Alexander Hamilton (biography) Study Guide

Alexander Hamilton (biography) by Ron Chernow

Contents

Summary

“Alexander Hamilton” is biographical account of the life of American Founding Father, Alexander Hamilton, by Ron Chernow. Not only does Chernow provide an account of Hamilton’s life, but he provides analysis for the reader along the way.

Alexander Hamilton’s precise birthdate is unknown, but is believed to be January 11, 1755 on the island of Nevis in the British West Indies. Hamilton is an illegitimate child, raised along with his older brother by his mother. At a young age, Hamilton develops a love for reading. After his mother dies, the young Hamilton comes to support himself by working as a shipping clerk, while beginning to pen poetry for the local newspaper. After a bad hurricane hits the island, Hamilton pens an essay on it which is so well-written and so moving it gains the attention of the governor of the island, who takes up a fund so that Hamilton may attend college in North America.

Hamilton ultimately travels to New York, where he becomes a student at King’s College. Hamilton applies himself to his studies, but also begins to pay attention to the growing disenchantment of many Americans with the British. Hamilton begins attending pro-American rallies, and begins to write on behalf of the American cause. Yet, his honorable nature compels him to defend the pro-British president of King’s College from an angry mob one night. The British attacks at Lexington and Concord worsen the situation between the American colonials and the British. Hamilton, along with a group of college students, volunteer to capture several cannons in lower New York before British troops can take them and use them. As the British prepare to crack down on New York, the Battle of Bunker Hill in Boston occurs and gives hope to the American cause. George Washington is sent to command all American troops assembling in New York, where it is expected the next large British attack will occur.

Hamilton is made captain of part of an artillery battalion, where he becomes popular among his men for sharing in their hardships and fighting alongside them. Although the Battle of New York is a loss for the Americans, Hamilton’s heroic actions catch Washington’s attention, and Hamilton comes to serve on Washington’s staff for most of the rest of the war, coming to fight again heroically in the Siege of Yorktown years later. Hamilton, during this time, marries Elizabeth “Eliza” Schuyler, and the two ultimately come to have seven children. After the war ends in victory for the Americans, Hamilton sets up a law practice in New York City, and seeks to make a name for himself in politics. Washington ultimately invites Hamilton to become the first Secretary of the Treasury in U.S. history after Washington is elected the first President of the United States.

Hamilton believes that a stronger central government is needed to keep the states together, and many of his policies – such as for a central bank, a public debt, and standing army – bring him into conflict with men like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Adams. Hamilton and Jefferson especially begin to feud, which ultimately requires Washington to step in to settle the issues between both men. After Washington’s presidency, Hamilton returns to a private life, but his reputation is

tarnished by a sexual affair. By the early 1804, words has also gotten to Vice President Aaron Burr, a former soldier and current lawyer who has at times worked with, and clashed with Hamilton, that Hamilton has said some derogatory things about Burr. Burr demands an apology and a disavowal; Hamilton, as a matter of pride, refuses. The two ultimately come to duel on July 11, 1804, at which time Hamilton deliberately does not shoot Burr as a question of honor, while Burr intentionally shoots and hits Hamilton. Hamilton dies the next day while Burr shows no remorse. Burr's reputation is ruined, while Hamilton's reputation is temporarily revived. Eliza Hamilton goes on to raise her children as a widow, supported financially by friends and family. Eliza lives on until 1857, defending her husband's reputation until she dies.

Prologue – Chapter 8

Summary

In Prologue: The Oldest Revolutionary War Widow, Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, in her early nineties, widow of Alexander Hamilton, lives a quiet life in Washington, D.C., in the early 1850s. Hamilton, dead from a duel at the hands of Aaron Burr, who considered Hamilton the primary obstacle to his political future. Now, Elizabeth keeps close mementos of her previous life, including a bust of Hamilton by Giuseppe Caracchi, and has devoted her present time to defending the reputation of her dead husband against attacks from John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and other political opponents. Hamilton, for his support of banks, factories, funded debts, tax systems, stock exchanges, and so on, has been labeled an aristocrat, a closet monarchist, and an evil genius among other things. However, Hamilton is also noted by others for his brilliance and his ability to get things done, and is credited with creating the machinery of modern nation-states. Ron Chernow explains that Hamilton was not only brilliant, but had a kind and romantic side, a storied life, and could be very combative. Chernow also credits Hamilton as being the prophet of capitalism in the United States, an opponent of slavery, a supporter of an independent judiciary, and other important things which are very relevant in today's America.

In Chapter 1: The Castaways, though there is no surviving record about Alexander Hamilton's birthplace, he claims the Caribbean island of Nevis in the British West Indies as the place of his birth. The islands are known for producing sugar, and have been colonized with convicts, criminals, slaves, and others. In 1718, John Faucette marries Mary Uppington, and the two have seven children, the second youngest being Rachel, born in 1729. Unsatisfied with life on Nevis, Mary receives legal separation from her husband in 1740. With Rachel in tow, Mary moves to Saint-Croix, where she marries the 16-year-old Rachel off to Johann Michael Lavien in 1745. Rachel bears Johann one legitimate son, Peter, but relations between husband and wife are strained as Johann is a cruel man. When Rachel leaves him, Johann labels Rachel an adulteress and has her jailed. Upon release a few months later, Rachel flees for St. Kitts. Meanwhile, James Hamilton, born in 1718 and of Scottish descent, falls into heavy debt as a merchant, and meets Rachel sometime after 1750. The two quickly fall in love, and become a common-law couple, ultimately having Alexander. Hamilton is humiliated by the fact that he is an illegitimate son. Alexander's own birthdate remains a mystery, Chernow notes, but states that he will adopt the date of January 11, 1755, based on contemporary evidence.

Alexander is denied a formal education because of his birth, but is nevertheless tutored by an elderly Sephardic Jewish woman, from whom Alexander gains a lifelong love for Jews. At some point, Alexander becomes aware of the past infamous St. Kitt duel of 1752 between John Barbot, a young lawyer, and Matthew Mills, a popular and wealthy planter, which began over a land deal, and which Barbot won but was accused of firing before Mills was ready. Chernow interrupts the narrative to explain this foreshadows

Hamilton's own duel in future decades. At a young age, Alexander becomes aware of the horrendous treatment of slaves, which leaves a lasting mark in his mind. Meanwhile, James gets by in business by sponging off his older brother's connections, where he comes to serve as head clerk for Archibald Ingram of St. Kitts. After settling a heavy debt for the merchant, James suddenly leaves his family. The exact reasons are unknown, but Alexander believes it is because James felt he could no longer support the family.

Rachel does her best to get by, caring for Alexander and his older brother, James, Jr., and working as a shopkeeper. During this time, Alexander yearns for escape, and becomes an avid reader. Between 1765 and 1769. the Hamilton brothers face a series of tragedies, including the death of their mother and all of the relatives which would have otherwise cared for them. While James apprentices to a carpenter, Alexander goes to work for New York traders Beekman and Cruger. As Chernow closes this chapter, he speaks about how it is possible that James Hamilton left his family because he believed his two sons were not actually his sons, that Rachel had an affair with merchant Thomas Stevens, grounded in the fact that Stevens took Alexander in, that Alexander became close friends with Thomas's son, Edward, and that Alexander and Edward were believed to look so similar that they could pass for brothers.

In Chapter 2: Hurricane, Alexander comes to work for Beekman and Cruger in St. Croix as a clerk, monitoring imports, exports, and inventory in general. He learns about pricing, money rates, business, and turning out quality, efficient work. Alexander knows he must overcome the stigma of being an illegitimate orphan, so he works as hard as he can, aspiring to wealth, fame, and glory, perhaps made possible by war. He confesses these thoughts to young Ned Cruger, part of the Cruger family, whom Alexander befriends while Ned is in St. Croix. Alexander's hard work is rewarded, including stints where he is placed as clerk in charge of the local trading outlet while operator Nicholas Cruger is away on business. Alexander's exposure to everything from legitimate trade to piracy will in the future encourage his desire for a Coast Guard and the U.S. Customs Service, as well as his belief that America must hold to a diversified economy. Meanwhile, Alexander continues to read, and begins submitting poetry for publishing in local papers while becoming religious under Presbyterian minister Hugh Knox. Knox allows Alexander access to his personal library of books, and helps steer Alexander toward a better education. On August 31, 1772, a massive hurricane hits St. Croix. Alexander writes a description of the hurricane which is published, and which receives widespread praise, including from the governor of the island. A fund is established to send Alexander to North America to be educated properly. Alexander travels to Boston sometime between 1772 and 1773 for his education.

In Chapter 3: The Collegian, Alexander travels from Boston to New York where he befriends Hercules Mulligan, whose brother is a junior partner at Kortright and Company, which in turn manages Alexander's funds for studies. Hercules introduces Alexander to other important members of society as the weeks pass, helping Alexander to establish important networks. Alexander first goes to study at the Elizabethtown Academy, a preparatory school in Elizabethton, New Jersey. Among the friends Alexander makes during his time in school is the politically-minded lawyer William

Livingston, who brings Alexander into the upper levels of society. There, Alexander develops romantic feelings for young Catherine Livingston, and William's brother-in-law, William Alexander, who will become a general in the American Revolution. Alexander Hamilton also befriends lawyer Elias Boudinot, who will become the future president of the Continental Congress. Alexander Hamilton next applies to - but is rejected from - Princeton, so he applies and is accepted to King's College in New York under Dr. Myles Cooper, a bastion of pro-British loyalty, with New York being a hotbed of pro and anti-British sentiment.

In college, Alexander first aspires to be a doctor, and befriends classmate Robert Troup. The two form a small literary society which also debates politics. Alexander, originally pro-British, becomes anti-British in the next few years as colonial American rights are impinged. The Boston Tea Party of 1773, the New York Tea Party of 1774, and the crackdown of the British by that spring lead 19-year-old Alexander to speak at a New York rally against British sanctions. Alexander is cheered. Myles Cooper is not thrilled that Alexander is involved in such activities. Meanwhile, the First Continental Congress is convened which organizes a boycott of British goods until the British Coercive Acts are repealed. Alexander goes on to debate Samuel Seabury, Anglican rector in the town of Westchester and good friend of Cooper's, on the subject of the Congress in the writing and publishing of pamphlets. Although Alexander argues against British actions, he hopes for a peaceful end to the controversy – but notes in his writing that Americans will fight if needs be, and will win against regular British troops in skirmishes and incursions. Cooper does not believe rumors that Alexander Hamilton, writing under a pseudonym, could be responsible for such writings.

In Chapter 4: The Pen and the Sword, news of the Battles of Lexington and Concord of April 18, 1775 reaches New York. The British attacks are condemned by many, and militias begin to form to fight. Thousands of patriots begin to rally, while many pro-British members of New York look to leave the city. Mobs begin targeting pro-British individuals, including Cooper, who, despite their differences, Alexander Hamilton defends as a matter of personal honor. Alexander distracts the mob long enough for Cooper to escape.

The late spring of 1775 comes on. The Second Continental Congress convenes in the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, later known as Independence Hall. The Battle of Bunker Hill occurs outside of Boston, in which American troops beat back British troops. George Washington is made commander of American forces in New York by Congress. Alexander is among the thousands assembled to see Washington arrive. Congress makes a last attempt at a peaceful resolution to the unfolding crisis, but King George III declares the Americans in open rebellion. Hamilton joins a group of King's College students who secure cannons in the city to prevent them from falling into the hands of the British navy.

Despite the violence of the British, Alexander condemns American retaliation, saying they must stand apart from the British and avoid such extremes. While Alexander now favors revolution, he worries about long-term disorder. Alexander comes to write for pro-American John Holt of the New-York Journal. In his essays, Alexander supports

American efforts but advocates honor in the face of dishonor. By now, Alexander no longer wishes to be a doctor, but begins to study law. When a regiment of New York artillery is formed, Alexander joins and is appointed captain. He becomes very popular among his men for sharing their hardships and making sure they are well-dressed. Meanwhile, Washington oversees military preparations in New York. Washington is slowly made aware of Hamilton, including after Hamilton leads a night attack against British troops at Sandy Hook. At the same time, a massive British fleet of 300 ships and more than 32,000 regular troops masses near New York, while Washington has less than 20,000 inexperienced troops to command. On July 2, British troops take Staten Island and prepare to move on Manhattan. The defiant colonies declare independence on July 4, 1776. In August, the British preparations are complete, and troops land in Brooklyn and advance to Manhattan. The Battle of New York commences as Washington's troops are forced to retreat and turn to fight where they can. Hamilton's troops help in rearguard actions to delay the British advance, and the Battle of New York ends in victory for the British. Hamilton fights again with Washington at White Plains, but the battle is also lost despite Hamilton's excellent work. By November, Washington has fewer than 3,000 men, with Hamilton among them.

In Chapter 5: The Little Lion, Washington learns important lessons from New York, including that taking on the British in a pitched battle is not a good idea. Hamilton's artillery continues to help cover Washington's retreat from New York across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania. Alexander Hamilton participates in the American victory at Trenton in which Washington launches a surprise attack across the Delaware River against British-employed Hessian troops. Another victory for the Americans occurs at Princeton a few days later, which cheers Americans up and shocks the British. For Hamilton's heroism, Washington invites him to join his personal staff. Hamilton, now 22, readily agrees. Washington, like Hamilton, is something of an outsider, believes in hard work and self-advancement, and sees promise in the young Alexander. Washington's calm quiet helps to settle Alexander's passion and outspokenness, while Alexander's knowledge helps give Washington greater depth. The two form a good team, with Hamilton giving weight and the gift of the written word to Washington's ideas and correspondence.

As a result, Hamilton's network of friends and influence continues to grow. He becomes girl-crazy, and befriends fellow aide to Washington, South Carolinian John Laurens. The two also become friends with young Frenchman, the Marquis de Lafayette, who has come to America to assist the cause against the British. Meanwhile, in July 1777, the British win a victory at Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York, paving a way for British troops from Canada to join the fight in America. With supplies running short and with the British nearing Philadelphia, Hamilton is sent to Philadelphia to find blankets, clothing, and other materials. These supplies help Washington's men keep the British bottled up in Philadelphia in the autumn, and to win a victory at Saratoga, New York. The British attempt to carry out a plan in which New England will be cut off from the rest of the American colonies, but Washington disrupts the plan. Hamilton is sent to fetch reinforcements from American General Horatio Gates in Albany. Gates is angered to be losing troops, and reluctantly lets two brigades be transferred to Washington. Hamilton falls ill before reuniting with Washington's army at Valley Forge. Meanwhile, information

is leaked out of Gates's camp that Gates wants to replace Washington, so Gates wrongly blames Hamilton. Washington stands by Hamilton.

In Chapter 6: A Frenzy of Valor, Alexander Hamilton is horrified by the conditions at Valley Forge. Everything is in short supply. Hamilton blames it on politics in Congress, which does not have the authority to require payments from the colonies for the keeping of troops. Hamilton realizes Congress has too little power to do what must be done. This idea will affect Hamilton for years to come. The German Baron Frederick William August von Steuben one day suddenly appears at Valley Forge, offering to help train and lead the American troops without pay unless the Americans are victorious. Steuben, who has served in the German military for years, is immediately appointed Inspector General by Washington. Meanwhile, Hamilton continues to educate himself on politics, economics, history, and geography among other subjects. His political outlook is founded in the ancient writer Plutarch, in which human lust, greed, and power are central, and which give rise to Hamilton's belief in checks and balances in government.

