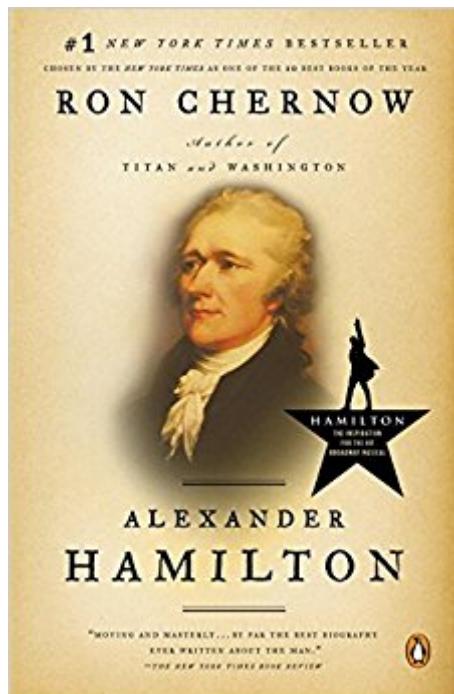


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# Alexander Hamilton



## Synopsis

A *New York Times* Bestseller, and the inspiration for the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*! 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 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. "Nobody has captured Hamilton better than Chernow." —The New York Times Book Review Ron Chernow's new biography, *Grant*, will be published by Penguin Press in October 2017.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Building on biographies by Richard Brookhiser and Willard Sterne Randall, Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton provides what may be the most comprehensive modern examination of the often overlooked Founding Father. From the start, Chernow argues that Hamilton's premature death at age 49 left his record to be reinterpreted and even re-written by his more long-lived enemies, among them: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Monroe. Hamilton's achievements as first Secretary of the Treasury, co-author of The Federalist Papers, and member of the Constitutional Convention were clouded after his death by strident claims that he was an arrogant, self-serving monarchist. Chernow delves into the almost 22,000 pages of letters, manuscripts, and articles that make up Hamilton's legacy to reveal a man with a sophisticated intellect, a romantic spirit, and a late-blooming religiosity. One fault of the book, is that Chernow is so convinced of Hamilton's excellence that his narrative sometimes becomes hagiographic. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Chernow's account of the infamous duel between Hamilton and Aaron Burr in 1804. He describes Hamilton's final hours as pious, while Burr, Jefferson, and Adams achieve an almost cartoonish villainy at the news of Hamilton's passing. A defender of the union against New England secession and an opponent of slavery, Hamilton has a special appeal to modern sensibilities. Chernow argues that in contrast to Jefferson and Washington's now outmoded agrarian idealism, Hamilton was "the prophet of the capitalist revolution" and the true forebear of modern America. In his Prologue, he writes: "In all probability, Alexander Hamilton is the foremost figure in American history who never attained the presidency, yet he probably had a much deeper and more lasting impact than many who did." With

Alexander Hamilton, this impact can now be more widely appreciated. --Patrick O'Kelley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After hulking works on J.P. Morgan, the Warburgs and John D. Rockefeller, what other grandee of American finance was left for Chernow's overflowing pen than the one who puts the others in the shade? Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) created public finance in the United States. In fact, it's arguable that without Hamilton's political and financial strategic brilliance, the United States might not have survived beyond its early years. Chernow's achievement is to give us a biography commensurate with Hamilton's character, as well as the full, complex context of his unflaggingly active life. Possessing the most powerful (though not the most profound) intelligence of his gifted contemporaries, Hamilton rose from Caribbean bastardy through military service in Washington's circle to historic importance at an early age and then, in a new era of partisan politics, gradually lost his political bearings. Chernow makes fresh contributions to Hamiltoniana: no one has discovered so much about Hamilton's illegitimate origins and harrowed youth; few have been so taken by Hamilton's long-suffering, loving wife, Eliza. Yet it's hard not to cringe at some of Hamilton's hotheaded words and behavior, especially sacrificing the well-being of his family on the altar of misplaced honor. This is a fine work that captures Hamilton's life with judiciousness and verve. Illus. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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This book is a beautifully rendered portrait of Hamilton, both his public life and his private life. As so many other reviewers have noted, the book is an example of first-rate biographical research and most of the book is well-written. Up to chapter 16, "Dr. Pangloss," the story is superbly told. But, when Thomas Jefferson enters Hamilton's life, much of the book becomes a contrast between Hamilton, who had his own well-documented personal failings, with Jefferson who, if the text is to be believed, had nothing but personal failings. Jefferson is variously described as hypocritical, duplicitous and conniving. Undoubtedly, Jefferson fit much of this description but so did Hamilton in their Federalist-Republican (anti-Federalist) feud in the 1790s. What bothered me was the unrelenting negative portrayal of Jefferson, Madison (after 1790) and John Adams. Hamilton is portrayed accurately and fully as a brilliant and decent man with some major flaws. Jefferson and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Madison and Adams, are portrayed as deeply flawed individuals who happened to have a few good points. The language reinforces this. If one were to count the negatively loaded adjectives and verbs accorded

