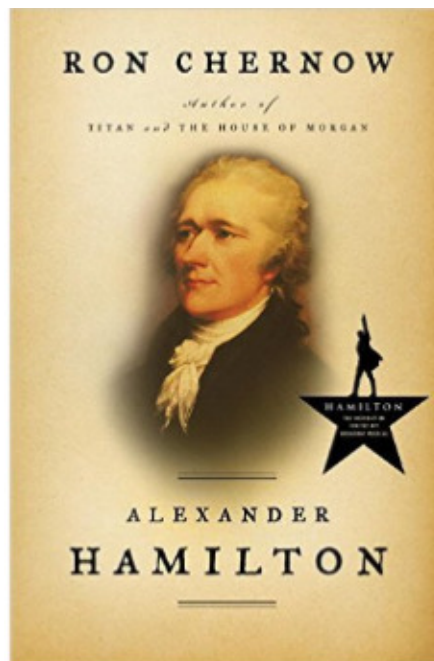




Alexander Hamilton

Ron Chernow

Download now

Read Online ➞

Alexander Hamilton

Ron Chernow

Alexander Hamilton Ron Chernow

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ron Chernow presents a landmark biography of Alexander Hamilton, the Founding Father who galvanized, inspired, scandalized, and shaped the newborn nation.

In the first full-length biography of Alexander Hamilton in decades, Ron Chernow tells the riveting story of a man who overcame all odds to shape, inspire, and scandalize the newborn America. According to historian Joseph Ellis, **Alexander Hamilton** is “a robust full-length portrait, in my view the best ever written, of the most brilliant, charismatic and dangerous founder of them all.”

Few figures in American history have been more hotly debated or more grossly misunderstood than Alexander Hamilton. Chernow’s biography gives Hamilton his due and sets the record straight, deftly illustrating that the political and economic greatness of today’s America is the result of Hamilton’s countless sacrifices to champion ideas that were often wildly disputed during his time. “To repudiate his legacy,” Chernow writes, “is, in many ways, to repudiate the modern world.” Chernow here recounts Hamilton’s turbulent life: an illegitimate, largely self-taught orphan from the Caribbean, he came out of nowhere to take America by storm, rising to become George Washington’s aide-de-camp in the Continental Army, coauthoring The Federalist Papers, founding the Bank of New York, leading the Federalist Party, and becoming the first Treasury Secretary of the United States. Historians have long told the story of America’s birth as the triumph of Jefferson’s democratic ideals over the aristocratic intentions of Hamilton. Chernow presents an entirely different man, whose legendary ambitions were motivated not merely by self-interest but by passionate patriotism and a stubborn will to build the foundations of American prosperity and power. His is a Hamilton far more human than we’ve encountered before—from his shame about his birth to his fiery aspirations, from his intimate relationships with childhood friends to his titanic feuds with Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Monroe, and Burr, and from his highly public affair with Maria Reynolds to his loving marriage to his loyal wife Eliza. And never before has there been a more vivid account of Hamilton’s famous and mysterious death in a duel with Aaron Burr in July of 1804.

Chernow’s biography is not just a portrait of Hamilton, but the story of America’s birth seen through its most central figure. At a critical time to look back to our roots, **Alexander Hamilton** will remind readers of the purpose of our institutions and our heritage as Americans.

Alexander Hamilton Details

Date : Published March 29th 2005 by Penguin Books (first published April 26th 2004)

ISBN : 9780143034759

Author : Ron Chernow

Format : Paperback 818 pages

Genre : History, Biography, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History, Politics

 [Download Alexander Hamilton ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Alexander Hamilton ...pdf](#)



Download and Read Free Online Alexander Hamilton Ron Chernow

From Reader Review Alexander Hamilton for online ebook

Brina says

Alexander Hamilton. The musical has brought much publicity to this early founding father. I have never seen the musical before, but a few Goodreads friends whose reviews I trust recently read this biography. I had been following their discussions in the nonfiction book club, but still wasn't sure. I am in the Doris Kearns Goodwin historian camp and had never read Ron Chernow before. What finally pushed me to read this book is that a Chicago Cubs player posted that it took him eighteen months but he finally finished. I was sold. With much being written about Hamilton his is what I took away from this award winning biography:

- Hamilton was the first rags to riches immigrant who embodied the American dream and achieved lofty goals, from being Washington's advisor to the first secretary of the treasury of the United States.
- Hamilton's vision for the future of the United States: his national bank, national debt and repayments, enhancing the British model of government on American soil, a model for an industrial society that would establish the United States as a key world player, the preservation of the Constitution for as long as possible and prevention of secession by any section of the country.
- Federalists vs Republicans and how divided the government was at the country's founding based on their views of agrarian vs industrial society, distrust of banks, supporting England vs France, the country being centered in the north or south and seeing presidents Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe in a completely different light than the one placed on a pedestal in school books.
- Hamilton and his wife Eliza as champions for the welfare of abused women and orphans and Eliza and her children preserving her husband's memory; as the oldest American widow during the 19th century she never remarried in fifty years.

