

# **Hamilton: The Revolution Study Guide**

**Hamilton: The Revolution by Jeremy McCarter and  
Lin-Manuel Miranda**

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## Summary

“Hamilton: The Revolution,” by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter. First Edition; Published April 12, 2016 by Grand Central Publishing. The book alternates non-fiction, critical and analytical essays by McCarter with transcriptions of the show’s dialogue / lyrics as written (and commented upon) by Miranda.

The book begins with an introduction by its primary author, theatre artist (and former drama critic) Jeremy McCarter: the author / composer of “Hamilton,” Lin-Manuel Miranda, contributes secondary commentary, primarily in the form of short song-by-song notes. Miranda is also quoted several times in McCarter’s essays, which are alternated with scene-by-scene excerpts from the show.

In the first few essays, McCarter comments on the origins of the musical, and on the development of initial relationships between its creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and several of his collaborators, including producer Jeffrey Seller; director Tommy Kall; and historian Ron Chernow (who wrote the biography of founding father Alexander Hamilton upon which the musical is based). McCarter also discusses how all three, along with other contributors to the project (both financial and artistic), became increasingly excited about the use of rap as the primary narrative vocabulary, and how they kept finding resonances between the experiences of Hamilton (in the past) and the experiences of other immigrants (in the present). McCarter also describes how, as more of the piece developed, they became engaged in the idea of casting non-Caucasian actors as historically Caucasian characters. Meanwhile, in the show excerpts, Hamilton’s primary relationships (i.e. with primary antagonist Aaron Burr, and with his wife Eliza) are introduced, as is the basic situation: Hamilton is one of several leaders of the American Revolution against British rule.

Over the next few essays, as he narrates the process by which Miranda’s ideas for the show developed, McCarter also writes about the contributions of other artists to the piece: choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler; designers David Korins and Paul Tazewell; and orchestrator Alex Lacamoire. McCarter also refers to several actors whose characterizations and interpretations contributed to the show and the development of both its narrative and production style. In the excerpts from the show, the Revolution gains momentum, and Hamilton’s relationship with mentor and ally George Washington deepens at the same time as his relationship with rival Aaron Burr deteriorates. Meanwhile, his relationships with the sensitive Eliza and her clever sister Angelica also intensify. Throughout all the essays, but particularly in this section, there are references to how Miranda, while determined to be as historically accurate as possible, also found it necessary, at times, to reshape history in order to make a more effective and/or engaging dramatic narrative.

As he describes how the piece became more complete and eventually moved into production, McCarter describes the intensity, depth, and trust of the various collaborative relationships that supported the project, including that Miranda shared with Oskar Eustis, the head of the Public Theatre where the show was first presented. Then,

as he describes the process by which the show moved from the Public to Broadway, McCarter draws connections between “Hamilton” and another landmark Broadway musical, “A Chorus Line.” Meanwhile, the excerpts from the show dramatize the outcome of the American Revolution, and Hamilton’s successes and mistakes, both personal and professional, in its aftermath.

In the book’s final essays, which are juxtaposed with the text of the show’s final moments (in which Hamilton is killed in a duel with Aaron Burr), McCarter describes the impact and importance of a visit by one of the show’s most fervent, and influential supporters: the sitting U.S. President, Barack Obama.



# Section 1

## Summary

Introduction - The introduction, written by theatre artist (and former drama critic) Jeremy McCarter, discusses several elements that drew him into the creation of the show, including his belief that rap and hip-hop, in the rhythms of their language and music, had a great deal of potential as a vocabulary for theatrical storytelling. He also describes how he came to believe that the show's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, was the best person to capitalize on that potential, and how, as they started working on the project, they came to realize the many parallels between the revolution in theatrical storytelling Lin proposed and developed, and the American Revolution in which the show's title character, Alexander Hamilton, played a key role. McCarter then discusses the process of putting the book together, commenting on the fact that while the show was essentially the vision of one man (Lin-Manuel Miranda), it required the input of dozens of other artists to bring it to life, in the same way that the vision of Alexander Hamilton required the input of dozens, if not hundreds, of other individuals to receive. Finally, McCarter comments on the unlikelihood of parallels between a play and a revolution by suggesting that one of the other key figures of the American Revolution, George Washington, inspired his soldiers by showing them a production of a play about a man who gave his life "to defeat tyranny and secure ... freedom" (11).

## Analysis

In addition to highlighting a couple of the book's themes (i.e. the focus on collaboration, the relationship between past and present), the introduction emphasizes the key role played by rap composer / performer Lin-Manuel Miranda in both the book and the creation of the Broadway musical that is the book's primary focus – "Hamilton," a portrait of key experiences in the life and career of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton. Additional key points to note include the comment about the show being a revolution in story-telling (which foreshadows other, similar references made by other individuals later in the book), the suggested parallels between the experiences of Miranda and Hamilton (an idea that is reiterated throughout the book), and reference to George Washington (who becomes a key character in the show).