In 1778, France recognizes American independence, and sends troops to help the war effort. While Washington awaits these troops, he decides to attack retreating British troops at Monmouth, New Jersey on June 23, 1778. At first, the British appear as though they will win, but Washington and Hamilton work to rally the Americans and beat back the British. Charles Lee, an American commander, is blamed for the near loss and, under court martial, is suspended for one year. Among his defenders are Aaron Burr, who comes to hate Washington and Hamilton. Lee goes on to slam Washington and Hamilton in print. John Laurens challenges Lee to a duel over the slander. Duels are not meant to kill an opponent, but to settle differences. Lee is wounded in the duel, and says he has never spoken of Washington as alleged. Meanwhile, Hamilton takes to print under the name Publius to criticize Maryland congressman Samuel Chase of attempting to corner the flour market with the French. Here, Alexander's belief in free markets is reinforced. The friendship between Hamilton and John Laurens continues, as both idealistically support the Revolution as well as carrying out its actual work. Laurens takes leave of Washington to help American troops fighting the British in the South. There, he fails to win favor for enlisting slaves as a condition for freedom. Hamilton goes on to criticize Congress's lack of power to tax to provide for the troops in the field. Hamilton later clashes with Congressman Francis Dana over Hamilton's critiques, which nearly ends in a duel.

In Chapter 7: The Lovesick Colonel, Hamilton, in winter camp at Morristown, writes to Laurens about what he wishes to find in a wife, including good looks, intelligence, good morals, gentleness, and so on. By January 1780, the supply and pay problems for Washington's army have not been solved, again owed to a lack of taxes and the inability to establish public credit. Hamilton continues to take these issues to heart. In February, 22-year-old Elizabeth "Eliza" Schuyler, daughter of General Philip Schuyler, arrives in Morristown to stay with relatives. Having briefly met in Albany a few years before, Hamilton and Eliza fall quickly for one another in Morristown. Eliza, from a very powerful and wealthy family, is short, beautiful, intelligent, and utterly kind. At the same time, Alexander flirts with Eliza's older sister, Angelica, which will pave the way for a lifelong friendship between them as well. In April, Philip Schuyler arrives in Morristown to

investigate army reform for Congress. Hamilton asks for Eliza's hand in marriage. After discussing it with his wife, Philip agrees to the match and befriends Hamilton. Hamilton is thrilled.

At the same time, Hamilton worries about the declining value of money, and the effect it has on supplies for the military. Hamilton comes to believe a central bank to control money and arrange for foreign loans to support the American cause is a good idea. He believes the Articles of Confederation are not strong enough, and is the first person to propose a Constitutional Convention to address concerns. In the early autumn of 1780, Hamilton is with Washington during the uncovering of Benedict Arnold's treasonous decision to switch sides and help the British. Hamilton, now a lieutenant-colonel, longs to fight in the field again, but Washington refuses to let Hamilton go since Hamilton is invaluable to the army as a whole. Hamilton marries Eliza on December 14, 1780. Shortly afterward, Washington, stressed from the war effort, and Hamilton, stressed from not being able to fight, argue. When Washington offers to make amends, Hamilton refuses. Still, both men remain loyal to one another, work with one another, and will come to rely upon each other in the future.

In Chapter 8: Glory, Hamilton continues to request combat command from Washington. Meanwhile, American currency collapses, and General John Sullivan wishes to nominate Alexander Hamilton to be superintendent of finances, but holds back when the popular Robert Morris takes the office instead. Morris has used his own personal credit to finance the American cause. Hamilton begins a correspondences with Morris, urging a national debt that should not be excessive. A friendship begins between the two. Hamilton begins to write on the state of political structure in the colonies, the need for civility, unity, and order after the Revolution, and the need for sound financial policy. In the summer of 1781, Hamilton threatens to resign from the military if Washington does not give him a field command. On July 31, Washington finally appoints Hamilton to command of a New York light infantry battalion. Hamilton appoints Nicholas Fish, a friend from King's College, as second-in-command. Meanwhile, a British attack on the Schuyler house nearly results in the death of one Schuyler daughter, and Philip's capture.

Washington, meanwhile, coordinates with French troops to trap the British at Yorktown, Virginia. By late September, Hamilton and his unit arrive in Williamsburg to prepare for the coming siege at nearby Yorktown. There, the British under Lord Cornwallis have put up ten defensives strongholds. By October 9, American and French forces begin bombarding the British positions. Hamilton is selected by Washington to lead the attack against the two closest strongholds on the night of October 14. Within a few days, Cornwallis surrenders. Hamilton witnesses the ceremony of surrender, then returns home to Albany to rejoin Eliza. Meanwhile, Hamilton's command has established him as a legend among the American people.

Analysis

From the start of his biography on Alexander Hamilton, Ron Chernow undertakes the process of contextualizing and passing judgment on past events. Oftentimes historians will simply recount the past, but Chernow, through his efforts, argues that historians and readers should not be afraid to pass judgment on the past in light of modern times and retrospective understanding. This is certainly true of Hamilton, who was both a great and flawed man. Chenrow, through his judgment of Hamilton, describes Hamilton as a prophet and a man many years ahead of his time. Many of the things which Chernow provides as evidence for Hamilton's prophet-like status (which becomes a theme in and of itself through the course of the book) include free markets, a standing army, a Coast Guard, public debt, tax systems, stock exchanges, and so on.

Hamilton also, in many ways, becomes one of the first true Americans. Born at the tail end of the dominance of European influence in the Americas, Hamilton – an illegitimate child – is funded by friends and admirers of his writings to study at college in New York. Hamilton is expected to have few chances in life due to his birth, but his time in America proves otherwise. In New York, not only does Hamilton make well-connected friends, but he finds the opportunity to advance himself by merit not only in his studies, but in combat during the Revolution. Hamilton thus comes to embody the quintessential self-made man, who proves himself in his talents for writing, his capabilities for war, and his honor as a man – eventually earning him the hand of Eliza, the daughter of an immensely powerful and rich general. Such a thing would never have happened under the old system of heavy European influence.

It is also Hamilton's time in the thick of combat and his service beside Washington that gives him a unique perspective on the American rebellion as well as American politics. Hamilton is frequently frustrated by the lack of supplies and support offered to the military by Congress. The inability to tax, and the lack of authority of Congress over the colonies, means the soldiers in the field must suffer – and also means, to Hamilton, that a new and more centralized government is needed. Hamilton comes to see a balance of power between the central government and its states will be needed, making Hamilton once again a prophet of events to come. This will be especially important during Washington's presidency.

Hamilton's time in war also allows him the unique opportunity to continue to educate himself on subjects such as economics. His continual efforts to improve his mind and his abilities further underscores the American ideas of merit and self-advancement. Hamilton's understanding of war not only enables him to have a different perspective than other Founders (such as Jefferson or Adams, neither of whom serve on the battlefield) in terms of politics, but in terms of the promise of America. Everything Hamilton has fought and bled for – freedom and the future of America – have made it all the more important to Hamilton that he do everything he can with his life that will not only benefit his country, but will justify his own life as well. The promise of war leads to the promise of peace, and Hamilton's reputation in postwar America is established with his leading of a charge on British fortifications at Yorktown.

Vocabulary

misbegotten, ardent, self-effacing, reverential, eloquence, hagiographic, exuberant, superlative, egregious, rhapsodized, rarified, incongruously, surcease, provincial, heterodox, askance, obsequious, unctuous, febrile, vociferous, sardonically, fastidiousness, polyglot, umbrage, peremptory, ubiquitous, reticence, vainglorious, avarice, supercilious, debonair, magnanimous, misanthropic, credulous

Chapter 9 – Chapter 17

Summary

In Chapter 9: Raging Billows, Hamilton formally becomes a citizen of New York State on in May, 1782. At home, he tends to his newborn son, Philip, and enjoys spending time with his wife and family. Hamilton, now 27, returns to the study of law and seeks to make a name for himself in politics. Hamilton passes the bar and is licensed as an attorney. (Chernow takes a moment to point out that Aaron Burr has also established a law office in Albany, six months before Hamilton.) Hamilton soon after learns that John Laurents has been killed in one of the final actions of the American Revolution, which deeply saddens Hamilton. Still, he continues to write on the subject of politics, and to press for reforms, such as expediting tax collecting. He is appointed by the New York legislature to represent New York in the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Hamilton must now contend with the system of politics he has long criticized, and he is frustrated by the Congress's inefficiency. Fortunately, Hamilton befriends James Madison of Virginia, who shares many of Hamilton's concerns. Among these is a need for revenue, especially to pay off war debts. In this, Hamilton argues that a central government must have the right to supersede the states to deal directly with the citizens. This is especially urgent given that many soldiers and officers, now in peacetime, find themselves being owed years of back pay, are indebted privately for money borrowed to fight the war, and are threatening to use force against Congress.

Hamilton writes to Washington to ask his help in handling the situation. Hamilton urges Washington to ask Congress for money through surrogates. Washington is gracious in his response to Hamilton, noting – and implementing in tradition to be observed forever – that the military cannot force civilian leadership to do anything at all, that the military must be subordinate to civilian control. Meanwhile, Hamilton works to create a standing, peacetime military, and to deal with continued threats of violence from unpaid soldiers. Hundreds of soldiers surround the State House, demanding justice. Hamilton is horrified by the disorder. Congress reconvenes in Princeton to escape the mobs. Eventually, they disperse. On December 4, Washington officially resigns from the military. Hamilton, his wife, and their son move to Wall Street, where they rent a house at Number 57. Hamilton now turns his attention to business.

In Chapter 10: A Grave, Silent, Strange Sort of Animal, Hamilton seeks to make a living by law. He partners with Balthazar de Haert, and begins to tutor young lawyers, such as the son of John Adams. Hamilton charges very reasonable prices for his service, which earns him much respect and fame. His performance in court always draws attention, for he speaks passionately. His legal career often brings Hamilton into contact with Aaron Burr. The two men get along well despite their wartime differences, and even work together in some situations. (Chernow takes a moment to explain that Burr, like Hamilton, dealt with family tragedy at an early age, and represented the dying European-style aristocracy in America. Hamilton, Chernow notes, represented the very American idea of merit.) Hamilton, interested in the future of politics and the future of

the country, differs from Burr in that Burr is only self-serving and an opportunist. Their animosity begins in their teamwork, as they compete with one another to be the first to speak defending a client in common.

Hamilton also receives criticism from others for choosing to defend people who had supported Great Britain during the war, who are themselves now being persecuted after the war. Hamilton believes that America's character is to be defined by how she treats her vanquished enemies, and so he defends those Americans who had formerly supported Great Britain. Hamilton, and others like Washington, plead for tolerance. Hamilton, meanwhile, is authorized by wealthy Bank of North America shareholders Jeremiah Wadsworth, and John B. Church (Hamilton's brother-in-law) to open up a private bank in New York. Hamilton organizes a board, and is made one of the directors, while General Alexander McDougall is voted the bank's chairman. Hamilton's request for a charter is denied with backing from Governor George Clinton amid concerns that the bank will favor merchants over farmers. Still, Hamilton plunges ahead and opens the bank anyway.

In Chapter 11: Ghosts, Alexander and Eliza have eight children over 20 years, and even take in the orphan of a fellow King's College graduate. Eliza ensures her children have a proper religious upbringing, ensuring the children are baptized and raised faithfully. Hamilton does his best to help, and spends much of his free time either reading or spending time with his children. By the age of 30, Hamilton is a member of New York's elite. During this time, Hamilton reconnects with Knox in St. Croix, and handles requests for money from his brother, James. Hamilton also continues his friendship with Edward Stevens. Hamilton's old horror of slavery resurfaces as well, as New York and New Jersey have the most slaves of any northern states. Hamilton argues against slavery, and helps to lead the New York Manumission Society in its efforts.

In Chapter 12: August and Respectable Assembly, as time passes, Hamilton comes to see the greatest obstacle to New York's prosperity as Governor George Clinton. Clinton is considered a man of the people by friends, and rabble-rouser by opponents. Originally, Clinton and Hamilton were friends, agreeing on the need to strengthen Congress's authorities, but in later years, Hamilton saw the dangers of democracy in populists like Clinton. Tensions over trade and money make relations so bad between New York and its neighbors that some fear war could break out. In April 1786, Hamilton runs for legislature in New York and is elected on a reform platform. From there, Hamilton is among those New Yorkers appointed to attend a conference in Annapolis, Maryland, whereby a dispute between Maryland and Virginia over the trade rights of the Potomac River is resolved. Among those in attendance is James Madison. The conference speaks of larger issues affecting the country as a whole. This helps spur Madison in the direction of desiring a central government. Hamilton, now 32, is among those New Yorkers selected to attend the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, and arrives in the city on May 17, 1787. Those who attend with Hamilton include prosperous landowner and Albany mayor John Lansing, Jr., and New York Supreme Court Judge Robert Yates.

Washington is voted to head the convention. Washington then appoints Hamilton, George Wythe, and Charles Pinckney to draw up rules and procedures for the convention. Among those who attend the convention are Ben Franklin, whom Hamilton greatly admires. At the convention, Hamilton argues not for reform of the Articles of Confederation, but a new Constitution. Hamilton also pushes for a stronger central government, which makes smaller states uneasy due to balances of power. Hamilton also worries whether or not a republican style of government could hold up against popular passion, and how safeguarding rights could be accomplished with such passions in play. Yates and Lansing become fed up with the convention, quit, and violate the rule of silence by telling Clinton about what has gone on. Rumors quickly spread. Hamilton is furious at the three men and those, like James Reynolds, who help to spread them. Clinton's people respond by spreading rumors about Hamilton. The convention continues in August, where the Constitution is refined and the finer points discussed. Hamilton is upset over slavery being tolerated, but still goes along with the Constitution because he knows slavery will one day be abolished using the Constitution. He also believes the Constitution to be a great compromise. The Constitution is signed on September 17, 1787, and sent to the states for ratification. Hamilton is the only signer from New York, as Yates and Lansing are not in attendance.

In Chapter 13, Publius, the people of the American states divide into factions, federalists (who support the Constitution) and antifederalists (who oppose the Constitution). Those for it worry that without it, the country will descend into mayhem and war while those against it believe it will lead to monarchy and a loss of rights. Hamilton and Clinton continue to clash over the Constitution, taking personal shots at one another in the process. Hamilton commits to defending the Constitution everywhere he can. Hamilton envisions a series of essays to defend the Constitution, which will come to be known as The Federalist, and which will include writings from John Jay, James Madison, and Hamilton himself. (Chernow interrupts and explains that careful analysis of the essays indicates that Hamilton wrote the vast majority of them.) The Federalist papers are well-argued, pointing out the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation, and the strengths of the Constitution. He speaks about the separation of powers, the limits on the Presidency, and the Bill of Rights. Over the next several months, states begin to ratify the Constitution. New York considers the Constitution at a convention in Poughkeepsie, where Hamilton defends the Constitution clause by clause while Clinton argues against it. On July 26, a dozen antifederalists break ranks to vote to ratify the Constitution. Hamilton is celebrated as a hero by most people. Hamilton will never again be so popular.

