



Alexander Hamilton

By Ron Chernow

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The inspiration for the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*!

In the first full-length biography of Alexander Hamilton in decades, National Book Award winner 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.

Ron Chernow's new biography, *Grant*, will be published by Penguin Press in October 2017.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

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

From Publishers Weekly

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.

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From Booklist

Starred Review Washington is revered as the "father of his country" and the "indispensable man." Jefferson is the "apostle of liberty," the author of our most sacred national document, and his idealism, though flawed, continues to inspire us. And Alexander Hamilton? He inspires admiration for his financial acumen and respect for his drive to rise above the genteel poverty of his youth. Yet he seldom is accorded

the affection reserved for some of our national icons. But as Chernow's comprehensive and superbly written biography makes clear, Hamilton was at least as influential as any of our Founding Fathers in shaping our national institutions and political culture. He was the driving force behind the calling of the Constitutional Convention, and he was instrumental in overcoming opposition to ratification. In Washington's cabinet, he consistently promoted a national perspective while placing our economy on a sound financial footing. Chernow, who has previously written biographies of J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller, acknowledges Hamilton's arrogance, his bouts of self-pity, and his penchant for cynical manipulation. But this self-made man was capable of great compassion and was consistently outraged by the institution of slavery. Although his understanding of human limitations made him suspicious of unrestrained democracy, his devotion to individual liberty did not falter. *Jay Freeman*

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Users Review

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Donald Taylor:

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Cheryl Fenske:

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