Benjamin Franklin Mini DBQ

As you work through the documents below, consider:

To what extent and in what ways did Benjamin Franklin reflect the conviction that "merit" or "talent" ought to bring rewards?

Directions:
Read the following documents and answer the sourcing and comprehension questions as you go.

Document 1: A Plan of Conduct, 1726

Source:
http://franklinpapers.org/framedNames.jsp
Taken from *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Vol. 1, 1726,* MS not found; reprinted from Robert Walsh, "Life of Benjamin Franklin," *Delaplaine's Repository of the Lives and Portraits of Distinguished Americans* (Philadelphia, 1815–17), II, 51–2.

Introduction:
Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was the youngest son of seventeen children. Observing that young Benjamin loved to read, his father decided he should learn the printing trade. When Benjamin was twelve years old, his father apprenticed him to an older brother, James, who was a successful printer in Boston. Benjamin learned the trade, but resented what he called James's harsh, tyrannical, and arbitrary treatment. In 1723, at age 17, Benjamin ran away from James and ended up in Philadelphia, alone and virtually penniless. In 1724, Franklin went to London and worked for another printer for about eighteen months before returning to Philadelphia in 1726. On board the ship returning to America, Franklin kept a detailed journal. In his autobiography written in the 1770s and 1780s, Franklin described the most important aspect of the journal, "the plan…for regulating [his] future conduct in life."

Text
Those who write of the art of poetry teach us that if we would write what may be worth the reading, we ought always, before we begin, to form a regular plan and design of our piece: otherwise, we shall be in danger of **incongruity** [contradiction, mismatch]. I am apt to think it is the same as to life. I have never fixed a regular design in life; by which means it has been a confused variety of different scenes. I am now entering upon a new one: let me, therefore, make some resolutions, and form some scheme of action, that, henceforth, I may live in all respects like a rational creature.
1. It is necessary for me to be extremely **frugal** [thrifty; not wasteful] for some time, till I have paid what I owe.
2. To endeavour to speak truth in every instance; to give nobody expectations that are not likely to be answered, but aim at sincerity in every word and action—the most amiable excellence in a rational being.

3. To apply myself industriously to whatever business I take in hand, and not divert my mind from my business by any foolish project of growing suddenly rich; for industry and patience are the surest means of plenty.
4. I resolve to speak ill of no man whatever, not even in a matter of truth; but rather by some means excuse the faults I hear charged upon others, and upon proper occasions speak all the good I know of every body.

1. How did Franklin's resolutions affect his course in life?

2. To what extent can the reader have confidence in Franklin's statement that he adhered to the plan "pretty faithfully"?

3. What do you think Franklin meant by "a confused variety of different scenes?"

4. Identify two character strengths that are suggested by Franklin's resolutions and highlight a phrase or sentence that justifies your response.

Document 2: Maxims from Poor Richard's Almanack (1733–1758)

Full text:
Poor Richard: The Almanacks for the Years 1733–1758 by Benjamin Franklin, Norman Rockwell (Illustrator), Van Wyck Brooks (Introduction).

Introduction:
Franklin, writing under the pseudonym of "Richard Saunders," from 1733 to 1758 published an annual almanac containing calendars, weather predictions, recipes, and other homespun practical advice. The 1758 Almanack preamble includes a collection of quotations from previous editions, considered to represent Poor Richard's "greatest hits."

Text
1734 ● Without justice, courage is weak.
1737 ● The noblest question in the world is *What good may I do in it*?
1738 ● Sell not virtue to purchase wealth, nor liberty to purchase power.

1741 ● Let no Pleasure tempt thee, no Profit allure thee, no Ambition corrupt thee, no Example sway thee, no Persuasion move thee, to do anything which thou knowest to be Evil; So shalt thou always live jollily: for a good Conscience is a continual Christmas. . . .

1746 ● Virtue and Happiness are Mother and Daughter. ● Dost thou love Life? Then do not squander Time; for that's the Stuff Life is made of.
1747 ● The Devil sweetens Poison with Honey.
1749 ● Content makes poor men rich; Discontent makes rich Men poor.
1750 ● Genius without Education is like Silver in the Mine.
1751 ● To-day is Yesterday's Pupil.
1755 ● Be at War with your Vices, at Peace with your Neighbours, and let every New-year find you a better Man.
1756 ● Love your Enemies, for they tell you your Faults. ● Plough [plow] deep while Sluggards [lazy person] sleep; And you shall have Corn to sell and keep.
1757 ● Work as if you were to live 100 years, Pray as if you were to die To-morrow.
1758 ● Silence is not always a Sign of Wisdom, but Babbling is ever a Folly. ● Virtue may [not] always make a Face handsome, but Vice will certain make it ugly. ● Half the Truth is often a great lie. ● The first Mistake in public Business, is the going into it. ● The Way to see by Faith is to shut the Eye of Reason. ● The Morning Daylight appears plainer when you put out your Candle. ● To serve the Publick faithfully, and at the same time please it entirely is impracticable.

5. Select two of your favorite sayings in this selection, put them in your own words, and explain how they relate to American identity or philosophy at the times they were written.