In Chapter 14: Putting the Machine in Motion, Hamilton begins to persuade Washington to stand for First President of the United States of America. At the same time, John Adams vies for Vice President. Meanwhile, Clinton continues to rail against Hamilton and the Constitution, forcing Hamilton to respond. Hamilton begins supporting political opposition to Clinton, citing Clinton's opposition to the Constitution. Clinton's people respond, calling Hamilton a Machiavellian and a power-mad politician who supports rich sycophants. Clinton wins reelection, and appoints Aaron Burr to be state attorney general to spite Hamilton, for Burr had campaigned against Clinton. Washington wins the Presidency, and is sworn in on April 30, 1789 in New York. Adams is then sworn in

as Vice President. Washington seeks Hamilton's advice on various subjects early on, especially relating to finance. Washington seeks to appoint Robert Morris to be Secretary of the Treasury. Morris, dealing with personal issues like bankruptcy, declines and suggests Hamilton. Washington extends the offer to Hamilton, who graciously and excitedly accepts. Hamilton becomes part of the Presidential Cabinet, which Washington invents. Over time, the Cabinet and its membership grows and matures. Washington remains above debates among Cabinet members, listening to options before making sound choices. Washington and Hamilton work very well together, as both men want to see America transformed into a single, respected nation.

In Chapter 15: Villainous Business, Hamilton's Department of the Treasury soon becomes the largest of the departments of the government. Hamilton works hard as Secretary, speaking to everyone from customs to the President. Hamilton chooses old friend William Duer as Assistant Secretary. Duer uses the position for personal gain, leaking information and using the information to anticipate making money based on government intents, such as in securities. Hamilton does not recognize what Duer is up to until long after the fact. While Jefferson travels from his post in France to assume his position as Secretary of State in America, Hamilton stands in for him in the time being. Hamilton advocates trade with Britain, which many others come to oppose based on the recent war. Hamilton also begins to advance plans in his Report on Public Credit for a national debt using bonds and bondholders. To pay off debts, Hamilton advises that some taxes will be needed, so he proposes taxes on tea, coffee, wine, and spirits, which also draws outrage. Hamilton explains in the report he prepares that a debt will be a blessing and will protect American prosperity, so long as the debt is not overwhelming.

The report has many critics, and sharpens differences between the North and South, with each reason accusing the other of wrongdoing. In February, 1790, Congress takes up discussion of the Report on Public Credit. Surprisingly, James Madison, now a Congressman, opposes the Report's suggestions. Madison worries about who will profit from appreciation of government securities, worries that the poorest people will be victimized, and worries about a public debt in general. Although Hamilton's Report is passed in the House, he feels betrayed by Madison. The issue of slavery also appears in Congress, as Quakers from New York and Pennsylvania file petitions to end the slave trade, and end slavery itself. Southerners accuse the Quakers of sedition, while Hamilton and Madison know the issue of slavery could destroy the new country. Both sides of the issue agree to shelve it for the time being.

In Chapter 16: Dr. Pangloss, Thomas Jefferson comes to take up his post as Secretary of State. Ron Chernow explains that, having served as U.S. minister (ambassador) to France, Jefferson met Angelica Church (Hamilton's sister-in-law) in Paris, and the two flirted with one another briefly. The political feud between Jefferson and Hamilton forced Angelica to choose sides, and so she chose Hamilton. Back in America, it is through Angelica that Hamilton learns of Jefferson's womanizing while in Paris, including a supposed relationship with slave, Sally Hemings. Hamilton worries that a bloody revolution will soon rip apart France, while Jefferson initially believes a revolution will be good for France. Jefferson believes the push for freedom in France is a replication of

the push for freedom in America. To Hamilton, Jefferson's optimism makes Jefferson blind to human nature. Jefferson, meanwhile, believes the American Revolution's efforts have now gone astray. Jefferson worries about the pro-British attitude of many New York merchants. When Jefferson and Hamilton meet for the first time in New York, they are cordial and friendly despite their political differences, such as Jefferson's opposition to Hamilton's Report on Public Credit, and Hamilton's support of the federal government assuming state debts.

Jefferson and Madison soon become allies. Madison continually blocks federal assumption of state debt, believing that those states that have already paid off, or have nearly paid off their debts, will now be responsible for the debts of others. For Hamilton, assuming state debt is important because it will strengthen unity. Hamilton begins to seek a compromise. Meanwhile, the issue of where the national capital should be located becomes divisive. Hamilton decides his support of New York for America's capital can be traded away in exchange for Southern support of debt assumption. It is decided that Philadelphia will be a temporary capital, while a site along the Potomac River will become the permanent capital. Hamilton comes to support the plan in exchange for additional support for debt assumption. Here, Madison, Jefferson, and Hamilton all agree to a compromise. Ron Chernow concludes the chapter by stating that this is the last time all three men will come together on an issue, and will hereafter be in open warfare against each other.

In Chapter 17: The First Town in America, Hamilton makes many friends as time goes on. He is well-respected, well-admired, and well-spoken of, even by political opponents. Only his enemies say anything negative about him. Meanwhile, Eliza does everything she can to support her husband, making sure Hamilton has a wonderful home in which to spend time with his family. Hamilton personally takes on some of the tutoring of his children, more concerned with their character than what they might accomplish in life. At the same time, Hamilton oversees the creation of the U.S. Customs Service, a program to maintain lighthouses and public piers, and the creation of the Coast Guard. Hamilton also strives to keep relations with the British, for despite the recent war with Great Britain, trade with Great Britain makes up up three-quarters of American revenue. To diversify revenue, Hamilton has taxes placed on whiskey and domestic spirits. This annoys many, especially those in Western Pennsylvania. In July 1791, when the tax takes effect, Western Pennsylvanians obstruct efforts to collect taxes. Hamilton says he will not stand for such lawbreaking, and is not finished suggesting controversial ideas.

Analysis

With the experience of the battlefield behind him, Hamilton now seeks to make his name in peacetime. The horrors of war have taught Hamilton to value the peace not as a time to do nothing, but as a time to do something. Hamilton's interest in politics, and in establishing himself as a truly self-made American, are evident. Not only does Hamilton immediately commit to establishing himself as a lawyer, but he also commits to doing his best to provide for, and raise a family. Hamilton earns both praise and scorn for the clients he takes on, including approval of helping the poor while earning disapproval for

helping former British loyalists. Chernow follows suit in his support of judging the past by relating Hamilton as an honorable man for his determination to uphold the law equally for all.

As the Constitutional Convention gathers together, Hamilton is among those selected to represent New York. Hamilton advocates for a stronger central government, drawing on the pitfalls of a weak central government during wartime. The arguments of those who favor a stronger central government, and the arguments of those who favor stronger states, are merged together to result in a balance of power between local and state governments, and checks and balances between all those who actually serve in government. Hamilton's support of such a system, Chernow notes, is based on Hamilton's prophetic opinions developed during wartime. To the present day, the United States remains a nation of balanced powers between the federal and state governments.

Hamilton's wartime experiences come back to reinforce his support of the Constitution. Drawing on his wartime experiences, as well as his self-education and awareness of history, Hamilton supports the Constitution by teaming up with Madison and Jay to pen the Federalist essays. The essays explain and argue for the Constitution, and demonstrate how men of different opinions can come together to support a compromised, common cause. Chernow, again judging the past, cites Hamilton's performance in penning some of the Federalist papers as one of the most important efforts of his life. These help to promote unity, and reassure those who are worried about surrendering some of their power to a central, now called federal, government. Hamilton's advocacy for the Constitution can also be explained by his wartime experiences: Hamilton did not risk his life for the promise of a new country only to watch that country fall apart.

Another such important effort of Hamilton's life – one of the things for which he is most remembered – is his acceptance of Washington's offer to be Secretary of the Treasury. Hamilton has long hoped for the job, and has carefully groomed himself for it through intense study and research. Hamilton is not only honored to have the job, but is honored to work on behalf of strengthening the unity and wealth of the country. He does this through ensuring American shores are defended by the Coast Guard, that American commerce is watched by U.S. Customs, and supports efforts to diversify the U.S. economy so that Americans are not dependent wholly, or nearly wholly, on one source of income both in terms of the government and in terms of individual citizens. Hamilton's efforts continue to define him as a prophet, Chernow argues, for such efforts remain vital to the United States in the present day.

Vocabulary

demarcating, priggish, nascent, supersede, fathomed, abysmal, subordinate, aegis, incorrigible, preeminent, extemporaneously, execrated, ideological, industrious, forlornly, agog, nebulous, paradoxically, solons, veneration, diminution, adumbrate, coxcomb,

conviviality, invective, preternatural, prolixity, salutary, insatiable, apotheosized, perfidious, sedition, contretemps, austerity, erudite, approbation

Chapter 18 – Chapter 26

Summary

In Chapter 18: Of Avarice and Enterprise, Hamilton, despite controversial ideas, remains popular among many people because he is representative of the spirit of merit in America. He is a self-made man who believes government should provide the conditions and then stand back for a good economy, and to allow people to advance their lives and livelihoods. Hamilton continues to create controversy by suggesting a national bank. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson dislike any business which allows men to make money by shuffling papers rather than actually producing something, but Adams believes banks are necessary and should be controlled by the state. Hamilton's support of a national bank has to do with wanting a standard currency for all 13 states, as well as instilling faith in the public. Hamilton believes the bank should be private, but overseen by the state. In such a bank, gold and silver become immensely valuable to a nation, and allow for the printing of paper money. Whereas wartime inflation had made materials scarce for the army, peacetime lack of currency has made much of America's economy a barter economy. Hamilton defends the idea of paper money, noting it should be based on actual gold in order to control how much of it exists.

In January 1791, a bill to charter the Bank of the United States for 20 years passes in the Senate. In the House, there is more opposition. Madison worries about how indebted farmers will respond to a national bank when they struggle with their own local banks. The biggest issue is whether or not a central bank is Constitutionally possible. Hamilton believes such authority rests under Article 1, Section 8, which says that Congress has the right to pass any legislation deemed "necessary and proper." The House passes the charter, with the North supporting it and the South opposing it, fearing too much power is being vested in one place. Washington turns to his Cabinet for their thoughts. Attorney General Edmund Randolph and Thomas Jefferson believe a central bank to be unconstitutional, while Hamilton holds it is because it would allow the government to make good on its powers – the right to collect taxes, borrow money, regulate trade among states, and support fleets and armies. Washington goes on to sign the bank bill into law.

When the bank opens in the summer of 1791, people flood the building to purchase stocks, and then later set to trading them. Such speculation worries Madison, who considers it little more than gambling. Equally alarming to many is that the greatest number of investors into the bank are from the Northeast. A few weeks later, when prices in stock become too high, and other banks refuse to loan money for their purchase, the first crash in American history occurs. Hamilton has no precedents to guide him in this situation. While he dislikes government involvement in markets, Hamilton believes action must now be taken to protect the American financial system. Hamilton reassures people about the stocks, tries to bring realistic expectations back into focus, and states that the price for stocks quoted by speculators is simply too high. It is then that Hamilton learns of the money Duer, now a private citizen, has made

investing in the central bank. Hamilton criticizes Duer for his efforts in a letter, and to remind Duer to restrain his speculation. Duer ignores Hamilton, but the marketplace listens. The financial situation settles. To Jefferson, such unstable situations are a threat. Jefferson comes to view Hamilton as a menace to America, and resolves to stop Hamilton at all costs.

In Chapter 19: City of the Future, 36-year-old Hamilton comes to have an affair with married 23-year-old Maria Reynolds in the summer of 1791 while Eliza and the children are away in Albany. Maria first comes to Hamilton for financial help, for her husband has been cruel to her and has abandoned her for another woman. They soon begin sleeping with each other. Maria then reveals that her husband, James, had made money from information leaked by William Duer. It is later revealed that Maria is part of an extortion racket in addition to genuinely hating her husband, and that she herself has sometimes dabbled in prostitution. Eventually, Hamilton is confronted by James Reynolds, who demands money for his troubles. Hamilton, who is sexually obsessed with Maria, pays the blackmail in order to continue seeing Maria.

Meanwhile, Hamilton begins to craft plans for transforming America in terms of manufacturing to challenge the British as leaders in textiles. Hamilton teams up with new Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Tench Coxe to create the Society for Establishing Useful Manufacturers, or SEUM to attempt to create an industry-based town in New Jersey, settling on the Great Falls area of the Pessaic River. The town founded there is named Paterson after Governor William Paterson. Hamilton goes on to make the case for manufacturing industry in a report to Congress entitled Report on Manufactures. Hamilton explains in the report that some of his support for manufacturing comes from inadequate supplies during the Revolution for the military. He also explains that he is not trying to get rid of farms, but to provide a market for surplus crops. A diverse economy, Hamilton argues, will be better for all Americans personally and financially. Hamilton believes the government should stimulate business, and to restrain it as needed. The House votes to shelve, rather than adopt Hamilton's report. Jefferson, meanwhile, cites the report as evidence of growing government power.

In the winter of 1791-92, more financial instability, begun by Duer's using inside information to make money, begins. In New York, the push for more banks begins. Jefferson is stunned by the number of banks being proposed, and the easy and fleeting money they mean. Even Hamilton is alarmed at prices of government and bank securities by late January 1792. A crash follows, largely attributable to Duer. Duer asks for Hamilton's help as Duer's debts skyrocket with the crash. Hamilton refuses to use his influence to help Duer, but has the Treasury purchase large numbers of government securities, buying public debt at bargain prices and stabilizing the market. Hamilton's plans for Paterson soon after fall apart as well. Duer, unable to pay his debts, is taken to debtors' prison. Such dramatic events are pointed to as evidence that Hamilton's plans and ideas are dangerous and do more harm than good. Jefferson and Madison are especially critical of Hamilton by this point. To his opponents, Hamilton's plans allow the rich to put their interests above the nation's.

In Chapter 20, Corrupt Squadrons, Madison and Jefferson begin organizing opposition to Hamilton which has grown along regional lines. Parties begin to emerge, with Hamilton and his supporters coming to be known as Federalists, while those who agree with Jefferson and Madison come to be known as Republicans (also known as Democratic-Republicans). Despite the emergence of these informal parties, most politicians see them as unfavorable, and while Hamilton or Jefferson might side with such a party, they would never outright label themselves as members of such a party. Meanwhile, the international situation also helps lead to the rise of parties. Opinion differs over whether American policy should favor France or Britain. Jefferson, and most Americans favor France for their help in the American Revolution, but Hamilton argues Britain is a far better trading partner. In such situations, the authority of Hamilton and Jefferson overlaps, as both finance and statecraft coincide. Each becomes angry with the other.

Jefferson knows he stands little chance of outdoing Hamilton because Washington normally sides with Hamilton, so he writes under a pseudonym to attack Hamilton in the press. Hamilton responds. The written responses not only focus on issues, but use vile language in personal attacks against the other in order to spread rumors. Washington is disgusted with such infighting in his Cabinet. By the summer of 1792, Republicans are accusing Federalists of wanting a new monarchy, while Federalists are accusing Republicans of wanting anarchy. Washington decides to intervene, saying that the feud between Hamilton and Jefferson is endangering the very country itself. Hamilton refuses to listen, and steps up attacks on Jefferson in the press while complimenting Washington's attempts to stop the feud. Jefferson responds in kind. (Ron Chernow interrupts his writing here to apply some analysis, saying that Hamilton, such as with his affair, never knew when to stop.) Soon, Madison and James Monroe come to Jefferson's defense in the press. Washington again tries to intervene, but is ignored.