Hamilton was a love story between him and Eliza and between him and America. It was deeply researched and had all the elements of a quality written history book that read like a story; I finished the last third in a day. I finally took the plunge and read a Chernow biography and am glad that I did, and I have a feeling that it won't be my last. This was such a compelling book about a compelling man and will most likely be in my top five nonfiction books for this year.

5 full stars

Matthew says

I am now prepared to see the Hamilton musical. Also, I now know more about Alexander Hamilton than I ever thought I would.

Despite its length, the book stayed generally interesting throughout. There was a section in the middle that got into the establishment of the US banking system where I got a little lost, but overall the book stayed accessible.

Another thing that helped keep things interesting was that the audio was read by Scott Brick. Brick has to be my favorite audio narrator.

The book covers a great deal of early US history - not just Hamilton. While I am sure the the author did great research and kept things factual, he definitely spun most of the storylines with Hamilton in a positive light. Because of this, many of the forefathers whom I thought were well regarded are demonized.

Hardcore Hamilton fans and history fans - check this one out!

Sean Gibson says

I've been wracking my brains literally for months trying to figure out who I can compare Alexander Hamilton to on the modern politocelebrity scene (or "to whom I can compare" him, if you douchey grammar wonks prefer).

There are two reasons that process has taken months: 1) I'm currently operating with the mental processing power of an old Radio Shack TRS-80 (on the plus side, I guess that means I can run awesome software like Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing!) and 2) Alexander Hamilton was one unique son of a Scottish laird.

Put Kanye West, Noam Chomsky, Donald Trump, and Steve Martin into a blender and what do you get?

Well, probably a pretty disgusting slurry of liquefied body parts.

Let me rephrase: put the personalities, intellects, and quirkiest components (not to mention the thin skin, in some cases) of Kanye, Noam Chomsky, Donald Trump, and Steve Martin into a personality, intellect, and quirk-blending processor and what do you get?

Something that comes out looking, but hopefully not smelling (given that gents of that vintage probably didn't smell so fresh after a hot summer day traipsing about in heavy, unwashed woolen garments), a little bit like Alexander Hamilton. (I'd be willing to wager that's the first time anyone anywhere ever has used both Noam Chomsky and Donald Trump as a comparison for an individual; that's how singular Hamilton was. And how much of a trailblazer I am.)

Smarter people than I have written at great length about this book and its subject, so I shan't prattle on for pages and pages. Suffice it to say, Alexander Hamilton is as influential a person as there is when it comes to shaping U.S. political history and the institutions that affect our lives every single day, and he was, perhaps, even more unique than he was influential. Sure, this book could replace the candlestick in the game of Clue just as easily as it can be an educational tool ("It was Colonel Mustard in the library with his copy of Hamilton that bludgeoned poor Professor Plum to death!"). But, there are few biographies of recent vintage that can match the immense scope, mind-boggling level of detail, and compulsive readability of this one. If you're a history buff in any way (or just want to see what all the Broadway hubbub is about), you'll want to give this book a whirl.

(A couple of words of warning, however: first, if you're a Thomas Jefferson acolyte, you might want to brace yourself; Mr. Chernow does not treat our country's second Vice President—and lifelong Hamilton rival—kindly, styling him a scheming, Francophile bon vivant of the most pernicious kind (though, really, if you're going to be a scheming bon vivant, you might as well be of the most pernicious kind—otherwise, you're just half-assing it, and if I believe anything, it's that anything worth doing is worth whole-assing). Second, if ever a man was on another man's (metaphorical) nuts, it is Ron Chernow on Alexander Hamilton's. There are a few instances in which Mr. Chernow attempts to maintain a façade, or at least a veneer (do we think a veneer is thinner than a façade?), of scholarly distance and objectivity, but, by and large, his Hamiltonian hard-on is of such obvious and epic proportions that, I'm told, the Washington Monument has expressed concerns to the Mayor of Washington, DC, that when Chernow visits our nation's capital, he's in violation of the Height of Buildings Act of 1910. The Mayor has thus far refused comment, though a source indicates that he has, at the very least, asked that Mr. Chernow not wear sweat pants when he visits the District, and has asked him to, and I quote, "try to tuck it into his belt.")

We'll call this a strong 4.5 stars.

Cinda says

So I'm sitting on a plane crying over the ending of this book. It's not like I didn't already know how it turns out. But I didn't know Alexander Hamilton before--not in the way I do now. No lie, reading this book is a major undertaking. I am a lover of history and biography and this is one of the most compelling true stories I've read in a long time. I've always been a little obsessed with Thomas Jefferson because the man had so many conflicts and inconsistencies. This book demonstrates the power of seeing events from a new perspective. (The more I read, the more I hated TJ, LOL.) It only proves the point that so much of what we think we know about American history is superficial.

Despite Chernow's obvious affection for his subject, he does not hesitate to call Hamilton out on some of his blunders and bad judgment calls. What is so impressive to me is that this man rose through the power of his words (his top-notch brain). I agree with those who call him the one true genius among the founding fathers.

Darwin8u says

"I heal all wounds but those which love hath made."

