

Sayings of Poor Richard

Benjamin Franklin

Poor Richard's Almanack was Franklin's biggest publishing success, and it continued to appear for over twenty-five years. Every house had an almanac. almanacs calculated the tides and the phases of the moon, claimed to forecast the weather for the next year, and even provided astrological advice for those who believe in it. Many almanacs also supplied recipes, jokes, and aphorisms. "Poor Richard" was an imaginary astrologer, who had a critical wife named Bridget. One year Bridget wrote the maxims, to answer those her husband had written the year before on female idleness. Once, Bridget included "better" weather forecasts so that women would know the good days fro drying their clothes.

Franklin took Poor Richard's wit and wisdom where he found it—from old sayings in other languages, from other writers, and from popular adages. He never hesitated to rework the texts to suit his own purposes. For example, for the 1758 almanac, Franklin skimmed all his previous editions to compose a single speech on economy. This speech, called "The Way to Wealth," has become one of the best known of Franklin's works. It has been mistakenly believed to be representative of Poor Richard's wisdom. Poor Richard often called for prudence and thrift, but he just as often favored extravagance.

1. Love your neighbor; yet don't pull down your hedge.
2. If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.
3. Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead.
4. Tart words make no friends; a spoonful of honey will catch more flies than a gallon of vinegar.
5. Glass, china, and reputation are easily cracked and never well mended.
6. Fish and visitors smell in three days.
7. He that lieth down with dogs shall rise up with fleas.
8. One today is worth two tomorrows.
9. A truly great man will neither trample on a worm nor sneak to an emperor.
10. A little neglect may breed mischief; for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost; for want of the rider the battle was lost.
11. If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some; he that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing.
12. He that composes himself is wiser than he that composes books.
13. He that is of the opinion that money will do everything may well be suspected of doing everything for money.
14. If a man could have half his wishes, he would double his troubles.
15. 'Tis hard for an empty bag to stand upright.
16. A small leak will sink a great ship.
17. A plowman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees.
18. Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterward.
19. Nothing brings more pain than too much pleasure; nothing more bondage than too much liberty.