In Chapter 21, Exposure, the fighting between Hamilton and Jefferson continues. Through the spring of 1792, the affair and the blackmail continue. Meanwhile, a friend of James Reynolds, Jacob Clinngman, discovers Hamilton leaving the Reynolds house one morning. The Reynolds brag about their blackmailing of Hamilton to Clingman. Hamilton comes to perceive this as a threat to his career rather than his marriage. Hamilton stops seeing Maria, but James continues to press him for blackmail money. Hamilton stops paying. In mid-November, James Reynolds and Jacob Clingman are charged by the Treasury Department with defrauding the U.S. government of $400 posing as executors of an estate of a soldier owed money as backpay. Learning of the origin of the charges, Reynolds believes he is now being persecuted in a vendetta by Hamilton. Clingman appeals to friend and Congressman, Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania, for help. Muhlenberg agrees to help Clingman but not Reynolds, and brings in Senator Aaron Burr to speak with Hamilton about the situation. It is Clingman who reveals Hamilton's affair to Muhlenburg, who is forced to make the information public to other elected officials, including James Monroe and Abraham B. Venable. Clingman provides love letters as proof of the affair. At the same time, Maria goes to see the governor over the situation, confessing the affair with Hamilton. James Reynolds, release from prison, flees the city.

Muhlenberg, Monroe, and Venable draft a letter of misconduct on the part of Hamilton to approach Washington with, but first visit Hamilton as gentlemen. Hamilton confesses the affair, denies it has anything to do with government corruption, and makes himself out to be the victim. The three men decide not to send the letter, and to keep the affair a secret. Hamilton asks them for copies of the evidence. Monroe entrusts this to John Beckley, clerk of the House of Representatives. Beckley, an avowed supporter of Jefferson, informs Jefferson and Madison of the affair. Monroe does, however, threaten to use the affair as a weapon if needs be. Hamilton confesses the truth to Eliza, and the two are able to repair their marriage. Maria files for divorce from James Reynolds to salvage her own reputation, and hires Aaron Burr as her lawyer.

In Chapter 27: Stabbed in the Dark, Hamilton and Jefferson continue to feud even more bitterly while both men appeal to Washington to run for a second term as President. Meanwhile, Hamilton commits to John Adams for a second term as Vice President, while Aaron Burr lets it be known he intends to challenge Adams. Burr's opportunism and frequent political betrayals are used by Hamilton to build support against Burr. Burr later steps aside for George Clinton to challenge Adams. In the end, Washington and Adams are reelected. Hamilton and Jefferson quickly return to their feud, which further frustrates Washington. Meanwhile, Jefferson and Madison put together a case to have Hamilton removed from public office for official misconduct, to be presented through Virginia Congressman William Branch Giles. The misconduct includes the allegation that Hamilton has misused money borrowed from Europe to repay a government loan from the Bank of the United States which the government then sought to use to purchase stock in the bank rather than using the money to repay France. Giles calls for extensive information from Hamilton on foreign loans. Hamilton complies.

Jefferson, unmoved, tells Washington an official inquiry into Hamilton and the Treasury Department should be carried out. Washington refuses. Under Jefferson's guidance, Giles then submits nine resolutions of censure against Hamilton in Congress. Although the resolutions are defeated, Hamilton's opponents do not back down. Jefferson and the others now see to use the Reynolds affair to their advantage. Jefferson also has Beckley root out discontents, such as former Treasury Department clerk Andrew Fraunces, fired in 1793, who believes Hamilton has wronged him by denying his claims of two warrants of redemption. Fraunces relays this to Jacob Clingman, new husband of Maria Reynolds. Fraunces then writes to Hamilton to blackmail him based on the success the Reynolds had enjoyed previously. Hamilton refuses, so Fraunces petitions Congress for justice. Congress denies his claims.

In Chapter 23: Citizen Genet, Washington and Adams are sworn in for their second terms. Foreign policy issues come to dominate the second term. Many Americans who originally supported the French Revolution are now shocked and disgusted by the violence and bloodshed that it has led to. France then declares war on England, Holland, and Spain, and Europe as a whole is plunged into war. The beloved Marquis de Lafayette, a hero in America, is persecuted at home in France, imprisoned, and finally released five years later. Hamilton is especially disgusted with the French Revolution, and condemns it outright. The more radical Republicans in America turn a blind eye to such travesties, which angers Hamilton even more. Washington asks his

Cabinet members for their thoughts on things. Hamilton and Jefferson both agree on American neutrality in the European war, but disagree as to how this should proceed. Hamilton argues that all treaties with the French are null and void because they were made with the old government and not the new. Jefferson argues that commitments must be upheld. Washington agrees to a neutrality proclamation while accepting the new French ambassador. While he supports neutrality, Jefferson believes the proclamation should be delivered by Congress, not the President.

Edmonde Charles Genet, the new French ambassador, arrives in America. Genet is outspoken and bombastic. Genet demands more American money for use in French wars, and is assisted by Jefferson in rousing up anti-Spanish sentiments in Spanish Louisiana. Washington and Hamilton are disturbed especially by Genet's authority to grant letters of marque to private American vessels for use as privateers against French enemies. The French ship Embuscade seizes a British ship, the Grange, in American waters, and tows the ship to Philadelphia. The British ambassador, George Hammond, protests this as a violation of American neutrality. Hamilton reassures Hammond that he will do all he can to avoid allowing America to be lured into war by such provocative acts. Washington and his cabinets overrule Jefferson's defense of French actions, and order Jefferson to tell Genet his actions – which now include re-outfitting captured British ships on American shores to serve the French – must stop. Genet refuses and clashes with Hamilton over the authority of the Constitution to do such things. Genet next takes a step too far. He tells Secretary of Pennsylvania Alexander J. Dallas that he intends to go above Washington's head to appeal directly to the people of the United States to allow him to continue his work on French ships in American cities.

Word of this quickly spreads, and ends Jefferson's support of Genet. Genet's recklessness brings together Hamilton, Madison, and Henry Knox to figure out what to do with the ship then being transformed, La Petite democrate. Their refusal to seize the ship outright leads to the ship sneaking out to sea, which in turn leads the entire Cabinet to demand that France recall Genet. Hamilton personally takes Genet to task and defends American neutrality in a series of essays called "Pacificus." Madison responds in the "Helvidius" essays, disagreeing with how Hamilton defends American neutrality. Finally, Washington has had enough and cracks down bravely on Jefferson and his supporters, saying American neutrality means that the French cannot arm ships for use in offensive wars in American territory. Hamilton leaks word of Genet's dealings, which become public knowledge. Back in France, the radical Jacobins take control of things and decide to execute Genet for offending America. Genet appeals to Washington for asylum. Hamilton is merciful, and urges Washington to grant it, who does. Genet marries the daughter of George Clinton, then spends the rest of his life in upstate New York.

In Chapter 24: A Disagreeable Trade, Philadelphia is plagued by yellow fever in August. Dr. Benjamin Rush does all he can to help save lives. Hamilton falls ill with the disease, followed by his wife. They are tended to by Hamilton's childhood friend, Edward Stevens, now a well-respected doctor. Stevens restores them in five days.

The differing treatments of Rush, a Republican, and Stevens, a Federalist, soon becomes political when Hamilton publicly advances Stevens's methods, and Rush's attempts to repeat them fail. That December, feeling out of favor and without success, Jefferson resigns from the Cabinet. Hamilton is thrilled by this, but unhappy that the Republicans have taken control of Congress. A Republican-dominated committee investigates whether or not Hamilton has, in the past, been too discretionary in handling of funds, but in the end, finds Hamilton not guilty of wrongdoing.

In Chapter 25: Seas of Blood, Washington replaces Jefferson with Edmund Randolph, who is replaced as Attorney General by William Bradford of Philadelphia. Hamilton's defense of trade with Great Britain comes under fire as British policy allows British privateers to intercept neutral ships, during which time 250 American ships are captured, with half of them declared as war prizes. Even the Federalists are angered with this. Many worry another war with Britain looms over Britain's actions. The Senate approves sending John Jay as an envoy to London to protest British actions.

Hamilton, meanwhile, meets with George Hammond to protest British actions and demand financial restitution. The French Revolution, at the same time, becomes especially bloody, and attacks on Christians alarm Hamilton especially. Thousands of French refugees pour into America for safety. Among them are a man named Talleyrand, who Hamilton befriends and who will one day serve Napoleon.

In Chapter 26: The Wicked Insurgents of the West, Western Pennsylvanians continue to rail against the whiskey taxes they have been hit with. Drawing on the model of the French Revolution, the Pennsylvanians begin taking up arms and committing acts of violence against government agents. Hamilton believes that shows of force will obviate the need to employ it, and so a show of force against the Pennsylvania rebels will quiet them down. At the same time, Hamilton's son, Johnny, grows ill, and Eliza's current pregnancy is giving her health issues. By September 1794, Washington decides force is needed to uphold the Constitution and stop rebellion from spreading. Washington personally leads a force of Maryland, Virginia, and New Jersey troops to Western Pennsylvania. Hamilton accompanies him and helps to handle the efforts to stop the rebels. The mission is successful by November, and Washington is applauded around the country for his handling of the situation. Washington balances firmness and forgiveness, and blames the Rebellion on Republican and French antagonism. Hamilton learns that Eliza has suffered a miscarriage, and wanting to be with his family, tells Washington he will resign at the end of January. Washington is sad to see him go, but thanks him for his service.

Analysis

As Hamilton continues his role as Secretary of the Treasury, he continues to advance new and often controversial ideas. Chernow explains that many of these ideas are made cogent through Hamilton's support of free markets, believing that government must create favorable conditions in which citizens and businesses may operate and thrive. This benefits not only the individual, but the country as a whole. Such freedom to

follow one's own destiny is purely in line with Hamilton's own experiences in America, in which merit and merit alone have allowed him to earn his way to the top. Born an illegitimate child on a far-flung and obscure British colonial island, Hamilton is now the first Treasury Secretary for what will become the greatest nation on Earth. Hamilton's efforts in support of the free market and the individual are prophetic, as much of America's power will come to rest on economic freedom.

However, some of Hamilton's proposals go too far for the likings of some. Thomas Jefferson, as a champion of states' rights, naturally opposes a central bank on the basis of power. Yet John Adams, a fellow believer in a strong central government, opposes a bank because he believes it is merely the shuffling of money, rather than real economic labor. The boom and busts of the bank confirm in Jefferson's mind the dangers of such an institution, and help contribute to a division between him and Hamilton that will ultimately become a bitter feud. Jefferson is likewise unhappy that Hamilton's ideas and suggestions continue to hold sway with Washington. Hamilton is undeterred, feeling as if he has enjoyed greater and greater successes – but Chernow notes that Hamilton's pride is his undoing. Hamilton, Chernow explains throughout the book, never knows when to stop.

Hamilton's sense of invincibility lands him in trouble with Maria and James Reynolds. Hamilton's sexual obsession with Maria, and the blackmail he pays out to James Reynolds, entrap Hamilton in a poor situation. Chernow spares no expense to note that the affair is not only morally wrong in and of itself, but is a betrayal of the unerring loyalty that Eliza has for Hamilton. Hamilton has repeated chances to break off the affair, but his sense of invincibility and his sexual obsession with Maria prevent him from doing so. Eventually, the involvement of Clingman leads to the danger that Hamilton may be exposed. Hamilton suddenly recognizes that his professional, as well as his private reputation are now on the line. Word spreads about the affair, but Hamilton manages to contain most of it, and to write it off as rumor.

However, the affair gives some pause to consider Hamilton's work as Secretary of the Treasury. If Hamilton could cheat on his wife, why would he not cheat the government? An investigation is launched into Hamilton's handling of money and loans as a question not only of Hamilton's competence, but as a politically-motivated effort to remove him from office. The effort fails. As Hamilton deals with personal issues, Ambassador Genet throws the young nation into an uproar. Genet is popular among Jefferson and his followers, and unpopular among those like Hamilton and Adams. Genet's overreaching ultimately forces him to seek help from the very country he has attempted to destabilize, yet also creates a greater rift between Hamilton and Jefferson. To Jefferson, opposition to Genet is a denial of the people; to Hamilton, it is an upholding of the Constitution, of American rights, and of law. Hamilton fears the chaos and disorder of France could spread to America, which is why he so strongly opposes Genet. Ironically, Hamilton is among those who press for sanctuary for Genet when his own French government calls for his head as France descends into chaos.

Hamilton's fears of disorder and chaos nearly come to fruition with the Whiskey Rebellion. Washington, who has tolerated opposition to Hamilton's taxes, will now allow

violence and unrest. Washington and Hamilton lead an army into Western Pennsylvania to put down the rebellion and uphold the Constitution. Hamilton's concerns continue to be for national unity, and the good of the country at large. The vast majority of the country applauds Washington's handling of the situation, and applaud Hamilton's efforts in assisting Washington. Hamilton is among those who predicted that France's revolution would be nothing like America's, and that bloodshed and cruelty would be the order of the day. Chernow continues to ascribe the status of prophet to Hamilton. Feeling neglected through all of this, Jefferson resigns. Hamilton himself ultimately resigns, wanting to be with his family and feeling guilty for the Reynolds affair.

Vocabulary

denigrate, iniquitous, presaged, beleaguered, exultation, vivacious, pecuniary, autarky, indefatigable, predilection, stratified, inchoate, fulminated, sedulous, propagating, defamatory, acrimony, vituperation, machinations, irremediable, internecine, omnipresent, hoary, folderol, mordant, bombastic, privateers, laconic, sublunary, impregnable, adroitly, vehemently, extemporaneous

Chapter 27 – Chapter 35

Summary

In Chapter 27: Sugar Plums and Toys, Hamilton, now 40, seeks to restore his family's finances and settle his debts, having made only $3,500 a year as Treasury Secretary. Hamilton resumes his private law practice to begin earning money. Word comes of Jay's treaty with the British, which many believes gives away too much, such as failing to obtain satisfaction for American sailors abducted by the British Navy, and for giving Britain most-favored-nation status in trade imports. The Treaty does secure freedom of trade with the West Indies and arbitration for merchants whose cargo has been seized. The Treaty flares up Republican and Federalist rivalry once more. Hamilton longs to make his thoughts known on the subject, but respectfully does not advance his opinions. Washington writes to Hamilton, asking for his thoughts, during which time Hamilton gleefully responds. Hamilton supports the treaty, and urges Washington to do the same. Washington shares Hamilton's assessment, and gets behind the treaty. Hamilton, out and about, squares off with an anti-treaty mob in which he argues for the treaty, but is shouted down. This compels Hamilton to take to the written, published word to defend the treaty. Jefferson and others write to oppose it. Madison especially opposes the treaty, and moves to become Washington's chief opponent. Washington feels betrayed, and the friendship between the two men dissolves. Hamilton helps Washington to organize support the treaty so that in the end, the treaty is voted into law by a margin of three votes.

In Chapter 28: Spare Cassius, Hamilton continues to spend as much time as he can with his family while handling his legal career. All the while, the Federalists continue to demonize Hamilton even though he is no longer in office. As Washington's second term comes to a close, he refuses to run for a third term. His decision will have a lasting impact on America. Washington turns to Hamilton for help in drafting a farewell address. The address calls for unity and neutrality. The address is a hit and reprinted everywhere. Many wonder why Hamilton does not seek the presidency. Ron Chernow argues that this is because Hamilton's affair was still mostly unknown to the public, and Hamilton did not want it to become public knowledge. Hamilton reveals as his goal the desire to stop Jefferson from becoming president, so Hamilton backs Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina for the office. Hamilton pens a series of essays under the name "Phocion" to denigrate Jefferson's candidacy. In the end, John Adams wins the Presidency, while Thomas Jefferson wins the Vice Presidency. Word comes that Adams intends to hit back at Hamilton for opposing him in the election.