- Inscription on an envelope to Eliza Hamilton from her husband Alexander.

I have read many political biographies in my 41 years, but few better. Chernow is able to walk that narrow, tricky trail between scholarship and narrative storytelling without tripping over hagiography. He presents the largeness and improbability of Alexander Hamilton without leaving out Hamilton's excesses and flights of paranoia and inflexibility. I think Chernow gets it right that *"If Washington was the father of the country and Madison the father of the Constitution, then Alexander Hamilton was surely the father of the American government."* He was a man who was infused with genius and energy, but also often tone-deaf to the political realities of his time. He was a man who knew government but was often ungovernable himself.

His talents built the frameworks that would later create both our nation's economic, government and military capacity as well as the Federalist party, however, those same skills would also help to tear down the Federalist party because of Hamilton's inability to bend or just shut up. Like those prophets that seem to gain strength and honor as the world shifts and slides into alignment with their oracle-like vision, the modern world seems able to identify and honor Hamilton because in many ways HE made it.

Chernow's biography paints the details of Hamilton's life with a vision of just how incredible a figure Hamilton was, and how his talents often unsettled those around him. Chernow also frames Hamilton around those important founding fathers that contributed to Hamilton's rise (Washington), fall (Jefferson, Madison, Adams), and death (Burr) while also showing how Alexander Hamilton also contributed to his own rise, fall, and death.

One of my favorite easter eggs from this tome was a remark Burr once made after shooting Alexander Hamilton. Chernow relates that "Only once did Burr betray any misgivings about killing Hamilton. While reading the scene in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* [an amazing book, which I recommend everyone read, btw] in which the tenderhearted Uncle Toby picks up a fly and delicately places it outside the window instead of killing it, Burr is said to have remarked, "*Had I read Sterne more and Voltaire less, I should have known the world was wide enough for Hamilton and me.*"

Anyway, an amazing man is never really captured, but this biography comes pretty close.

Finally, Chernow writes primarily about banking families and American biographies:

Chernow's **Banking Dynasties**:

1. Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. - ★★★★★
2. The House of Morgan: An American Banking Dynasty and the Rise of Modern Finance - ★★★★★
3. The Warburgs: The Twentieth-Century Odyssey of a Remarkable Jewish Family - ★★★★★

Chernow's **American Political Biographies**:

1. Alexander Hamilton - ★★★★★
2. Washington: A Life - ★★★★★
3. Grant - ★★★★★

Upon reviewing my reviews, I'm convinced Chernow does slightly better at writing histories of individuals rather than families; politics rather than finance. However, I should note, I've enjoyed ALL of his books and he's a master at his craft.

* Saw Hamilton the Musical on July 12 (so after Lin-Manuel Miranda and Leslie Odom, Jr left, but before Daveed Diggs left) and it was kinda amazing.

Brandice says

Alexander Hamilton had a way with words, as does Ron Chernow. While *Hamilton* is a brick of a book, it was an interesting, thorough look at the life of a Founding Father: his upbringing, his challenges - both personal and professional, his accomplishments, of course, his fatal duel with Aaron Burr, and his lasting impact on the foundation of today's nation.

This was a buddy read with my friend Cody, and it was nice to be able to share takes on certain events or actions that occurred, and gain an additional perspective. Cody's review here:
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Hamilton was born in the West Indies, a father of 8, and a prolific writer, using words as his chief method of expression and persuasion in most professional aspects. He wrote volumes upon volumes of work to support various American policies, systems and politicians, and sometimes, to defend his own dignity. He was a student through and through, constantly learning about new subjects and to me, painted a new picture of what a dedicated scholar looks like.

I have always enjoyed American History as a subject so this book piqued my curiosity when I first learned of *Hamilton*, the musical a few years ago (which I plan to see when it comes here next year). I feel very prepared now! In reading this book though, I realized how *little* I actually knew, and was surprised by how

many new things I learned. There were several instances of events that I couldn't help but compare to current actions of today. Sometimes history *does* repeat itself, for better or for worse.

In addition to learning a great deal about Hamilton himself, *Hamilton* provided a plethora of information on other Founding Fathers and figures who impacted the U.S. during, and following, the Revolutionary War, including Washington, Jefferson, John Adams, and others.

Though the book is packed with information chronicling Hamilton's life and America's progression during this time, the below paragraph, included very early on, highlights Hamilton's vast accomplishments which are then discussed in much greater detail throughout the book:

"The magnitude of Hamilton's feats as treasury secretary has overshadowed many other facets of his life: clerk, college student, youthful poet, essayist, artillery captain, wartime adjutant to Washington, battlefield hero, congressman, abolitionist, Bank of New York founder, state assemblyman, member of the Constitutional Convention and New York Ratifying Convention, orator, lawyer, polemicist, educator, patron saint of the New York Evening Post, foreign-policy theorist, and major general in the army. Boldly uncompromising, he served as a catalyst for the emergence of the first political parties and as the intellectual fountainhead for one of them, the Federalists. He was a pivotal force in 4 consecutive presidential elections and defined much of America's political agenda during the Washington and Adams administrations, leaving copious commentary in virtually every salient issue of the day."