6. Which of these sayings support the idea that that “merit” or “talent” ought to bring rewards?

Document 3: Priestley’s Account of the Kite Experiment, 1752

Source:
http://franklinpapers.org/framedVolumes.jsp
Printed in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 19, 1752; also copy: The Royal Society. II. Printed in Joseph Priestley, *The History and Present State of Electricity, with Original Experiments* (London, 1767), pp. 179–81.

Introduction:
In addition to his work as a successful and wealthy printer, Franklin added postmaster, ambassador, author, scientist, and statesman to his resume. A well-respected polymath, he tracked hurricanes, founded The University of Pennsylvania, and developed new medical devices. A few of his best-known inventions included the lightning rod, which protected buildings from fires started by lightning, bifocal glasses, which he called “double spectacles,” and many more.

Beginning in 1757, Franklin served in London as agent of Pennsylvania (and later of other American colonies as well) until he became convinced in 1775 that reconciliation between the American colonies and Great Britain was impossible. Largely due to his experiments with electricity, Benjamin Franklin was the most respected scientist in London in the mid-1700s. Franklin frequently met with other scientists at the London Coffeehouse, calling the group “The Club of Honest Whigs.” When a young scientist and clergyman, Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), decided to write a book on the history of electricity, the coffeehouse was the best place for him to do his research by interviewing his heroes, the pioneers in the field of study. Priestley met Franklin in December 1765, learning from Franklin himself the details of the famous 1752 kite experiment. Priestley’s 1767 book included the first publicly available scientific account of Franklin’s test of his hypothesis that lightning was a form of electricity.

Vocabulary	***Text***
electric fluid: Franklin developed a theory that electricity is a kind of fluid coursing through the earth and its atmosphere **hempen string**: a string made of hemp **electric virtue**: electric fluid or energy	To demonstrate, in the completest manner possible, the sameness of the **electric fluid**, with the matter of lightning, Dr. Franklin, astonishing as it must have appeared, contrived actually to bring lightning from the heavens, by means of an electrical kite, which he raised when a storm of thunder was perceived to be coming on. This kite had a pointed wire fixed upon it, by which it drew the lightning from the clouds. This lightning descended by the **hempen string**, and was received by a key tied to the extremity of it; that part of the string which was held in the hand being of silk, that the **electric virtue** might stop when it came to the key. He found that the string would conduct electricity even when nearly dry, but that when it was wet, it would conduct it quite freely; so that it would stream out plentifully from the key, at the approach of a person’s finger. . . .

spire (n): a cone-shaped structure on the top of a building	[Franklin believed that] by means of a common kite, he could have a readier and better access to the regions of thunder than by any **spire** whatever. Preparing, therefore, a large silk handkerchief, and two cross sticks, of a proper length, on which to extend it; he took the opportunity of the first approaching thunder storm to take a walk into a field, in which there was a shed convenient for his purpose. But dreading the ridicule which too commonly attends unsuccessful attempts in science, he communicated his intended experiment to no body but his son [William] who assisted him in raising the kite.
	The kite being raised, a considerable time elapsed before there was any appearance of its being electrified. One very promising cloud had passed over it without any effect; when, at length, just as he was beginning to despair of his contrivance, he observed some loose threads of the hempen string to stand erect, and to avoid one another, just as if they had been suspended on a common conductor. Struck with this promising appearance, he immediately presented his knucle to the key, and (let the reader judge of the exquisite pleasure he must have felt at that moment) the discovery was complete. He perceived a very evident electric spark. Others succeeded, even before the string was wet, so as to put the matter past all dispute, and when the rain had wet the string, he collected electric fire very copiously. This happened in June 1752, a month after the electricians in France had verified the same theory, but before he heard of any thing they had done.

7. Using only Priestley's description, draw a sketch of Franklin's kite.

8. What was the purpose of Franklin's kite experiment?

9. Whom did Franklin take with him to assist in his kite experiment? Why did he take only this person?

10. What was Franklin's first indication that his experiment might be a success?

11. Put this passage in your own words: "Struck with this promising appearance, he immediately presented his knucle to the key, and (let the reader judge of the exquisite pleasure he must have felt at that moment) the discovery was complete. He perceived a very evident electric spark."

Application

Now that you have read the primary source documents, go back through each and look for evidence that will help you answer the prompt:

To what extent and in what ways did Benjamin Franklin reflect the conviction that "merit" or "talent" ought to bring rewards?

Writing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement condenses your arguments in a nutshell and may appear at either the beginning or the end of an essay, but it is not written until after you have planned your overall response and marshalled your evidence. A good thesis statement accomplishes the following:

a. Fully addresses all parts of the prompt, while acknowledging the complexity of the issue.
b. Clearly takes a side—makes a declarative statement that one thing is more important, more persuasive, and so on, than another. Since the prompt often requires the writer to "assess" or "evaluate," or explain "to what extent," the thesis statement must show which side the writer takes.
c. Suggests a "table of contents" or road map for the essay—shows what elements enter into consideration.
d. Summarizes an essay that is proven by abundant and persuasive facts and evidence.

12. In the space below, write your thesis statement in response to the prompt you wrote in no. 1 above. Then, use bullet points to show what evidence you will use in the rest of your essay that provides factual support for your position.