In Chapter 29: The Man in the Glass Bubble, John Adams comes from a humble background, and like Hamilton, is a self-made man. Adams is vain, combative, oversensitive, and outspoken. Adams spares no expense to speak negatively about Hamilton's illegitimacy and womanizing. To reassure the public about continuity and peaceful transfer of power from Washington, he keeps most of Washington's Cabinet intact, including Timothy Pickering on as Secretary of State, Oliver Wolcott, Jr., at the

Department of the Treasury, and James McHenry at the Department of War. Many of the Cabinet find Adams to be distant and cold. Hamilton later irks Adams by sending a long letter about how a president should conduct himself after Adams is sworn in.

In Chapter 30: Flying Too Near the Sun, Hamilton, now 42, begins to correspond with his father's relations in Scotland. With Washington retired, the Republicans seize on the new political landscape to discredit the Federalists, including Hamilton. Hamilton is targeted for his previous essays in which he hinted at an affair between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. In the summer of 1797, a series of essays are published by James Thomas Callender, a venomous writer who preys upon scandal and gossip, in which Callender begins to speak about the Reynolds affair, as well as wrongdoing on Hamilton's part as Secretary of the Treasury. Hamilton responds in print, saying the allegations are false. Callender goes on to publish every piece of written evidence he can find relating to the affair. Hamilton responds at length, forced to admit to the affair and the damage it has done to his family. In the end, the scandal does little to his public reputation. Hamilton accuses James Monroe of leaking everything, and the two are prepared to duel but calm themselves down. Monroe denies leaking the information, and blames it on Clingman. Monroe appeals to Aaron Burr, believing him to be a friend of Hamilton's, to calm Hamilton down further. Burr intercedes, and helps to defuse the situation. Eliza does her best to keep a brave face by the affair and ensuing scandal, is heartbroken, but remains loyal to Hamilton.

In Chapter 31: An Instrument of Hell, Napoleon comes to power in France. American minister Charles Cotesworth Pinckney is expelled from France, and French ships begin stalking American ships. Adams commits to maintaining American neutrality while increasing the size of America's military should war with France come on. Adams dispatches a three-man delegation to France to settle issues, including Pinckney, John Marshall, and Elbridge Gerry. Hamilton approves of this completely. There, they meet with Talleyrand, now French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Talleyrand's demands are shocking. He demands a loan for France, and demands Americans pay for damage inflicted on American ships by French privateers. Further, Talleyrand demands money as a bribe to even begin negotiations. Marshall writes home of failure. The Republicans doubt the French have been so rude, and demand the release of communications between the two countries. The papers, which come to be called the XYZ Papers, uphold the French as underhanded and demanding, giving the Federalists a new popularity in America. The Republicans try their best to downplay the papers, blaming their contents on the American delegation rather than the French.

Hamilton takes to pen to condemn Republican attempts to excuse French misbehavior in an essay called "The Stand." Adams continues to handle strengthening the military, which is opposed by the Republicans who consider standing armies a threat to freedom. When a French ship captures American ships outside New York in May 1798, it is decided that a Navy and a Navy Department are needed, as well as a provisional army of ten-thousand men. Over time, permission is granted by Congress to raise additional units for combat. French trade is embargoed, and American privateers are set loose on French ships, thus beginning the Quasi-War with France. Adams and Hamilton believe Washington should command the new military forces. Washington agrees so long as

Hamilton, Pinckney, and Knox may be his deputy commanders. Knox refuses to serve under Hamilton, but Pinckney agrees. Adams is angry that Hamilton has once again found himself in a position of power. Hamilton is made Inspector General and sets to organizing military forces for potential all-out war while Washington takes a passive role.

In Chapter 32: Reign of Witches, as Adams's presidency carries on, hostilities between Federalists and Republicans increase. In January 1798, Republican Congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont and Federalist Congressman Roger Griswold of Connecticut, actually physically fight over insults thrown at each other on the floor of Congress. The press especially becomes anti-Federalist, and influx of pro-French Irish immigrants leads to the Federalist Congress to pass the Alien and Sedition Acts, which try to clamp down on immigration and free speech. Hamilton uses the Sedition Act to go after the paper The Argus for legitimately slandering him and the government. Hamilton must also use military force to put down a rebellion in Eastern Pennsylvania, which flares up against federal rule. The rebels are forgiven and written off as ignorant German immigrants. The Acts are considered a blunder, however, are seized upon to great advantage by the Republicans, and are later repealed through the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions. These Resolutions worry Hamilton, who believes they may be more divisive than uniting.

In Chapter 33: Works Godly and Ungodly, Hamilton's father, James, dies on Saint Vincent on June 3, 1799, having been financially supported by Hamilton for years. In 1799, Hamilton also comes to offer legal advice to the abolitionist Manumission Society, and does so until his death. Meanwhile, Eliza's Christian outlook serves as the source of her charitable work. Meanwhile, Aaron Burr uses a fever outbreak as a ploy to set up a Republican bank under the guise of public health company dedicated to clean drinking water. Hamilton comes on board to help Burr. In the details at the last minute, Burr includes language saying that the Manhattan Project, originally geared toward public health, could become a bank in the future using "surplus capital." When Hamilton later learns about this, he is furious for being tricked by Burr. At the same time, Burr challenges fellow Manhattan Company supporter John Barker Church (Hamilton's brother-in-law) to a duel over Church slamming Burr's behavior by insinuating bribery. Both men take on the duel, but their shots miss one another. Church then apologizes, and the two men make peace.

In Chapter 34: In An Evil Hour, Hamilton continues to muster a military force. When it is revealed that France desires peace in October 1798, things appear to settle down. Adams then commits to attacking Hamilton and the standing military forces as unnecessary, and to push for further clarification of peace from the French. Hamilton still continues on with plans for an army, leading to arguments between him and Adams which end any cordiality remaining between them. Meanwhile, Hamilton's friendship with Washington continues through letters until Washington's death in December 1799. Washington's death temporarily stops party bickering as everyone comes together to honor the man. Washington's death also proves dangerous for the Federalists, who have relied on Washington to unify different factions within the Federalist party. Adams especially worries what will happen next. Hamilton believes he now has a right to become commander of the armed forces with Washington's death, but Adams refuses

to appoint him. Adams and Congress also begin disbanding the army as the threat from France fades. In France, Napoleon's taking on the crown of Emperor proves Hamilton's previous fear correct –that a violent revolution to overthrow one king could give rise to another.

In Chapter 35: Gusts of Passion, Hamilton takes on what will become known as the Manhattan Well Tragedy, the Levi Weeks case. On December 22, 1799, young Gulielma Sands leaves the New York boarding house run by her relatives, Catherine and Elias Ring, supposedly to meet with fiancée Levi Weeks, also a tenant of the boarding house, in order to marry him. That evening, Sands returns to the house alone, asks if Gulielma has gone to bed, and is stunned to find she is not there. On January 2, her fully-clothed corpse is pulled from a wooden well owned by the Manhattan Company. Aaron Burr, who has founded the company, joins Hamilton and Brockholst Livingston to defend Levi Weeks against the charge of murder. The Rings insist that Gulielma was impregnated, then murdered by Weeks. Hamilton, Burr, and Livingston discredit the testimony of the Rings, demonstrate that Gulielma was no innocent girl through use of laudanum, and probably sleeping with Elias Ring. Hamilton's team also casts suspicion on Richard Croucher, a shady seller of ladies' garments, who had arrived from England only the year before and also lives at the Ring boarding house. They feel Croucher is too eager to tell sordid sexual tales about the girl. Weeks is ultimately found not guilty, while three months later, Croucher is convicted of raping a 13-year-old girl at the boarding house, adding to the suspicion that Croucher was the murderer of Gulielma.

Both Hamilton and Burr use the case to further their standing in the public eye as they then run for New York legislature. Burr makes an agreement with Jefferson and the Republicans. He will swing New York in their favor in exchange for the number two spot under Jefferson. Hamilton is horrified by this. Burr is ultimately successful in his bid, and so is chosen for Vice President. Adams is stunned by the loss, and worries about his own reelection. The Federalist split, with some backing Adams, and others, from Hamilton's wing of the party, backing Pinckney. Adams, believing his Cabinet is full of nothing but Hamilton supporters, commits to purging the Cabinet of anyone he suspects of disloyalty. This includes Secretary of War, James McHenry, and Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering. Adams goes on to hurl insults and to defame Hamilton, which are then relayed back to Hamilton. Hamilton then makes it his personal mission to see Adams out of the Presidency, and begins drumming up support for Pinckney. Hamilton is warned that the vendetta against Adams could be dangerous, but Hamilton will hear none of it.

Analysis

Hamilton, who now enjoys an immense reputation, and who has managed to gloss over his private indiscretions, seeks to reestablish himself as a lawyer and commit to his family. Readers should note that, even after achieving one of the highest offices and some of the highest honors in the land, Hamilton is not content to retire and relax. In the American tradition, Hamilton looks for his next step, ready to do something else important. The idea of the American self-made man is that one never settles for the

current achievement, but always looks for the next, whether it is large or small. Hamilton continues to correspond with Washington to offer advice, while beginning to write on politics in general. Hamilton goes so far as to help Washington win support of the Jay Treaty among members of Congress, demonstrating that Hamilton, though not officially in politics anymore, is not officially out of politics anymore either. But Hamilton's honor and reputation are not unchallengeable.

As it turns out, the Reynolds affair comes back to haunt Hamilton years after the fact. Hamilton is forced to publicly acknowledge the affair, and does his best to both downplay it and atone for it. While the affair does not destroy Hamilton's reputation, it does it serious damage that cannot be repaired. Hamilton seeks out the offending party, and blames the innocent Monroe. A duel is avoided, and believing Burr to be a friend of Hamilton's, Monroe has Hamilton continue to talk down Hamilton. The reader should note the immense irony here of Burr talking Hamilton down from a duel over spoken words, only to himself years later challenge Hamilton to a duel over spoken words.

At the same time, the rivalry between Hamilton and Jefferson has left a lasting impression, as their personal, and then factional warfare has broken into actual party warfare. Among the divisions which plague the Republicans and the Federalists is Republican support for the revolution in France. The assumption of power by Napoleon again proves to be Hamilton a prophet, Chernow notes, for Hamilton believed that the chaos of disorder after a revolution could only lead to a new tyrant. In this case, it is Napoleon. As Hamilton continues his law career, he continues to invest himself in such politics by opposing Adams's reelection for President. As Chernow has noted previously, Hamilton has often overreached and gone too far, and his opposition to Adams is one such example. Apart from fracturing the Federalists, Hamilton's reputation is further degraded for his betrayal by those in power.

Chernow continues to note that the past must be critiqued by present-day historians and readers through the juxtaposition of Hamilton's shortcomings in political intrigue, and his successes as a private lawyer. Hamilton demonstrates a tremendous sense of honor in those whom he defends, such as Levi Weeks. Meanwhile, Hamilton's overreach – such as challenging Adams – results in Adams coming down hard on Hamilton who is struggling to coordinate a standing army. Adams is given authority to disband most of the army, which results in Hamilton losing his job as Inspector General, and with Adams denying Hamilton the advancement to the position Washington leaves vacant. Hamilton is stung, and wonders what he will do next.

Vocabulary

piquant, reticular, emancipate, betoken, congruence, aloof, capricious, specious, conjectured, besmirch, ruefully, lasciviousness, interminable, truculence, ignominious, assiduously, unorthodox, bellicose, inimical, sangfroid, morose, fratricidal, grandiloquent, harangues, irascible, indecorous, adulatory, maladroit

Chapter 36 – Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter 36: In A Very Belligerent Humor, Hamilton writes a private pamphlet slamming Adams, and hopes that it will be circulated among Federalists. But the pamphlet is leaked to Republican newspapers, most likely by Aaron Burr or John Beckley. This forces Hamilton to publish the pamphlet in public in its entirety. Many are perplexed by the pamphlet, for it both slams Adams and asks that electors give votes equally to Adams and Pinckney. The pamphlet ultimately backfires against Hamilton, as most Federalists think Hamilton a hypocrite for it. Adams does not even respond to the pamphlet because it has backfired on Hamilton so badly. In the presidential election, Jefferson claims a narrow victory, which Adams blames on Hamilton's pamphlet. The election loss turns more Federalists against Hamilton, who believe Hamilton has wasted his prestige and created a negative, pessimistic outlook on the future. Jefferson, who speaks optimistically of America and human nature, provides a stark contrast to the gloomy outlook of people like Hamilton, which helps to account for his victory. Jefferson's election also causes a dramatic political realignment, as Republicans will come to control the White House for the next 24 years.

In Chapter 37: Deadlock, America and France formally end the Quasi-War in October 1800. The peace agreement validates Adams's push for diplomacy against Hamilton's desire for war, but comes too late to help Adams in the election. While Jefferson wins the election, it does not at first appear that he will triumph, as he receives the exact same number of electoral votes as Aaron Burr (73 each). Hamilton hates Jefferson, but hates Burr even more. At least Jefferson, Hamilton considers, has principles that he adheres to. Hamilton actively seeks to position his fellow Federalists against Burr as Congress takes up the issue of breaking the tie. In the end, it goes to Jefferson. When Jefferson is sworn in, he is very conciliatory, calling on Americans to unite. Hamilton, however, suspects that Jefferson will not be so welcoming as a president, and will not hesitate to use executive authority he previously opposed.

In Chapter 38: A World Full of Folly, Hamilton, now 46, begins to fade from public view. Looking to spend more time with his family, and contemplating his next step in life, Hamilton builds a country house nine miles north of Manhattan which he names the Grange. The Federal-style house is designed by New York's most prominent architect, John McComb, Jr., and is constructed by Ezra Weeks, brother of Levi Weeks. Hamilton takes to gardening and tending to his land while continuing his legal practice. The Grange puts Hamilton into serious debt, but he does not worry about this, as his legal practice is doing better and better. Meanwhile, Hamilton pays attention to politics, as Jefferson and Burr clash following Burr's refusal to stand down during the Congressional deadlock over which man would be the president despite Burr's earlier promise to be the second man under Jefferson. Hamilton also worries that Jefferson will decentralize government too much. Hamilton also criticizes Jefferson for repealing the Judiciary Act, which allowed Adams to make last-minute judiciary appointments before

leaving office. Hamilton and his friends go on to found the newspaper, the New-York Evening Post to oppose Jefferson's work.

One week after Hamilton oversees the paper's founding, his son, Philip Hamilton, is involved in a duel with young lawyer George I. Eacker over Eacker's bad comments about Philip's father, and Philip's confronting Eacker in a theater about this. Philip is shot in the arm during the duel, and later dies. The New-York Evening Post publishes editorials calling for the ending of dueling. Hamilton is plunged into depression after Philip's death. The New York governor's race which follows the Presidential election is very divisive, as George Clinton seeks another term on the Republican ticket while the Federalists put forth Stephen Van Rensselaer, who is married to Eliza Hamilton's younger sister, Peggy. Hamilton steps in to help Stephen not only as a matter of family loyalty, but to undermine the Burr-backed George Clinton. Jefferson, meanwhile, moves to back New Yorkers in every possible office who are anti-Burr Republicans. Clinton regains the governorship in a landslide. Burr then seeks to bring together a coalition of disaffected Republicans and uncommitted Federalists.