Hamilton is a great read for American History fans, and those who want a detailed portrait of one of the nation's most influential men, who helped set the stage for the U.S. becoming an industrial and economic power.

Nicole~ says

4.5/5 stars

*How does a bastard orphan,
son of a whore and a Scotsman,
dropped in the middle of a forgotten
spot in the Caribbean
by providence,
impoverished, in squalor,
grow up to be a hero and a scholar?*

*The ten dollar founding father
without a father got a lot further
by working a lot harder,
by being a lot smarter,
by being a self starter,
by fourteen, they placed him
in charge of a trading charter.*

*And ev'ry day while slaves
were being slaughtered
and carted away across the waves,
he struggled and kept his guard up.
Inside, he was longing
for something to be a part of,*

*the brother was ready
to beg, steal, borrow or barter.*

*Then a hurricane came,
and devastation reigned,
our man saw his future drip,
dripping down the drain,
put a pencil to his temple,
connected it to his brain,
and he wrote his first refrain ,
a testament to his pain .*

*Well, the word got around, they said,
" This kid is insane, man."
Took up a collection
just to send him to the mainland.
"Get your education,
don't forget from whence you came,
and the world is gonna know your name.*

What's your name, man?"

Alexander Hamilton...
My name is Alexander Hamilton.
(From **Hamilton**, the musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda)

Eleven Tony wins to Lin
for a brilliant broadway score,
inspired by this bio
from author Ron Chernov'.
From bastardy and poverty,
a man of many flaws,
still a visionary,
genius and maker of laws.
Driven by ambition, a financial wiz
of a fledgling nation,
controversial, tragic,
sadly ironic,
American icon,
Alexander Hamilton.

But...seriously,

Hamilton's monument at Trinity Churchyard in New York City:

The Patriot of incorruptible Integrity
The Soldier of approved Valour
The Statesman of consummate Wisdom
Whose Talents and Virtues will be admired...
Long after this Marble shall have mouldered into Dust.

Pulitzer Prize winning author Ron Chernow's sprawling, weighty biography was first published in 2004 and seems to be enjoying a much deserved popularity resurgence, basking in the limelight of Lin-Manuel Miranda's smashing, 11 Tony Award-winning Broadway musical inspired by its subject. ?Chernow's biographical treatment might be considered the most extensively researched to date of the life of Alexander Hamilton, nevertheless, it may be found slightly biased as the reader will note, even if his patience wanes and skimming parts becomes the only alternative to fleshing out the pertinent bits in this lifetime.

Hamilton's story, in contemporary terms as Miranda has implied in his musical, is the immigrant story where dreams come true. Illegitimate, orphaned and impoverished, he never looked at his personal misfortunes as roadblocks to his future. Instead, his hard work, intelligence and drive to improve his circumstances got him noticed by benefactors who sent him to the U.S.

Though a rebel at heart, he had *"a profound dread that popular sentiment would boil over into dangerous excess [and] ...even amid an insurrection that he supported, he fretted about the damage to constituted authority and worried about mob rule."* Hamilton served in the American Revolution, and became aide de camp to George Washington who unreservedly had faith in him despite many who by nature distrusted foreigners, doubted his honesty and loyalty, and thought him a spy for the British.

Truly a visionary, *"where other minds groped in the fog of war... Hamilton seemed to perceive everything in a sudden flash."* He exerted his brilliance in drafting plans for a new American government while war was still raging on, and as Washington was selected as the first president, Hamilton became his Secretary of the Treasury founding *"a central bank, a funded debt, a mint,"* saw America as a great manufacturing nation and laid the foundation *"for both liberal democracy and capitalism."* ?

Amid his genius capabilities however, Hamilton showed bewildering foolhardiness: among the most notorious was a scandalous affair to which he confessed in a 90+page letter, published it en masse and distributed it to the public. Hard to imagine that this blatant act of marital suicide didn't actually end that way.

Hamilton had his share of ideological opponents who in turn had no great love for him, among them Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, with whom he exerted his quick tempered, hot headedness, verbal tongue lashing, character assassinations and nasty mudslinging (quite a familiar political climate at present, no?) His most incomprehensible act (in a manner of speaking, an unintentional suicide?), was agreeing to a duel with his political arch-enemy Aaron Burr, even after the death of his son by the same means.

In these times, this example of hatred is very potent and thought provoking, that even the most intelligent in a crowd would stoop to resolve their differences in the most destructive, senseless, fatalistic manner, by point blank pulling the trigger. For a talented visionary as Hamilton who helped lay the groundwork for a country in which freedom, justice, harmony and equality among its citizens are paved, the manner of his death seemed very shortsighted. Furthermore, by that same sort of shortsightedness, base animosity and violence would the country that this founding father helped 'birth' come to the same demise?

What would our Founding Father think of US now?

Integrity, Valour, Wisdom, Virtue....Dust?

Jon says

It had a lot less hip-hop than I was expecting, but I still really liked it.

