In an essay entitled “The Art of Virtue”, Franklin describes how he “conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection” – no less! But this is more than the average New Year’s resolution to be a better person that most of us make from time to time. Franklin’s plan is based on a “method”. He makes a list of thirteen basic virtues. These he writes in a little book, one virtue on each page. Then he draws seven columns on each page, one for each day of the week, and crosses each column with thirteen lines. At the end of each day he puts a black spot in the appropriate square for every moral fault he has made. In this way he is able to see where his moral weaknesses lie and where he must strive to improve himself! Here are the thirteen virtues he identifies:

**The Art of Virtue**

by Benjamin Franklin

1. **TEMPERANCE.** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. **SILENCE.** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. **ORDER.** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. RESOLUTION. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

5. FRUGALITY. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.

6. INDUSTRY. Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. SINCERITY. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. JUSTICE. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. MODERATION. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. CLEANLINESS. Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes, or habitation.

11. TRANQUILLITY. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. CHASTITY. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation.

13. HUMILITY. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Idleness is, as we all know, the root of all evil, so Franklin also devises a timetable to ensure that the twenty-four hours of the day are used as effectively as possible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Morning Question: What Good shall I do this Day?</th>
<th>5 6 7</th>
<th>Rise, wash, and address Powerful Goodness! Contribute day’s business, and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study, and breakfast.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 9 10 11</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 1</td>
<td>Read, or overlook my accounts, and dine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Put things in their places, supper, music, or diversion, or conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evening Question: What Good have I done today?</td>
<td>Examination of the Day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activities

1 DISCUSSION
a) Franklin narrows down the list of virtues to thirteen. What do you think of his list? Are there any you would add, or take away?
b) Which of these virtues strike you as being old-fashioned – in other words, least compatible with life in the 21st century?
c) What do you think of Franklin’s daily schedule? How does it compare to yours?!
d) If you were to start using Franklin’s schedule, how would it change your life? Would these changes be for the better, or the worse?

2 VOCABULARY
a) Find adjectives for each of the virtues Franklin names. For example: temperance – temperate
b) Franklin gives a short exemplification of each virtue, using a verb in the imperative. For example: Temperance – Eat not to Dullness, drink not to elevation. Do the same with the virtues listed below. Note: Franklin uses the rather old-fashioned form of the negative imperative, rather than the modern form don’t eat... don’t drink. You can choose whether you want to sound modern or old-fashioned!
   • generosity
   • caution
   • patience
   • bravery
   • loyalty
   • perseverance
   • discretion

3 GRAMMAR TASK
Discuss which form of the verb is correct in the following sentences, and why:
a) Either the pupils or the headmaster has/have to decide in this matter.
b) My brother and my sisters is/are agreed that I should make the speech.
c) Everyone selected for this task has/have to be sure they are capable of it.
d) Some of the ammunition seems/seem to have been stolen.
e) A high percentage of the electorate seems/seem to have voted for change.
f) But a large number of voters has/have simply stayed at home.
g) Like I’ve always said, politics is/are a dirty business.
h) Doris is one of those people who never seems/seem to grow old.
i) Not only the students, but also the teacher has/have learned something from these exercises.
j) Bacon and eggs is/are my favourite breakfast.

4 WRITING
Take a leaf out of Jonathan Swift’s book and write a satirical list of virtues for our times, with exemplifications. Satirical means that you will be choosing “virtues” that are not very virtuous at all, but that you think are typical of the time we live in. You might try choosing antonyms (i.e. words that mean the opposite) to the virtues in Franklin’s list.