

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, one of the foundational texts of American literature, has undergone a variety of published incarnations since Franklin's creation of the work in 1771. In his opening paragraph, the author introduces the twofold nature of his text, commenting first that it will be a means for his son William "to know the Circumstances of my Life" but also that "my Posterity . . . may find . . . fit to be imitated" some of Franklin's means of "having emerg'd from the Poverty and Obscurity in which I was born & bred, to a State of Affluence & some Degree of Reputation in the World." More than simply a memoir, the *Autobiography* presents Franklin's conscious recognition of his place in history; more broadly, it serves as an illustration of the author's identification with the new republic—the self-made man in the land of self-made men—and his desire to share that dream and achievement with his countrymen.

In Part One of the *Autobiography*, Franklin offers the story of his own life, beginning with his family genealogy, describing his childhood as the youngest son of a harsh father, and discussing at length his youthful rebellion against both personal and social patriarchy. From his earliest youth, Franklin displayed an optimism, self-confidence, and independence of thought that at times bordered on arrogance, traits that would come to define his life. While this attitude occasionally took its toll on the young man, it overwhelmingly factored into Franklin's success as a businessman, inventor, diplomat, and statesman. Intended as an inspiration to young Americans and written in 1784 and 1788 at the request of several admirers, Parts Two and Three continue Franklin's account of his life but focus more on the public and theoretical man as opposed to the private individual. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* achieves its goal of providing a model for successive generations, due in great part to the author's careful construction of his own persona as the representative American.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X. The *Autobiography* is an American literary classic. On the one hand it resembles Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick*, stories of innocent youths who found success by adapting to the scheming lifestyles of the American city. On the other hand it provides the most important framework for African American political discourse in the twentieth century. It shows the life then, and in some ways now, of a Negro in America. Its movement from individual alienation to spiritual and ultimately social transformation grounds it in the tradition of St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Frederick Douglass's *Autobiography*.

Malcolm X created the *Autobiography* by telling his compelling though undocumented story to Alex Haley, a

journalist, via some fifty interviews that began in the spring of 1963. Many of these were recorded covertly by the FBI, which considered Malcolm X a security threat. In an epilogue to the book, Haley described how he gained Malcolm X's confidence to share his story.

Published in November 1965, the *Autobiography* gained praise by the *New York Times* as "an eloquent statement." It allowed its author's charismatic leadership example to transcend his assassination on February 21 of that year. Its impact was to make available to millions of African American street youths, inmates, and activists Malcolm X's model of self-emancipation. There were four stages in his transformation. The first was the exploited, a depression era boy who lost his father to the Ku Klux Klan. Second was the exploiter, a street hustler and criminal. Third was the self-emancipator, the devotee of the Black Muslims and preacher of black nationalism. Finally came the social liberator, the founder of the short-lived ORGANIZATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN UNITY, a group committed to interracial and pan-African efforts toward human rights. Through his record of these stages, Malcolm X became a role model of how one could transform oneself and others in the struggle for collective liberation.

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See also **Nation of Islam**.

AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINES (ATMs)

are data terminals for convenient money transactions. Don Wetzel is credited as the inventor of the ATM. He created the machine while working for the Docutel Company in Dallas, Texas, during the 1960s.

ATMs are actually kiosk computers with a keypad and screen. The patron is prompted with instructions and given a choice of transactions. An optional receipt can be printed for patron records. Bank access to accounts is provided through telephone networking, a host processor, and a bank computer to verify data. Using an ATM card, a debit card, or a credit card, bank patrons can electronically access their accounts and withdraw or deposit funds, make payments, or check balances.

ATMs have eliminated the need to enter a bank for basic transactions and allow access to accounts at machines throughout the United States. Financial institutions started charging fees to use their ATMs in the mid-1990s, making the transactions very profitable for the host banks. The use of ATMs has cut service staff in traditional banks, impacting employment in the industry. As many