Jessica says

I have now read the Hamiltome. (I know that's what people call the book Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote about the musical, but seriously, this thing could stop bullets.) I wouldn't have picked this book up if it weren't for the musical, and it wasn't exactly light reading, but I'm glad that I did. Before I did, I was kinda sure that Hamilton was the guy who was shot by Aaron Burr, and pretty sure he'd never been president, and if I thought for a second I'd remember that he was on the \$10 bill.

Now I know so much more. Like that he founded the Coast Guard, and the first national bank. That he wrote most of Washington's speeches as president, and dispatches during the war. I know how influential he was to politics, to industry and banking, and to the law. And he did it all by the time he was killed at 49 by Aaron Burr, who, frankly, was an asshole. (Anybody who writes detailed letters about his sexual conquests to his own daughter is an asshole. And that's not all he did.)

This was an excellent, and exhaustingly thorough biography. I didn't give it five stars because, well, it's not exactly light reading. I wouldn't pick it up again, and I will recommend it to hardcore history buffs and not necessarily your average reader. But it shed a lot of light on the early days of our country, it gave me a new appreciation for Hamilton, Washington, and others. And a healthy dislike of Jefferson, as well as John Adams, who I swear to Odin had to have been bipolar. I have no regrets about reading it, am in fact very glad that I read it. It did make me yearn for a book all about Eliza Hamilton, though. Honestly, a book just about Alexander and Eliza's family life would be fascinating, but impossible, since she really did burn all her letters.

And, musical fans: Yes, Lin-Manuel has taken liberties with storyline and whatnot. And that's okay. If you really want to know the truth, here's the book for you. If you'd rather sit back and enjoy a cabinet battle all in rap, you know where to go.

All hail the self-starter, the ten dollar Founding Father. HAMILTON!

Ashley *Hufflepuff Kitten* says

"...the world was wide enough for Hamilton and me." -Burr

This book is utterly exhaustive in its scope. Dry and dull in a few places, exhilarating and taut and heartbreaking in others. This feels like a life done justice, although I am also curious about the biography that Eliza started and her son finished after she was gone. I loved the framing with Eliza in the prologue and epilogue. Loved piecing together where the book and musical met, loved the bits where they diverged. Loved stumbling upon the actual historical lines from letters and writings that made it into the musical's brilliant score. Shout out to Scott Brick for bringing this book to life for my ears the way few could.

"I am so tired. It is so long. I want to see Hamilton." -Eliza

Trudi says

If they break this Union, they will break my heart.~Alexander Hamilton

If anybody had told me a year ago that I would be delving into an 800 page biography on arguably America's least known Founding Father, first Secretary of the Treasury and he of ten dollar bill fame, I would have said they were crazy. But like so many people who will read this book in the coming years, it all started with a mad love affair for the Broadway musical. It's *literally* all I've been able to think about (or listen to) since April. It's consumed my waking hours in the oddest, most unpredictable, *joyous* of ways. Having now read Chernow's impressive, meticulously researched book, I am no longer surprised how it was able to inspire Lin-Manuel Miranda to write his extraordinary, beautiful, emotional, smart, searing, perfect musical (and that's all I'm going to say about the musical), because I really want this review to focus on Chernow's accomplishment and his fascinating subject -- Alexander Hamilton.

One of the things that really jumped out at me while reading this, is how easily Hamilton's remarkable life and stupendous achievements could have been erased and lost to history for good. He had many enemies -- many people who wanted to re-write history minimizing his role in it, and deny his many staggering contributions. Hamilton died relatively young as well (just 49), way younger than many of the other Founding Fathers who outlived him by decades (except George Washington of course). When you don't survive to live and tell your story, you are really at the mercy of others. Remember this line from *Braveheart*? "History is written by those who have hanged heroes."

Was Alexander Hamilton a hero? I think by most definitions he most certainly was. Flawed for sure, but nevertheless an extremely intelligent man, with confounding reserves of energy and ambition, and a deep, abiding inner moral compass of what was ethical and right. He also possessed an unsurpassed, formidable ability to synthesize large, complicated ideas into accessible tracts and tangible plans to build meaningful and lasting governments and institutions. And oh yeah, he also wielded his pen in a terrible and mighty way that would have made Shakespeare quiver in his breeches, producing mountains of passionate and fiercely written letters and pamphlets and essays.

I also have to believe Hamilton was truly a good man, because two very intelligent women, remarkable in their own rights (his wife Eliza and his sister-in-law Angelica Church), loved him beyond measure and sang his praises for a lifetime. How do you avoid getting written out of history by those who have hanged heroes? Write brilliantly like a maniac non-stop, leaving behind some of the most important historical tracts ever penned, and be survived by a loyal and dedicated wife who will outlive you by 50 years and spend most of that time fighting for your reputation and the preservation of your rightful place in history.

Reading *Hamilton* whilst the *sturm und drang* of the upcoming American election rages in all its frightful rhetoric and bitter partisan vitriol has made for quite an echo chamber of America's shaky, fledgling, post-Revolutionary days and just how tenuous the fabric that binds all the States together really is. It was never a marriage made in heaven, oftentimes held together by duct tape, threats and sheer iron will. America was a walking contradiction, with its State vs Federal, rural vs urban, North vs South, slaveholding vs free divides. Nobody knew (and feared) these fractures more than Hamilton himself. But he also knew a United States would be stronger and better than a dissolute nation of independents jockeying for power and control and consumed with self-interest.

