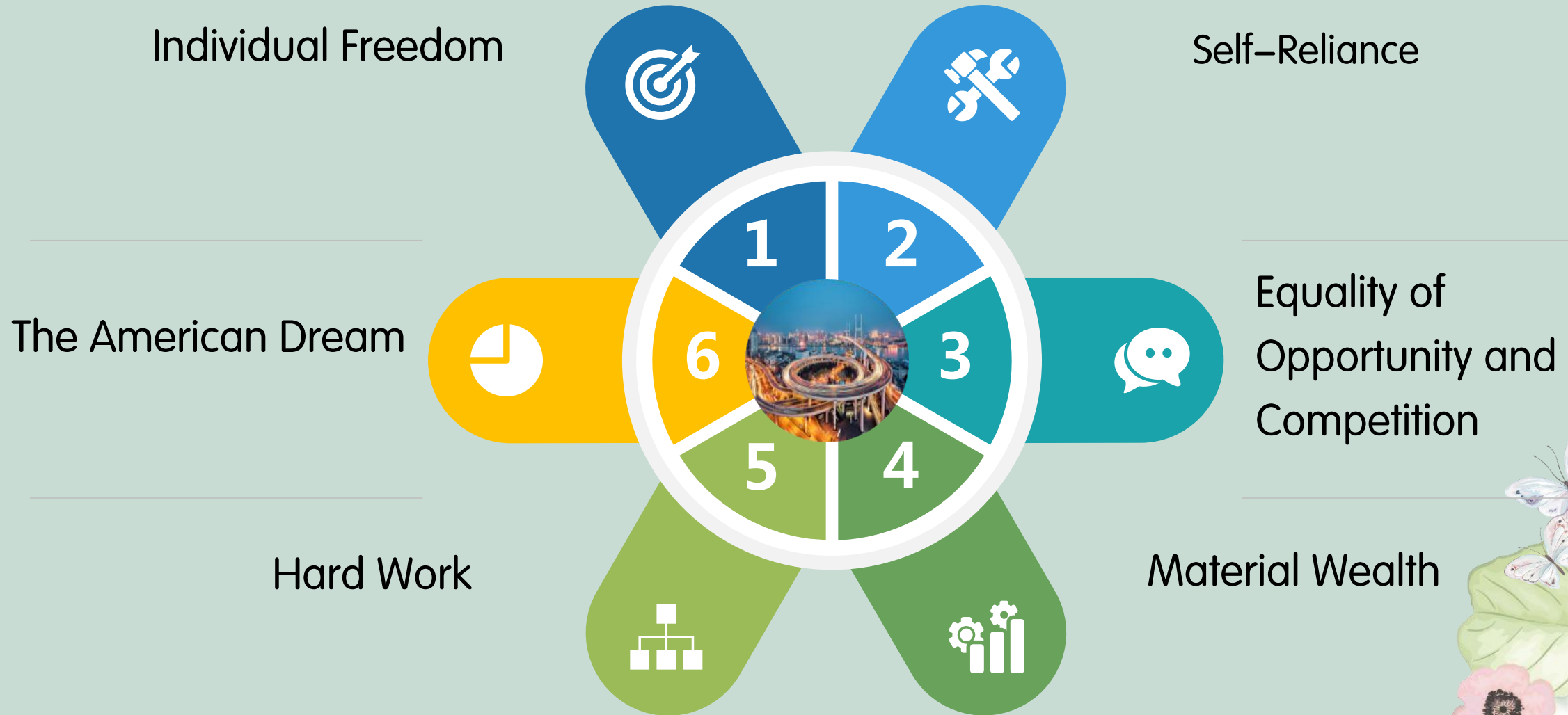


# Assignments

- ❖ 1. What's the differences between American dream and Chinese dream ?(请比较美国梦和中国梦的异同)



# Traditional American Values





拍信 Paixin.com

—is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.

In a word, the traditional way from rags to riches: through thrift and hard work.



## Chinese Dream VS American Dream



[https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015xivisituz/2015-09/23/content\\_21962972.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015xivisituz/2015-09/23/content_21962972.htm)



我梦我行  
WO XUE XI WEN  
WO JIAN XING

# 中国梦

和谐旋律·共同筑梦  
HE XIE XUAN LU GONG TONG ZHU MENG

“中国梦”关乎着中国未来的发展方向，凝聚了中国人民对中华民族伟大复兴的憧憬和期待；它是整个中华民族不断追求的梦想，是亿万人民世代相传的夙愿，每个中国人都是中国梦的参与者、创造者。

富强民主  
公正法治

文明和谐  
爱国敬业

自由平等  
诚信友善



# Assignments

- 2. Preview American Romanticism
- 3. Features of literature of American Romanticism
- 4. Read the story by Washington Irving:
  - *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*
  - 1. Who is the protagonist of this story? Describe the protagonist's physical features and the meaning of his name.
  - 2. What do you think of the writer's language?





Thank You