In Chapter 39: Pamphlet Wars, Hamilton is unhappy with Republican control of the House, the Senate, and the Presidency. Hamilton worries that his own work and achievements will be undone and forgotten. Hamilton is happy, however, that Burr is out of favor with Jefferson and the Republicans. Burr then reaches out to attempt a political comeback, which Hamilton considers might be used against Jefferson. Meanwhile, in New York, pamphlets begin to appear which criticize Burr's sexual affairs, while other pamphlets condemn both Hamilton and Burr for their politics. James Cheetham's American Citizen blasts Burr for the presidential deadlock, and slams Hamilton as an aristocrat. Pamphlets fly back and forth, and duels quickly become common. James. T. Callender breaks the story about Jefferson's supposed affair with Sally Hemings, and the fathering of several children through her. Jefferson refuses to respond, but his supporters do, savaging Callender in the press. In 1803, Callender's body is found floating in the James River after a night of heavy drinking. A coroner's jury lists the death as accidental due to intoxication, but others wonder if it is vindictive Republicans to blame.

In Chapter 40: The Price of Truth, Hamilton alternates between wanting to get back into the political ring, and wanting a quiet life in the country. He settles for his law practice, and writing on political theory. Hamilton's health, as time passes, begins to catch up with him. He deals with constant stomach and bowel problems, and begins to think about death. Still, Hamilton's mind remains sharp and he continues to enjoy a profitable law practice. Among those that Hamilton defends is Harry Croswell, a Federalist editor for the paper The Wasp, in which Jefferson is accused of having previously paid Callender to take shots at Washington and others. Hamilton argues that the truths of what one writes must be taken into account. Croswell is convicted, and Hamilton appeals the case to the New York state supreme court. Hamilton argues that a free press is needed to check abuses of presidential power. Hamilton argues that that to libelous, writing must be found to be false, defamatory, and malicious. Truth and intent, Hamilton explains, must be linked. Hamilton loses the case, but Croswell is not sentenced.

In April 1803, Jefferson conducts the Louisiana Purchase – the buying of 828,000 square miles of land from France for a mere $15 million. Hamilton supports Jefferson's work with the Purchase as for the good of the country, and because it is in keeping with his nationalistic vision of the future. Burr, seeks to prop himself up politically in New York by running for Governor. In order to fight back Burr, Republian editor James Cheetham brings up old statements of Hamilton's in which Hamilton called Burr a "Catiline" (traitor). Burr, who knows his personal reputation must be intact to resurrect himself politically, is stung by the attack. Meanwhile, Cheetham continues to create drama between Burr and Hamilton by continuing to publish statements both men have made against each other.

At the same time, the Federalists are unable to find a good candidate for governor, so they meet to choose which Republican to back. During this time, Hamilton gives a speech slamming Burr as wanting his own northern country while backing John Lansing for governor. Hamilton, meanwhile, deals with rumors spread by Albany Judge Ebenezer Purdy that Hamilton wants an American king. Hamilton confronts Purdy over this with the witness of Judge Nathaniel Pendleton. Cheetham all the while continues to publish sordid stories about Burr as well, even after Burr brings suit. Burr also comes to blame Hamilton for a number of unsigned pamphlets and broadsheets written against him. Burr ultimately loses the race for governor, and his supporters wholly blame Hamilton. Burr himself comes to see Hamilton as the cause of his downfall. Hamilton comes to fear secession as Timothy Pickering begins calling on Federalist leaders to support a Northern secession to leave the Democratic-Republicans of the South behind. The movement picks up steam. Hamilton comes to totally oppose the plan, and begins urging others to speak against it.

In Chapter 41: A Despicable Opinion, Hamilton dines with Judge John Tayler, a Republican, and several others in March 1804. Tayler and Hamilton both dislike the idea of Burr being governor. Hamilton and James Kent, another Federalist, continue to speak ill of Burr, which delights Dr. Charles D. Cooper, son-in-law of Tayler. Cooper writes a letter about the details of the dinner to a friend, but the letter is either intercepted, stolen, or deliberately leaked. Parts of the letter are reprinted in the New-York Evening Post by editor William Coleman, who believes the letter is part of a handbill that must be refuted as an invention. Philip Schuyler defends Hamilton in print, saying his son-in-law had vowed not to become involved in the governor's race. Cooper rails against Coleman and Schuyler, and writes another letter to defend himself. By June 18, Burr receives word of what is going on. Burr is furious, having recently lost the election. Burr summons his friend, William P. Van Ness, whom Burr sends with a letter for Hamilton demanding explanation of everything. Ness delivers the letter to Hamilton at his law office at eleven in the morning.

The road is set for a duel. Duels are seen as a way to resolve conflicts, secure honor, and handle grievances. Duels rarely end in shooting, and even then do not always end in death as some states carry legal penalties for dueling. The point of a duel is not to be an excellent marksman, but to demonstrate courage by submitting to the duel. Hamilton responds on the evening of June 20. Rather than making peace, he says he cannot judge the intent of the words that Burr has read or heard, especially over a course of

years. Van Ness delivers Burr's reply two days later, demanding a definite reply. Burr does not care about the intent, but whether Hamilton himself has said such things. Van Ness tells Hamilton that a simple reply saying that Hamilton can recollect saying no such words will settle the controversy. Hamilton refuses to do this.

Hamilton then turns to his friend, Judge Nathaniel Pendleton, who is surprised by Hamilton's inflexibility. Hamilton expects a duel challenge to come, and is prepared to meet it. Burr has Ness deliver a formal duel request to Hamilton through Pendleton on Wednesday, June 27. The duel is set for July 11 so that Hamilton may set his affairs in order, such as seeing some legal clients through their cases. Hamilton now finds himself in a difficult position: he must engage in a duel after slamming dueling in his paper. Hamilton decides he will "throw away" his shot, meaning he will deliberately not shoot Burr. Hamilton's friends try to talk Hamilton out of his duel plan, and out of the duel altogether, but Hamilton will hear none of it. He does not believe Burr will try to kill him, as dueling is so heavily frowned upon, and Burr's reputation is already in shambles. Except to close friends, society in general does not know anything is wrong. Burr and Hamilton are polite to one another when they attend the same events and dinners. Hamilton uses his time not only to wrap up legal cases, but to write letters of farewell in case he should be killed.

In Chapter 42: Fatal Errand, Hamilton drafts his will on July 9. Burr tells Ness he cannot wait for the duel, and wishes it would come on already. On the morning of July 11, 1804, Hamilton, Pendleton, Burr, and Ness are ferried from Manhattan across the Hudson to Weehawken, New Jersey, where a wooded cliff, accessible by a path, serves as a traditional dueling ground since New Jersey is more lenient on duels than New York law is. Dr. David Hosack is also present, but remains at the boats below to plead ignorance of the duel, but to be on hand should an injury need treatment. Flintlock pistols owned by John Barker Church, and used in Philip Hamilton's duel, are chosen for the Burr duel by Alexander Hamilton, while the distance of ten paces are marked out.

The duel then occurs. Hamilton is shot by Burr in the area above his right hip. Hamilton falls to the ground, recognizing instantly the wound will be mortal. Hamilton also fires his weapon. The shot comes nowhere near Burr but hits a tree branch twelve feet in the air, honoring Hamilton's pledge not to shoot Burr. Hosack quickly tries to attend to Hamilton, but Hamilton is bleeding profusely and loses consciousness. Hamilton is carried down to the boats and returned to New York. There, he is taken into the home of his friend William Bayard. Hamilton drifts in and out of consciousness, calling for the news to be broken gently to his wife. Word quickly spreads of the duel and its outcome throughout New York and beyond. Eliza comes to be with her husband, while crowds gather. Hamilton asks to see his friend, Reverend John M. Mason, who immediately comes to see Hamilton and pray with him. Hamilton lingers on until 2:00 p.m. the next day, July 12, 1804, when he dies.

In Chapter 43: The Melting Scene, Hamilton's death causes a great outpouring of sympathy throughout New York and beyond. A funeral and procession are arranged and paid for by the New York Common Council, while businesses shut down for the day of the procession, July 14. Hamilton is then buried in Trinity churchyard. After the duel,

Burr breakfasts with a friend and goes about business as usual, uncaring of Hamilton's fate. The public turns against Burr, accusing him of murder, assassination, and poor character. What remains of Burr's reputation is gone, as Hamilton had previously predicted.

When Burr learns that a coroner's jury is being convened to investigate Hamilton's death, Burr flees New York for Philadelphia. Much of Philadelphia society is repulsed by Burr's presence. On August 2, the jury finds Burr guilty of murder, with Pendleton and Ness as accessories. Burr flees to St. Simons Island off the coast of Georgia, while later in August, a New York Grand Jury drops the murder charge for a less charger of violating the law. While in Georgia, Burr secretly meets with British ambassador Anthony Merry to pledge support to helping the British if they choose to separate the western United States from the eastern. Many local Georgians, mainly Republicans, are happy to have Burr among them.

When the U.S. Senate reconvenes on November 4, 1804, many are stunned to see Vice President Burr take his seat on the dais. Others take to his defense. Others, like Jefferson, seek to use Burr against the Federalist-heavy judiciary, as Burr is to preside over the impeachment trial of Samuel Chase, a Federalist judge and associate justice of the Supreme Court. Chase is acquitted of all charges, and facing mounting pressure, Burr resigns from the Vice Presidency. Burr is now a wanted man, bankrupt, and without a real future. Burr wanders throughout the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys, trying to gain British backing for a plot against the United States and later trying to form a plot to take over Mexico. Burr then travels throughout Europe for several years, and when charges are dropped against him, he returns to New York in 1812. He tries to revive his law practice, shows no remorse for Hamilton, and finds himself a constant target for harassment. In 1833, Burr remarries a wealthy widow, and dies in 1836 in a Staten Island hotel after suffering two strokes.

In Epilogue: Eliza, Eliza Hamilton is devastated by the death of her husband. Within three years, she has had to deal with four deaths – her oldest son, her sister Peggy, her mother, and now her husband. Eliza draws strength from her Christian faith, from family, from friends, and from well-wishers. Eliza remains fiercely loyal to her husband, refusing to ever speak ill about him in any way, shape, or form. Gouverneur Morris organizes a secret fund from Hamilton's friends to support Eliza and her children. Not until 1937 is the secret fund revealed. The Grange is purchased by friends of Hamilton's to relieve the property of debt, then sold back to Eliza at half-price.

Eliza raises her children as best she can, and all sons become successful in one way or another. Alexander Hamilton, Jr., goes on to a career in law and the military. James Alexander Hamilton serves in the War of 1812 and later a lawyer and writer. John Church Hamilton also fights in the War of 1812 and becomes a lawyer. William Stephen Hamilton fights in the Black Hawk War, flocks to California with the gold rush where he sells supplies to miners, and dies of cholera in 1850. Philip Hamilton goes on to serve as a lawyer. Angelica Hamilton becomes a spinster, first cared for by her mother, then cared for by her younger sister, Eliza Hamilton Holly, who also comes to care for her mother in later years. The widow Eliza continues to do good work, tending to

orphanages and teaching children to read. Eliza dies on November 9, 1854, at the age of 97. She is buried beside Alexander Hamilton at Trinity.

Analysis

Hamilton decides that his next step will be to continue to harass John Adams. Hamilton writes a pamphlet which slams Adams, and helps the Federalists lose the election. Hamilton's reputation is further damaged by the pamphlet, for its nature does not merely cost Adams the presidency, but the Federalists the election. As a result, the Federalists largely turn against Hamilton, favoring the party over personal disagreements between Hamilton and Adams. Interestingly, Hamilton's role in the election between Adams and Jefferson sets the stage for the future of American exceptionalism, Chernow notes. Hamilton and the Federalists tend to be regarded as pessimists, while the sunny optimism of Jefferson and the Republicans comes to capture the public's hearts and minds. Americans, then and now, do not need to be reminded of the hardships they face on a daily basis, but want a promise of a better future. Hamilton's pamphlet focuses on the negatives of the present, tying the negative in with Adams. Jefferson, on the other hand, speaks of a bright future and better days, which is the breath of fresh air Americans need.

Despite his damaged reputation, and despite his shrinking relevance, Hamilton continues to involve himself in politics – an overreaching on Hamilton's part. Through the press, through political intrigue, and through hearsay, Burr's duplicity in Jefferson's election leads to greater political drama, in which Hamilton invests himself by slamming Burr. Hamilton hates Jefferson, but hates the dishonest Burr even more. Interestingly enough, despite his hatred for Jefferson, readers should note that Hamilton is, once again, able to put the good of the country ahead of politics and personality by applauding and supporting Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase.

By the spring of 1804, Hamilton and Burr have reached the lowest possible point of their relationship. Hamilton slams Burr at a private dinner, the details of which ultimately reach Burr. Burr, readers will remember, has in the past talked Hamilton down from a duel, and now himself challenges Hamilton to a duel. Once again, Chernow critiques Hamilton, saying that Hamilton had publicly opposed dueling, and had several chances to make peace with Burr – but due to his hatred of Burr, his pride, and his sense of honor, Hamilton could not bring himself to apologize or disavow the remarks. With Hamilton refusing to apologize, the duel could be the only natural outcome. Yet, in keeping with his honor, Hamilton deliberately refuses to shoot Burr in keeping with the code of duels at the time. Burr, however, has no such concerns for Hamilton. Burr's cold nature, as well as his animosity toward Hamilton, compel him to shoot Hamilton directly, ultimately resulting in Hamilton's death. Burr expresses no remorse. The reader will note, interestingly, that Hamilton's death by duel was preceded by his son's death by duel, using the same pistols, and tended to by the same doctor.

Hamilton's death temporarily revives his reputation, as Burr's heartlessness after the duel, as well as the details of the duel, become public knowledge. Eliza devotes her life

not only to ensuring her children are raised well and succeed in life, but ensuring that the legacy of her husband is bright and respected. Chernow concludes his biography of Hamilton by focusing on Eliza's life, and her efforts to protect her husband's legacy. Chernow is quick to applaud Eliza for her loyalty, while reminding readers of Hamilton's own disloyalty. Hamilton thus emerges as a great but flawed man, whose own pride and sense of invincibility resulted in political meddling and which ruined his reputation and his career. To the present day this shows in how some regard Hamilton as a political genius, or a political villain.

Vocabulary

pertinacious, ameliorate, deference, chagrined, intuited, cerebral, quintessentially, preponderance, profligacy, tribulations, inscrutable, ritualized, intransigent, didactic, obdurate, sanctimony, blithe, insouciance

Important People

Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton is the first Secretary of the Treasury of the United States of America under George Washington's administration, is the husband of Eliza, and the father of seven children. Hamilton is regarded as brilliant, courageous, and prophetic, though his overconfidence and pride often get in his way.

Born illegitimately in Nevis on January 11, 1755, Hamilton works as shipping clerk and gains local fame for his writing talents. Funded by locals to study in New York at King's College, Hamilton comes to serve alongside George Washington during the American Revolution. During the Revolution, Hamilton marries Eliza Schuyler, and two go on to have seven children. After the Revolution, Hamilton becomes a delegate to the Constitutional convention, and then, along with Madison and Jay, authors the Federalist papers in support of the document.