I do believe Chernow has proven that no other Founding Father worked as determinedly with every cell in his body (and top-notch brain), to preserve the Union, and uphold the Constitution. There were many

compelling forces, and influential personalities, with the capability to topple this marvelous enterprise with a single huff, and one good blow. But it was Hamilton standing vigilant, it was Hamilton who roared, and cajoled, and screed, not on my watch, and here's why. It's also no wonder then that on his death bed, surrounded by his family and friends, that Hamilton should utter with such deep feeling: "If they break this Union, they will break my heart."

Hamilton's life (all 49 years of it) reads like a Dickensian novel. More than once while I was reading I couldn't help but smack my forehead at the stranger than fiction details, and uncanny coincidences and twists of fate both tragic and ironic. That he began his life as a poor orphan in the Caribbean only to help fight for and build a nation an ocean away is something out of a movie plot. As is his infamous death by duel, at the hands of (then Vice President) Aaron Burr (sir).

Who dies in a duel?! Hamilton does. And a few years prior to that fateful meeting in Weehawken, his eldest son Philip (using the same pistols!) would die the same stupid way. There were many times when I wanted to shake Hamilton, and kick him, especially when he was tomcatting around and cheating on Eliza with Maria Reynolds, but this final decision to duel with Aaron Burr absolutely infuriated me. It was SO UNNECESSARY, especially given the fact Hamilton still had a wife and young children who depended on him. Of course, it was a dueling era, and duels were pretty commonplace, and Chernow makes a strong case that Hamilton wasn't suicidal, and really believed he could survive the duel with Burr (as most participants do). However, there was also a part of him that knew he could die, since he was so thorough and conscientious in his handling of his affairs. And writing a poignant, final letter to Eliza (which if I had been her I'm sure I would have pulled my hair out).

Alexander *knew* how utterly devastated Eliza was to lose their son Philip -- so HOW COULD HE DO THAT TO HER AGAIN??? Eliza should have been crushed by the grief -- losing her mother, her sister, her son, her HUSBAND, all in a very short time span. Yet she persevered and would survive to accomplish many remarkable things in her own right, not the least of which was to ensure her husband's rightful, prominent place in the history books.

And now I'm off to listen to the Broadway cast album AGAIN. Because I can't stop.

Kemper says

Like a lot of people I've been listening to the *Hamilton* musical album non-stop and read this because it was the source of Lin-Manuel Miranda's inspiration to create the brilliant Broadway show. The idea that a dense biography of an American Founding Father who was probably best known to the general public as the guy on the ten dollar bill and the subject of a pretty funny Got Milk? commercial would someday lead to the creation of an incredibly popular musical that blends show tunes with hip-hop is only a little less likely than the life of Alexander Hamilton himself.

(And if you're interested in reading a great account of the impact the show has on people I highly recommend this article that sportswriter Joe Posnanski wrote about taking his daughter to see it.)

The circumstances of Hamilton's birth on a Caribbean island as the illegitimate son of a divorced woman and a fortune seeking Scotsman were the first strike against him, and things only got worse when his father abandoned him and his mother died. As an orphan with no money and an embarrassing social status for the time young Alexander probably should have lived a short, hard life and been forgotten by history. However,

he also had a brilliant mind, a talent for writing, and an enormous appetite for work that was fueled by relentless ambition. After a hurricane devastated his island Hamilton wrote an account of the tragedy so moving that a collection was taken up to send him to America to attend college.

Hamilton arrived in New York just as the American Revolution was about to start, and his talents landed him a pivotal position on George Washington's staff as well leading troops in the field and playing a key role during the Battle of Yorktown that essentially won the war. Hamilton's role in the writing of *The Federalist* with James Madison and John Jay along with his political maneuvering was critical in getting the Constitution ratified. His biggest contributions to the United States probably came from his bold actions as the first secretary of the treasury when he not only got the young nation on sound economic footing but also used money as a tool to link the fates of the frequently bickering states together as a way of achieving unity and promoting a strong federal government. As Washington's most trusted advisor Hamilton was critical in shaping the future of the country he did so much to help create.

All of this should have meant that Hamilton would be remembered as one of the most important figures in American history but he also made powerful enemies including Thomas Jefferson. The struggle between those who believed power should reside in the federal government or with the states became a bitter fight in which Hamilton was the victim of relentless political attacks that slandered his reputation and made him a perpetual lightning rod of controversy. The conflict would lead to the creation of the two party political system as well as a constant tug of war between factions about how much authority the American government should have that continues today.