to Hamilton's three main opponents, they would vastly outnumber any positive linguistic connotations. In order to sharpen Hamilton's character portrayal, the image that Chernow gives of Hamilton's opponents is, given other biographies of these men, less than just. The name-calling, smear campaigns and character assassinations in the 1790s are appalling (but less so given the 2016 Presidential campaign). However, a dozen years after independence and only a few years after the Constitution was ratified, the fears of the anti-Federalists were real ones. Jefferson's and Madison's hypocrisy and the foibles of John Adams notwithstanding, the concerns expressed were often genuine ones at that time about what kind of country the United States would be and how the Constitution should be interpreted. The possibility that the Jeffersonians may have had a point gets lost in Chernow's constant barrage of claims about duplicity, hypocrisy and malevolent intentions. So I thought this was a brilliant portrayal of the man who founded our economic and, to a large extent, our political system. The portrayal of Aaron Burr is excellent and the factors leading up to the duel are gripping. But the mid-section of the book would have been even stronger if Chernow had presented Hamilton's foes in a fuller, less negatively charged light.

Ron Chernow provides a comprehensive portrait of one of the most overlooked of our Founding Fathers. Hamilton's achievements were clouded by claims from some of his contemporaries that he was a monarchist—an absurd charge. It seems clear that without Hamilton's political and financial genius, the fledgling nation might not have survived. The one flaw of the book is that Chernow clearly seems biased towards Hamilton. Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams come across as villains—perhaps more so than they deserve.

Every American should read this book. It clearly explains the struggles our founding fathers went through to create this great country. Alexander Hamilton's role in bringing cohesion to a bunch of autonomous states, each of which had its own agenda, was crucial and brilliant. That the turmoil, infighting, personality clashes, backbiting, scholarship, anger and passion led to a constitution that remains relevant today is truly amazing. The banking and monetary systems Hamilton created proved to be the glue that made our country the United States. Hamilton's vision created the Coast Guard and made it possible for the United States to stride with confidence onto the international stage. Ron Chernow brings all of this to us with verve, clarity, humor and discernment.

I have not finished this book yet - it clocks in at over 800 pages - but so far, I am incredibly intrigued by Chernow's ability to make the seemingly mundane sound like an adventure novel. I admit, I am a huge fan of Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical, but even if I weren't, this book would easily hook me in. Chernow writes in a way that makes the reader feel as though he is having a conversation with them. A conversation about a surprisingly daring, courageous, and deeply flawed Founding Father. I am excited to challenge myself, this being the longest book I have set out to read, and I am thoroughly enjoying it so far.

Amazing historical read. Chernow takes the reader back in time to one of America's most integral time periods with in depth and humanistic profiles of many of our most famous early Americans. I'd always wanted to know why Hamilton and Burr ended up the way they did and I was overwhelmed with information on them and all the founding fathers. I also never knew that Washington and Hamilton had the relationship they did. Also interesting to read about Adams and Jefferson. This book is exhaustively researched and full of important and interesting facts and insights. Leaves the reader with the idea that Hamilton might well have been elected president had he not been the polarizing figure he was. His contributions to present-day society is still evident.

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