With Washington's election, Hamilton comes to serve as Secretary of State, where clashes with Jefferson, Adams, and others over policy. Many of Hamilton's prescriptions for the United States, such as a tax system, Coast Guard, and public debt, continue to be used today. However, after he resigns, Hamilton's popularity wanes following an affair with Maria Reynolds, and after repeated political intrigues where Hamilton slams or supports different candidates. One such person that Hamilton slams and refuses to apologize to as a matter of pride and honor is Aaron Burr. Hamilton is challenged to a duel by Burr, and the two men meet up on July 11, 1804 to carry through. Hamilton chooses not to shoot Burr, while Burr mortally wounds Hamilton. Hamilton dies the following day.

Eliza Hamilton

Elizabeth "Eliza" Schuyler Hamilton is the wife of Alexander Hamilton, with whom she gives birth to seven children. Eliza is a sweet, beautiful, intelligent, and fiercely loyal wife who supports her husband in every single possible way that she can. She is devastated by Hamilton's later affair, but works through the difficulty. Eliza is later devastated once more by the death of her son, Philip, to a duel, only to later lose Alexander Hamilton himself to a duel. Eliza commits to raising her children as a single mother, seeing them succeed in life. Eliza herself dies at the age of 97 in 1857.

Aaron Burr

Aaron Burr is the Vice President under Thomas Jefferson, and the man who is made infamous for killing Alexander Hamilton in an 1804 duel. Burr is a self-serving widower and womanizer who does whatever he can to get ahead both in politics and law. Burr's treacherous tactics, however, earn him few friends. Burr later takes offense at

comments Hamilton makes of him during a dinner party, to which Burr demands a response. When Hamilton refuses to apologize or disavow these remarks, Burr challenges Hamilton to a duel. Burr deliberately tries to kill Hamilton in the duel, and then upon learning of Hamilton's death, shows no remorse. Burr's reputation is ruined, and he later sinks into obscurity, trying to begin his own country in the West and later seeking to rule Mexico. He remarries a wealthy widow and dies in 1836 after suffering two strokes.

George Washington

George Washington is the first President of the United States. A man of humble origins and a war hero of the French and Indian War, Washington goes on to lead American forces to victory in the Revolutionary War with Hamilton by his side, and later oversees the Constitutional Convention. Washington is ultimately elected President, during which time he must calm tensions between Hamilton and Jefferson. Washington later leads troops to put down the revolt in Western Pennsylvania, and often sides with Hamilton's policies in order to strengthen the central government based on experiences gained during the Revolution. After a second term as president, Washington retires and dies in December, 1799.

John Adams

John Adams is the second President of the United States. Brilliant, combative, and immensely proud, Adams clashes with Hamilton on numerous issues, including the idea of a central bank. When Adams becomes president, he and Hamilton continue to clash, as much over personality as over policy. When Hamilton works against Adams during his reelection, and when Hamilton's anti-Adams pamphlet is believed to cost the Federalists the election, Adams and the Federalists largely turn their back on Hamilton, nearly destroying Hamilton's reputation.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson is the third President of the United States. Brilliant, non-combative, and optimistic, Jefferson presents a positive vision for America which resonates with voters. Jefferson has long clashed with Hamilton on various policy issues, ranging from powers in the central government to the chartering of central banks. While serving under Washington, Jefferson and Hamilton begin a bitter feud over policy that quickly becomes personal. Jefferson is later supported as President by Hamilton, however, when Jefferson makes the Louisiana Purchase.

James Madison

James Madison is the fourth president of the United States. Madison is friendly, brilliant, and regarded as the "Father of the Constitution" for his work on the Constitution,

especially the Bill of Rights. Madison befriends Hamilton as he, Jay, and Madison come to write the Federalist papers, urging states to ratify the Constitution. Madison and Hamilton later have a falling out, however, as they come to disagree over policy, and their disagreement turns personal.

James Monroe

James Monroe is the future fifth president of the United States of America. Gentle and intelligent, Monroe is an early opponent of Hamilton, based both on Hamilton's affair, his policies, and his handling of the central bank. Monroe is later wrongly blamed for Hamilton for the revelation of Hamilton's affair, and the two nearly come to a duel.

Maria Reynolds

Maria Reynolds is a beautiful and manipulative 23-year-old extortionist who runs a racket with her husband, whom she hates. Maria sets her sights on Hamilton, whom she sexually plies with tales of abuse suffered at the hands of her husband, while her husband, James, blackmails Hamilton. Maria continues to prey on Hamilton's sexual obsession with her for more than a year, while Hamilton pays out more and more money to James. Eventually, Maria and James divorce.

Edmonde Charles Genet

Edmonde Charles Genet is the French ambassador to the United States during Washington's presidency. Genet is at first warmly received by the people of the country, but quickly loses support among Americans – including Hamilton and Jefferson – when Genet tries to go over Washington's head to appeal to the people at large for support in using American ports to prepare ships for war against the British. Genet provides a brief moment when Hamilton, Jefferson, Washington, and all others are aligned on a single issue. The Jacobins in France decide Genet's offenses warrant death, so Genet appeals for asylum in America. Hamilton urges Washington to grant it, which Washington does. Genet spends the rest of his life in upstate New York where he marries the daughter of the state governor.

Objects/Places

Hurricane essay

Hamilton's essay on the hurricane that strikes St. Croix is pivotal in his life, as it sets him on a trajectory for greatness. The essay, so well-written, attracts the attention of the island's governor, who, together with other elites, forms a fund to send Hamilton to college in New York. Had Hamilton not taken an interest in reading and writing, and had he never penned the hurricane essay, he would have never been given the chance to study abroad.

U.S. Constitution

The U.S. Constitution serves as a framework for governance in the United States, limiting the power of government while ensuring the rights of American citizens. It is drafted during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, including Hamilton, and ratified by all American states thereafter. Hamilton is an ardent support of the Constitution, for it is the law and order which he greatly values over the chaos and wild government that follows revolutions, such as in France.

Federalist papers

The Federalist papers are a series of essays written by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, which urge states to adopt the Constitution. The essays have become famous in American literature for their brilliance and beautiful language, and speak to the very heart of American government. The Federalist papers are one of the most important achievements of Hamilton's life, and are among the things for which he is most remembered. The Federalist papers do their job, and help encourage the states to ratify the Constitution.

Duels

Duels are a ritualized way of resolving conflict between two men that are meant to bring about peace rather than violence. An injured party will seek an apology from the offender; if the offender refuses, the injured party will challenge the offender to a duel. Duels are rarely ever deadly, though dangerous, as both parties involved preserve their honor and courage by showing up. Usually, weapons are not even fired as both parties settle verbally on the field. Often, when the duel is actually carried out, participants intentionally choose not to shoot each other, thus allowing honor and courage to be upheld and a new round of talks to settle the issue.

Hamilton's son is killed in a duel defending Hamilton's honor; and Hamilton is later killed in a duel by Burr even though Hamilton has spoken against the act of dueling, and even though his son has met the same fate.

Pistols

Pistols belonging to Hamilton relative John Barker Church are selected for the duel between Hamilton and Burr. While Hamilton deliberately wastes his shot, Burr deliberately tries to kill Hamilton. Tragically and ironically, the pistols used by Hamilton and Burr were most recently used by Hamilton's son, Philip, in the duel that cost Philip his life. Because of Alexander Hamilton's duel, any lingering support for the practice is done away with, as sets of dueling pistols become more and more rare.

British West Indies

The British West Indies are Caribbean islands where Hamilton spends much of his early life. Born on the tiny island of Nevis, Hamilton later moves to the island of St. Croix with his mother and older brother. There, Hamilton begins work as a shipping clerk after losing his mother to fever. Hamilton comes to write for the local papers, which garners the attention of the island elite. The island elite join together to provide funding for Hamilton to head to North America to attend college. It is from the British West Indies that Hamilton then sets sail for Boston, whereafter he travels to New York.

New York

New York is where Alexander Hamilton travels to attend King's College in New York City, and later joins up with the American continental army to defend the city and the state against a British invasion. New York is where Hamilton returns after the Revolution to begin a law practice and raise his family. New York is where the seat of the American federal government originally rests, and is where Hamilton later returns following his work as Secretary of the Treasury. It is in New York City that Hamilton is later challenged to a duel by Burr, and it is from New York City that Hamilton and Burr set out with their seconds for the cliffs of Weehawken, New Jersey.

Valley Forge

Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, is the winter camp of George Washington's army in the winter of 1777-1778. Hamilton is among those encamped at Valley Forge, where winter conditions, a lack of supplies, and a lack of real support from Congress make a strong impression on Hamilton and his future conception of politics. Valley Forge is where the strongest of Washington's men remain for combat in the spring, and is where Hamilton takes time to continue his self-education by brushing up on economic theory.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the city in which American independence is declared, the Constitution is written, and is the city which becomes the second temporary seat of the federal government. It is in Philadelphia that Hamilton and his family come to live while Hamilton works as Secretary of the Treasury. It is in Philadelphia that Hamilton later comes to have his affair with Maria Reynolds, and it is later to Philadelphia that Burr flees after killing Hamilton. Philadelphia is largely horrified by Burr's presence, meaning Burr cannot stay for long before traveling south to Georgia.

Weehawken

Weehawken, New Jersey, is a small community located just across the Hudson River from New York City. The cliffs of Weehawken, accessible by boat and by foot, and covered in trees, provide the perfect covert dueling grounds. It is to Weehawken that Burr and Hamilton are ferried by boat across the Hudson to engage in their duel. It is in Weehawken that Hamilton is mortally wounded by Burr, with Hamilton then being ferried back to New York while Burr follows.

Themes

Alexander Hamilton's time in the military gave him a different political and philosophical point of view than some of the other Founders

Alexander Hamilton's time in the military gave him a different political and philosophical point of view than some of the other Founders, argues Ron Chernow in his biography, Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton's (and Washington's) experience fighting in the American Revolution is crucial to understanding his conception of how America should be. It is also vastly different than the experiences of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, none of whom served in combat in the Revolution.

Hamilton begins service in George Washington's army as a captain of artillery, serving through the New York campaign, and later through Valley Forge. As the war proceeded, Hamilton became attached to Washington's staff, where he helped in the day-to-day management of the army. As the war ended, Hamilton was given field command once more, and led a successful charge against British fortifications at Yorktown.

It was during this time that Hamilton was not only exposed to the horrors of actual combat, but the dangers of a weak central government. The Articles of Confederation, which loosely held together the 13 colonies, did not give Congress much power. As a result, unable to generate revenue for the army, many soldiers went without proper food, medical care, clothing, blankets, supplies, weapons, and ammunition – let alone pay for service. Hamilton saw firsthand the way his soldiers suffered as a result of a weak central government.

At the Constitutional Convention, Hamilton presses for important powers for the central government; and in his time as Treasury Secretary, Hamilton sought to use the free market to grow and diversify America's economy, meaning greater wealth and the ability to collect taxes to properly fund government services and the armed forces. He also sought to encourage standard currency, supported a public debt, and supported a standing army among other things, all due to experiencing firsthand a government without even basic powers. Hamilton's policies were contested by Jefferson, Madison, and Adams, who feared too much authority in the banks, or too much authority in the federal government, respectively.

Hamilton was a prophet of the future

Hamilton was a prophet of the future, argues Ron Chernow in his biography, Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton, both in policy and in thought, predicted many things which came to pass, and created many things that still exist today. As such, Chernow considers

Hamilton a man ahead of his time, and determines that this makes Hamilton a brilliant man.

In terms of government, Hamilton foresaw the American system as being federalist, with a balance of power between the central government and the states while protecting the rights of individual Americans. The Constitutional Convention struck just this compromise between those who believed either the central, or the state government, should reign supreme. Federalism is still in existence in America today. Hamilton also foresaw the importance of creating a Coast Guard and a U.S. Customs Service to protect America and ensure proper commerce, both of which are still in existence today.

In terms of finance and economic policy, Hamilton's achievements still hold sway in America today. Hamilton believed that a proper tax system must be in place in order to provide government services and fund the military, and that a manageable public debt would allow America the ability to fund its operations without having to raise taxes. Hamilton's pursuit of a central bank and a standard currency helped to increase wealth and commerce, but also created the boom and bust cycle in finances in which Hamilton provided government intervention to settle (something which became important in the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Great Recession of 2008).

In terms of prophetic vision and prediction, Hamilton's careful studies of every subject imaginable led him to recognize important things. Hamilton predicts that one day, slavery in America will collapse. Hamilton knows that without law and order after a revolution, the potential for more violence and demagogues is great. Among some of the more important of Hamilton's predictions have to do with France, and the economy. While such a situation is avoided in America, Hamilton predicts it will occur in France. Events prove Hamilton correct. Hamilton's desire for a prosperous United States means a diversified economy will be needed – something that comes to pass over time. Hamilton also correctly predicts, chillingly, that he will be killed in his duel with Burr, and that Burr's reputation will be finished as a result.

Hamilton is emblematic of America's self-made man

Hamilton is emblematic of America's self-made man, argues Ron Chernow in his biography, Alexander Hamilton. When Hamilton is born, the remaining vestiges of European influence on society and culture are beginning to wane. Hamilton, an illegitimate child, is sent to study in New York by the elite of St. Croix. As an illegitimate child in such society, Hamilton has few chances to do anything. But in America, where birth and birthright are less and less important, Hamilton has a chance to make his own life as he sees fit, and comes to reflect the possibility of promise for all Americans.

Hamilton commits hard to study, both self-education and formal education. It is in college hat Hamilton learns of the discord between locals and Great Britain. Seeking to make a name for himself, thankful to his adoptive home of New York, and looking to achieve glory, Hamilton commits to the American cause by joining and fighting with George Washington's army. Hamilton proves himself able on the battlefield and at

Washington's side, earning him a stellar reputation, immense honor, and marriage into a wealthy and powerful family – something that would not have been possible outside of America.

Because of Hamilton's knowledge, bravery, and connections, he is made Secretary of the Treasury. Though many of his policies are controversial, most are highly successful, and his reputation only increases. When Hamilton leaves office, he is not content to retire or remain idle. Instead, he commits himself fully to a law career, and raising his family. Though Hamilton ventures in and out of politics, he never holds high office again. Hamilton, however, comes to ruin his reputation based on becoming involved in political infighting and backstabbing, and this ultimately costs him his life in a duel with Aaron Burr.

Despite this, Hamilton is the quintessential American who succeeds (and fails) in life based on his own efforts. Hamilton's experiences compel him to value the free market, support individual freedoms and rights, and to appreciate the promise of America. Likewise, his service in the military teaches him never to take a moment for granted. His fight for America becomes all the more important to Hamilton in peacetime, for he wants to thrive in the country he has helped to ensure the existence of. Everything Hamilton fought and bled for during the war – including freedom and the future of America – have made it all the more important to Hamilton that he do everything that he can with his life to not only benefit his new country, but to justify his own life as well.

Hamilton's pride and overconfidence are his primary weaknesses

Hamilton's pride and overconfidence are his primary weaknesses, argues Ron Chernow in his biography, Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton, who is immensely intelligent, and who takes great satisfaction in his self-advancement, also comes to be very proud and to feel invincible at times. In most situations, this overconfidence comes to be dangerous; in his confrontation with Burr, Hamilton's pride is deadly.