Hamilton frequently didn't do himself any favors with his outspoken nature, and his insecurities about his illegitimacy caused him to be hypersensitive to insults. His basic cynicism and mistrust of people made him wary of popular trends and leaving the fate of America in the hands of the general public who he felt could be too easily swayed by a mob mentality and demagogues. (Geez, where could he have gotten that idea?) This left him vulnerable to attacks by his enemies who smeared him as an elitist at best or a schemer plotting to return America to English control or set up an American monarchy at worst. He badly hurt his own political party by feuding with President John Adams who became another enemy who would smear Hamilton long after his death. Hamilton also had the distinction of being one of the first American politicians to be caught up in a sex scandal, and his reaction to it by publishing a tell-all memoir called *The Reynolds Pamphlet* was a miscalculation that severely damaged his public image.

Propaganda from his enemies and his own combative nature and thin skin hurt his standing during his life and limited his political prospects. When his long and complex relationship with Aaron Burr ultimately led to Hamilton's death after their infamous duel his enemies would continue to slander his reputation while his widow Eliza would spend the rest of her life defending it and try to make sure his accomplishments weren't forgotten.

What Chernow has done with this sympathetic portrait of a brilliant but flawed man is illustrate how America owes so much to Hamilton's genius. By detailing Hamilton's collaborations and battles with the other Founding Fathers it shows that they weren't saints with some glorious vision of what America should be. They engaged in compromises and accepted contradictions in the interests of getting things done, and they were consumed by the fears of all the ways the country could fail. They were also just as capable of acting in short-sighted, mean spirited, and despicable ways as any politician today, Thomas Jefferson in particular comes across as a hypocritical sneaky jerkface that I would never vote for.

After reading this it's easy to understand how Hamilton the remarkable person inspired *Hamilton* the remarkable musical.

Chrissie says

I am not going to give you Alexander Hamilton's life story. If you are looking for that, it is this extremely thorough and well researched book you should read. Nope, my review is no "Reader's Digest" version of the book! I am going to tell you what I like and what I think could have been better, with a mere peppering of details about Hamilton's life.

Let me start by saying that I listened to this as an audiobook on a long, long car ride, over several days. It is perfect for this. It is clear. It is very thorough. It is extensively researched. You have no need to search for additional or explanatory information anywhere else. The presentation of facts is straightforward, well organized and balanced. Statements and quotes are not simply taken as fact but are analyzed and judged for their validity. Divergent views are discussed. Both individuals' weaknesses and strengths are pointed out. It is however quite evident that the author does admire Hamilton.

The telling moves forward chronologically, starting with information about Hamilton's parents and his childhood. He was born, most probably, in 1755, in Charlestown on Nevis, one of the Leeward Island. His early years were spent on the islands of the West Indies, mostly Nevis and Saint Kitts of the British Leeward Islands, and Saint Croix, of the American Virgin Islands. The date of his birth is debated, as well as who his father and siblings actually were. His mother, Rachel Faucette, was of half-British and half-French Huguenot descent.

Talented at school at a young age, he was in 1772 sent off to New York to study. Yet, his Caribbean roots were to mold him, to make him into the man he came to be--a fervent abolitionist, a supporter of the needy and orphaned, determined, motivated and self-reliant. Yet he also had a propensity for turning a quarrel into a vendetta, incapable of dropping a disagreement.

He was an autodidact. The book follows his education, his occupations, what he did in the Revolutionary War, his governmental posts and why he is considered one the Founding Fathers. It covers his personality and personal relationships with Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, other famed men and women of those times and of course also Aaron Burr, who brought about his death in the fatal duel of 1804. A summary of Burr's life, after the duel and until his death, is given too. Covered in detail is Hamilton's involvement with the married couple Maria Reynolds and her husband James, then filling the gossip sheets with a tantalizing sex scandal and blackmail intrigue.

An epilog concludes with additional information about Hamilton's ever-devoted wife and seven surviving children. His wife, Elizabeth Schuyler, lived another half a century after his death. Despite his infidelities, she dedicated herself to him and to the task of his fame being properly recorded in history. She was co-founder and deputy director of an orphanage in New York City. For eight years an orphaned child came to live with the Hamiltons, as one of their own. Actions do often speak more than words.

Hamilton's aptitude for thinking through problems, finding solutions and then expressing his views coherently and eloquently comes through clearly.

With Hamilton being Secretary of the Treasury, I was worried that finance and economy would be too overly emphasized. This was not the case. You need not be an economist to understand or fully appreciate this book.

If anything, the book is too thorough. There is no detail left uncovered. The battles of the Revolutionary War wore me out. The years after Hamilton left the government and all he did was bicker with the likes of Adams and Jefferson could have perhaps been shortened. These were too drawn out. The fatal duel between Burr and Hamilton has a melodramatic flourish that I could have done without.

I think Scott Brick reads the book very well. He is clear and very easy to follow. He mirrors the melodrama of the author's words in the depiction of the duel events. Incidentally, one of Hamilton's sons also dies in a duel. Dueling was certainly *de rigueur* in those times!

It is worth reading the book not just to learn about Hamilton, but also to hear about the feuds and the divergent views that existed between the Federalists and the Republicans, between Washington and John Adams and Jefferson.

Books I have read by Ron Chernow:

- *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. 5 stars
- *Alexander Hamilton 4 stars
- *Washington: A Life 4 stars

The book is interesting to compare with:
John Adams 5 stars by David McCullough

Perry says

Rise Up! Time to Take a Shot!