Hamilton's first major failure comes through his sexual affair with Maria Reynolds. Then the Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton feels as if he has reached the heights of power, and is invincible. Feeling he can do anything he wishes, and sexually obsessed with Maria, he continues on an affair with Maria even though he must pay blackmail money to keep it a secret, and even though he risks exposure and ruin. Hamilton is able to keep the affair quiet for several years, but word of it flares up again eventually and wrecks his reputation.

Hamilton's next major failure comes through both pride and overconfidence in dealing with John Adams. Having parted ways with Adams over the central bank, and frozen out of Adams's administration, Hamilton rails against Adams in print. Hamilton's efforts against Adams are blamed for Adams's loss in the Election of 1800. As a result, most Federalists turn against Adam, and Hamilton's own reputation is further damaged. It can be argued that Hamilton should never have let personality and past differences compel

him to involve himself in party politics, but Hamilton's pride, and his overconfidence in himself and his reputation, prevent him from staying out of the drama. As Chernow himself notes, Hamilton simply did not know when to stop.

Hamilton's final major failure comes through pride in dealing with Aaron Burr. Having both worked with, and been misled by Burr in the past, Hamilton recognizes Burr as a self-serving opportunist who will use anyone and anything to get what he wants. Hamilton does not hesitate to label Burr as such. Burr, whose own reputation is marginal, demands a response from Hamilton regarding such words. Hamilton refuses to recant them as a matter of honor and pride, and so commits to a duel with Burr. Hamilton could have easily defused the situation, but he refused to do so and paid with his life.

Historians must not be afraid to pass judgment on the past

Historians must not be afraid to pass judgment on the past, argues Ron Chernow in his biography, Alexander Hamilton. Chernow leads by example throughout his biography, taking time away from the historical narrative to speak to readers directly. Here, he either contextualizes what is going on, or directly offers analysis and opinion about things that are occurring, especially as they relate to Hamilton. This demonstrates that the past is not merely something to be read about, but actively considered and learned from.

From the very start, Chernow is quick to render his opinions and thoughts of Hamilton and Hamilton's times. Throughout the book, he argues that Hamilton was a prophet of the future, and provides copious and systematic evidence to this effect – such as Hamilton's insistence on a standing army and a public debt. He also argues that Hamilton's opposition to slavery in effort, but not through the Constitution, did not make Hamilton a hypocrite but a man of his times. Hamilton, Chernow explains, recognized that pushing the divisive slavery issue at the very moment people were pushing for unity would have been disastrous, and would prolong slavery in the long-term.

Chernow is quick to condemn Hamilton for being too proud and feeling invincible, such as when Hamilton entered into an affair with Maria Reynolds. Chernow not only explains and details the affair, but is quick to condemn Hamilton for the affair in and of itself. Chernow says it is a sad lapse on Hamilton's part. This is because Hamilton has made himself out to be a moral person, and because Eliza's love and loyalty for Hamilton are so total and unconditional. Hamilton's betrayal of his family, Chernow argues, carries over into questions about his professional conduct as later voiced by several Republicans.

Chernow continues to fault Hamilton for his pride through Hamilton's later life. Chernow argues that Hamilton simply does not know when to stop, especially as it concerns politics. For a self-educated man, Hamilton simply is not learning the lessons of extending himself too far. Hamilton engages himself in wrecking Adam's chances of

reelection through a pamphlet in which Hamilton slams Adams. Hamilton's reputation and honor are irrevocably scarred by the incident, especially among fellow Federalists who feel betrayed by Hamilton's overreach. Chernow also notes that Hamilton could have later apologized or made peace with Burr numerous times prior to the duel, but refused to do so – a decision which ultimately led to Hamilton's death.

Styles

Structure

Ron Chernow tells his biography of Alexander Hamilton from both the third and first-person omniscient points of view. The majority of the book is told in the third-person, as Chernow assumes the role of third-person narrator who relates the events of the life of Alexander Hamilton. Writing as the third-person narrator, Chernow is able to contextualize important events with additional information, such as providing brief biographical sketches of the famous men whose lives intertwined with Hamilton's, such as Washington, Jefferson, and Burr, as well as sketches of important events relating to Hamilton, such as the American Revolution and the nature of the Constitutional Convention. This provides for a richer and fuller understanding of Hamilton and his times. At various points, Chernow interrupts the narrative to speak from a personal standpoint, where he directly comments on things which occur in Hamilton's life, or in which he contextualizes certain things. For example, Chernow interrupts the narrative of Hamilton's birth to discuss the various dates different sources give for Hamilton's birthdate, while later on, Chernow morally condemns Hamilton for his affair with Maria Reynolds. This is keeping with Chernow's belief that historians should not be afraid to pass judgment on the past.

Perspective

Ron Chernow writes his biography "Alexander Hamilton" in language that is simple, but peppered with educated, early American vocabulary. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the simple language is essential to Chernow's biography, which is massive and far-ranging. The simple language allows Chernow to speak straightforwardly about complicated times and complicated people, including Hamilton. The brevity in words also acts as a refreshing counter to the sheer length of the biography itself. This makes complex events easy to understand. Second, the appearance of early American language, educated, formal, and often poetic, not only gives the biography an authentic feel, but demonstrates to modern readers what late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century America were like. For example, Chernow uses the words "self-effacing" instead of "humility", "exuberant" instead of "happy" or "enthusiastic", and "rarefied" instead of "exclusive."

Tone

Ron Chernow divides his biography, titled Alexander Hamilton, into 45 consecutive, linear, and chronological chapters, including a Prologue and an Epilogue focusing primarily on Eliza Hamilton. The prologue begins with Eliza in her late nineties, near death, and speaks about how Eliza has spent the last 50 years defending the memory of her dead husband. The ensuing 43 chapters span the time from the early 1700s

through the early 1800s, dealing with Hamilton's family's background, his own illegitimate birth, his rise to Secretary of the Treasury, and his downfall and duel. The chronological and structured approach to the biography allows readers to follow Hamilton's life step by step, and event by event. Along the way, Chernow offers contextual information, and often interrupts the narrative to provide analysis or pass judgment. The Epilogue traces Eliza's life after Hamilton's death, and also speaks about what becomes of their children and Hamilton's reputation.

Quotes

If Jefferson provided the essential poetry of American political discourse, Hamilton established the prose of American statecraft. No other founder articulated such a clear and prescient vision of America's future political, military, and economic strength or crafted such ingenious mechanisms to bind the nation together.
-- Ron Chernow (Prologue paragraph N/A)

Importance: Here, Chernow lays out a basic premise that will serve the rest of his book. He explains that Hamilton was a man before his time, who foresaw what America could become, and did his best to lay the foundations for the future. This included everything from the Coast Guard to stock exchanges. These foundations helped ensure the original colonies-turned-states could operate together as country.

In fewer than five years, the twenty-two year-old Alexander Hamilton had risen from despondent clerk in St. Croix to one of the aides to America's most eminent man.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 5 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Here, Ron Chernow relates Alexander Hamilton's meteoric rise from an illegitimate, orphaned shipping clerk to an aide to George Washington. Hamilton has fought with valor in important battles from New York to Trenton to Princeton, and his abilities are recognized by Washington himself. He requests Hamilton join his staff, and Hamilton readily agrees.

For Hamilton the American Revolution was a practical workshop of economic and political theory, providing critical object lessons and cautionary tales that charted the course for his career.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 7 paragraph 138)

Importance: Ron Chernow explains that Alexander Hamilton learned many lessons serving in the fighting of the American Revolution which came to affect his later career. Hamilton saw firsthand how the military suffered due to politics and Congress's inability to raise money through taxes to support troops in the field. Hamilton also saw how inflation and the need for loans required a central bank, or the Congressional authority to control printing money and handling a public debt.

Hamilton was throwing down a gauntlet: the central government had to have the right to enact laws that superseded those of the states and to deal directly with their citizens.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 9 paragraph N/A)

Importance: In the need to pay off war debts, Hamilton and James Madison argue that Congress must have the right to impose some taxes or collect some money from the states. This requires a federalist approach - that the central government must have some limited power over the states to directly deal with citizens. This balanced approach to government will become a hallmark of the American system in the coming years.

Burr embodied the old aristocracy, such as it then existed in America, and Hamilton the new meritocracy.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 10 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Early in Hamilton's New York legal career, he has frequent encounters with Aaron Burr. Despite their wartime differences, the two men get along, and even work together on some cases. Burr, like Hamilton, dealt with family tragedy at an early age, but represents the dying European sense of aristocracy in America. Here, he differs with Hamilton, who represents the very American idea of merit. This serves to underscore their disagreements in later years.

I conceived myself to be under an obligation to lend my aid towards putting the machine in some regular motion. Hence I did not hesitate to accept the offer of President Washington to undertake the office of Secretary of the Treasury.
-- Alexander Hamilton (Chapter 14 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Here, Alexander Hamilton describes his acceptance to be Secretary of the Treasury. It is something for which he has long prepared, being self-taught in economics, financial policy, and money. Hamilton puts his self-education to good use, ensuring an efficient, productive, and successful Treasury Department.

In a nation of self-made people, Hamilton became an emblematic figure because he believed that government ought to promote self-fulfillment, self-improvement, and self-reliance. His own life offered an extraordinary object lesson in social mobility…
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 18 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Here, Chernow explains what made Hamilton so popular among so many people, even if his ideas were often controversial. To this day, Hamilton enjoys popularity because he believed that government should ensure that people have the right to determine their own lives, not determine how their lives should be. Likewise, Hamilton also demonstrated that a rise to fame, nearly impossible under European aristocracy for an illegitimate colonial orphan, was very possible in America. Hamilton is the ultimate success story, and a role model for countless Americans to achieve their dreams.

For Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton was more than just dead wrong in his prescriptions. He was becoming a menace to the American experiment, one who had to be stopped at all costs.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 18 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Here, Chernow describes the fallout from Hamilton's overseeing of the central banking system. The wild speculation, boom, and quick bust, cause Hamilton to have to try to regulate the crisis. To Hamilton the bank is a success that requires calm and long-term commitment, whereas to Jefferson, the wildness in speculation and the near-collapse of the financial system are proof to him that Hamilton is not only wrong, but dangerous to America. This unveils a war between Hamilton and Jefferson.

The Reynolds affair was a sad and inexcusable lapse on Hamilton's part, made only the more reprehensible by his high office, his self-proclaimed morality, his frequently missed chances to end the liaison, and the love and loyalty of his pregnant wife.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 21 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Chernow describes one of Hamilton's greatest shortcomings and failures. Hamilton engages in a sexual affair with the young Maria Reynolds, is blackmailed by her and her husband, and nearly ruins his family, career, and reputation as a result. What is especially disturbing is that Hamilton has always held himself up as a morally pure person despite reality. What is worse is that Hamilton's wife is so loving and loyal to Hamilton that it makes Hamilton's betrayal especially hurtful.

Where Hamilton looked at the world though a dark filter and had a better sense of human limitations, Jefferson viewed the world through a rose-colored prism and had a better sense of human potentialities.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 36 paragraph N/A)

Importance: Jefferson defeats Adams in the presidential election of 1800. Adams blames the loss on Hamilton's pamphlet which eviscerates Adams, while others blame the pessimism of Hamilton compared to the optimism of Jefferson. Here, Chernow explains the fundamental difference between men like Jefferson and men like Hamilton. Hamilton's negative behavior, and his realistic view of the dark side of human nature is not what people want to hear, as they already know about such things in their daily lives. They want to know what the promise of the future can bring, and look to optimism and faith in the future as Jefferson sees it. This helps to explain how Jefferson is able to capture the Presidency in 1800.

Duels were also elaborate forms of conflict resolution, which is why duelists did not automatically try to kill their opponents… The point was not to exhibit deadly marksmanship; it was to demonstrate courage by submitting to the duel.
-- Ron Chernow (Chapter 41 paragraph N/A)

Importance: After enough insults are hurled back and forth, Burr challenges Hamilton to a duel. As Chernow notes here, duels have traditionally been ways of settling disputes, and rarely ever end in death. The point is not to kill, but to make a statement of courage by showing up at the duel and trying to settle differences man to man. Hamilton does not expect to be killed when summoned to a duel by Burr, and seeking to answer the call of the duel without engaging in the duel, deliberately does not shoot Burr. Burr, instead, shoots Hamilton, mortally wounding him.

For Eliza Hamilton, the collapse of her world was total, overwhelming, and remorseless.
-- Ron Chernow (Epilogue paragraph N/A)

Importance: Following Hamilton's death, his wife is devastated. Hamilton's death is the fourth close family member she has lost over three years, which includes her mother, her younger sister, and her son. Eliza struggles to survive, and succeeds, aided by

family and friends. She raises her children well and involves herself both in charitable work, and devoting the rest of her life to defending her husband’s honor and reputation.

Topics for Discussion

Hamilton as Self-Made Man

Despite Hamilton's status as an illegitimate child with no background, Hamilton receives the hand of Eliza in marriage. Why?

Hamilton as A Self-Made Man

Why is college, and later Hamilton's experience in war, so important to him – especially when it comes to his reputation and the idea of America? What do Hamilton's efforts do for him?

Hamilon's Wartime Experiences

Hamilton's frustration at Congress during the Revolution is clear. Why is Hamilton so angry with Congress? How does this affect Hamilton's outlook on politics and the future? Why?

Hamilton's Wartime Experiences

How does Hamilton's wartime experience help compel him to support a stronger central government, and to support the U.S. Constitution? Why is this so?

Hamilton as Self-Made Man

Honor and reputation are vastly important to Hamilton now that the Revolutionary War has ended. Why is this so? How does Hamilton seek to uphold and further his reputation and his honor?

Hamilton as Prophet

What are some of Hamilton's early ideas as Secretary Treasury? Why does Hamilton advance these ideas? How do they affect the country?

Hamilton as Prophet

Why do Jefferson and Adams so strongly oppose Hamilton's ideas for a central bank? Why does Hamilton so strongly support a central bank?

Hamilton as Too Proud

Why does Hamilton continue his affair with Reynolds, even after multiple chances to break it off? How does his affair come to affect his career?

Hamilton as Prophet

How do the revolution in France and the rebellion in Western Pennsylvania coincide? What is Hamilton's response to both situations? Why?

Hamilton as Too Proud

How does Hamilton's reputation finally suffer its first major blow after the affair? Does Hamilton recover from this? Why or why not?

Hamilton as Too Proud

How does Hamilton remain involved in politics, even though he is no longer Secretary of the Treasury? How does this affect his life and his reputation? Why?

Hamilton as Too Proud

Although Adams and Hamilton are both Federalists, they clash against one another repeatedly. Why is this so? Does blame rest with both men for their rivalry? Why or why not?

Hamilton as Too Proud

Why does Hamilton resist any attempts to make peace with Burr prior to the duel? Why does Hamilton seek to go through with the duel instead? What judgment can modern readers render of Hamilton's decision?

Hamilton as Too Proud

How do the reputations of Hamilton and Burr fare following the duel? Why? Does this speak to the overconfidence of both men? Why or why not?

Passing Judgment on History

Evaluate the life of Alexander Hamilton. What conclusions do you draw about his life in general, especially regarding his personal life, his political career, political positions and

choices, and the infamous duel? Is Hamilton a hero, a villain, or something in between? Explain.