Reviewing a historical biography can be a difficult task, a genre for which the writing can veer to the monotonous. Here, Ron Chernow does a kingly job with his impeccable research and suaveloquent writing. More significantly of late, this bio served as the basis for the fantastic new blockbuster Broadway musical *Hamilton*. I'll step back and let Lin-Manuel Miranda's daedal lyrics give you the players and a sketch of part of the story. And well, you know how it ends. It's history, after all.

You want answers to the question?

"How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean by providence, impoverished, in squalor, grow up to be a hero and a scholar?"

Answers:

For one, go into everything exclaiming, "Hey yo, I'm just like my country, I'm young, scrappy and hungry, and I'm not throwing away my shot!" "When are these colonies gonna rise up?" "We're gonna rise up! Time to take a shot!"

Acquaints himself with two beautiful New York women of Dutch origin. The Schuyler Sisters. Angelica: "I've been reading *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine. So men say that I'm intense or I'm insane. You want a revolution? I want a revelation. So listen to my declaration: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal."

The sister he marries, Eliza: "Grab[s] my sister, and whisper[s], "Yo, this one's mine. My sister made her way across the room to you and I got nervous thinking 'What's she gonna do?' She grabbed you by the arm, I'm thinkin' 'I'm through.' Then you look back at me and suddenly I'm Helpless!"

Fighting a King who proclaims, "You'll be back, like before. I will fight the fight and win the war for your love, for your praise, and I'll love you till my dying days. When you're gone I'll go mad, so don't throw away this thing we had. Cuz when push comes to shove, I will kill your friends and family to remind you of my love."

Get close to a General who, with 32,000 troops in New York harbor surrounded by British ships, barks, "We are outgunned, outmanned, outnumbered, outplanned. We gotta make an all out stand. Ayo, I'm gonna need a right hand man. ... Can I be real a second?... Let down my guard and tell the people how I feel a second? Now I'm the model of a modern major general, the venerated Virginian veteran whose men are all lining up, to put me up on a pedestal, writin' letters to relatives embellishin' my elegance and eloquence, but the elephant is in the room, the truth is in ya face when ya hear the British cannons go... BOOM!"

Though, beware the seeds of resentment planted in Aaron Burr, your arch-enemy: "Death doesn't discriminate between the sinners and the saints, it takes and it takes and it takes and we keep living anyway. We rise and we fall and we break and we make our mistakes. And if there's a reason I'm still alive when everyone who loves me has died. I'm willing to wait for it....

I am the one thing in life I can control. I am inimitable. I am an original. I'm not falling behind or running late. I'm not standing still, I am lying in wait.

Hamilton faces an endless uphill climb. He has something to prove. He has nothing to lose. Hamilton's pace is relentless he wastes no time.

What's it like in his shoes? Hamilton doesn't hesitate. He exhibits no restraint. He takes and he takes and he takes and he keeps winning anyway. He changes the game. He plays and he raises the stakes. And if there's a reason he seems to thrive when so few survive, then Goddamnit- I'm willing to wait for it."

And, in the Battle of Yorktown, 1781, make a move:

"HAMILTON: I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory. This is where it gets me: on my feet, the enemy ahead of me. If this is the end of me, at least I have a friend with me, weapon in my hand, a command, and my men with me. Then I remember my Eliza's expecting me... Not only that, my Eliza's expecting. We gotta go, gotta get the job done. Gotta start a new nation, gotta meet my son! Take the bullets out your gun!

We move under cover and we move as one through the night. We have one shot to live another day. We cannot let a stray gunshot give us away. We will fight up close, seize the moment and stay in it. It's either that or meet the business end of a bayonet. The code word is 'Rochambeau,' dig me?

You have your orders now, go, man, go! And so the American experiment begins with my friends all scattered to the winds..."

Quotations to lyrics from ***Hamilton, An American Musical***, written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, from songs, in order of quotes, "Alexander Hamilton," "My Shot," "The Schuyler Sisters," "Helpless," "You'll Be Back," "Right Hand Man," "Wait for It," and "Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)."

And, that's only half the story.

Highly recommended for a historical biography.

Mike Mcfarland says

Alexander Hamilton will make you feel bad about yourself. When he was about 19 years old, he had not only graduated from Columbia University, he was also George Washington's aide-de-camp. When he was about 30, he was already one of the most successful lawyers in New York, he was responsible for writing the U.S. Constitution, and was in the process of building the U.S. Treasury Department from nothing. He was a genuinely brilliant and astonishing man.

But, he was also a very difficult man, and that was his undoing. He could be arrogant and condescending. He could pound you into the ground if you were wrong about anything. This kind of attitude wins you enemies, and when Hamilton's enemies - chief among them, Thomas Jefferson - came to power in 1800, he and his vast talents were frozen out of government. He was a raging bull the last years of his brief life because his talents were in their prime, but he had no meaningful outlet for them. And then he was shot dead. You can't help but wonder what might have been if he had lived.