## Vocabulary

lyrical, density, ingenuity, erudite, libretto, annotation, inevitable, retrospect, amplify, legacy, formation, vindication, discordant, polyglot, tyranny



## Section 2

### Summary

Chapter 1, Introduction: McCarter describes how rap theatre artist Lin-Manuel Miranda, when invited to perform at the Obama White House, presented an initial sketch from a new show he was developing about Alexander Hamilton, an immigrant to America who made a new life for himself. McCarter draws parallels between the experiences of Hamilton and those of Miranda, Miranda's father, and Obama's father, all of whom, McCarter suggests, followed similar journeys to that of Hamilton, with similar self-fulfilling results.

Chapter 2, Introduction: McCarter describes the development of the relationship between Miranda and the artist who became the show's director, Tommy Kail, including their collaboration on Miranda's first full show, "In the Heights." McCarter also discusses the development of the song "My Shot" which, McCarter says, "in the lingo of musical theatre, [is] an 'I want' song" (21), one in which the central character reveals his drive and desires, adding that rap is the perfect medium for such a song.

Summary of the Scenes: "Aaron Burr, Sir" introduces the piece's primary narrator (Aaron Burr) and explores the beginnings of the complex, difficult relationship between Burr and Hamilton. In "My Shot" and "The Story of Tonight," Hamilton reveals the intensity and extent of his patriotic ambitions, and introduces three of Hamilton's closest friends and allies in the early stages of the Revolution: Laurens, Lafayette, and Mulligan.

Commentary by Lin-Manuel Miranda: Miranda discusses how choices about the story and music evolved and the development of parallels between characters / actors in the first and second acts. In Chapter 2, Miranda's notes refer to how "Aaron Burr, Sir" is a fictionalization of their first meeting, and how contemporary street dancers in New York influenced the development of this song. His notes on "My Shot" refer to references drawn from the work of other rappers and from other musicals; how hard he worked to develop accurate representations of Hamilton's mind and spirit; and the collaborative work that went into creating the final version of the piece. In relation to "The Story of Tonight," Miranda comments that the use of this song as a motif throughout the show was inspired by the work of composer / lyricist Stephen Sondheim.

### Analysis

The book's thematic interest in the connection between past and present is explored in several ways here, from the references to parallel experiences in the Chapter 1 essay to the reference in Miranda's comments about composer Stephen Sondheim. The idea developed here, and throughout the book, is that there are several sorts of influence: broad strokes ideas to specific lines of text to emotional resonances to similar events.



One particularly significant manifestation of this thematic idea is the reference to the “I want” song, one of several references throughout the book to how Miranda, while using an undeniably contemporary musical vocabulary (i.e. rap and hip hop) is simultaneously anchoring his innovations in the past – specifically, the history of musical theatre.

## **Vocabulary**

vibrancy, ovation, prototype, inventive, hilarious, lingo, prevalent, confidant, precocious, anarchy, fraught, abolitionist



## Section 3

### Summary

Chapter 3, Introduction: McCarter describes how Miranda convinced historian Ron Chernow (who wrote the definitive biography of Alexander Hamilton) to work on the project, and how Chernow was able to provide important historical information. McCarter also describes how Chernow came to accept the idea / principle that the Caucasian characters would be played by non-Caucasian performers, partly because those performers would be better able to access the rhythms and style of Miranda's music.

Chapter 4, Introduction: McCarter comments here on how history and character of New York City influenced the musical. He describes how Lin's compositions and lyrics captured the energy and ambition of the city, a drive and a sense of self that seems to have continued across the centuries. McCarter also comments on how the historical facts of how the city was constructed by shipbuilders were echoed and shaped by the designer of the show's set, David Korins. He then describes how the staging of the song "The Schuyler Sisters" managed to portray the construction of the city while introducing important characters, story elements, and attitudes.

Summary of the Scenes: The three Schuyler sisters – Eliza, Angelica, and Peggy – come into New York and explore the city, interacting with the chorus as they all sing about being "in the greatest city in the world" (45).

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: In relation to "The Schuyler Sisters," he refers to how he adapted some of the ideas of rappers Jay Z and Pharrell to this show, and how one of his favorite personal sayings ("Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now!") (44) made it into the show – specifically, in the mouth of the sensitive Eliza.

### Analysis

The essays in this section further explore the thematically central idea of the relationship between past and present in a variety of ways. These include the description of how historian Ron Chernow both became involved in the process of creating the work and how he came to see the value of, as Miranda puts it, telling a historical story with contemporary vocabulary. Other references to this theme include the description of how the style and energy and ways of New York influenced the show, and the description of how other rap artists influenced Miranda's work. At the same time, the essays in this section further develop the idea of collaboration. Specifically, the reference here is to the collaboration between Miranda and David Korins, with commentary suggesting that the visual vocabulary of how the set worked was influenced by Miranda's musical and textual vocabulary, and vice versa.



## Vocabulary

plausible, esteem, quotidian, eminent, affirmation, discrepancy, accrue, presumption, coherence, prototype, masonry, joist, disseminate, facilitate, vertigo



## Section 4

### Summary

Chapter 5, Introduction. McCarter discusses the involvement of producer Jeffrey Seller, particularly his intense attraction to, and support for, the show, and how he brought to the project a range of experience producing Tony award-winning Broadway shows. McCarter then refers to Miranda's need to develop two story elements: Hamilton's quick intelligence (i.e. showing that he was also fighting a war of ideas as well as a war for freedom) and structurally set up a number for the King of England.

Chapter 6, Introduction: McCarter discusses the involvement of orchestrator Alex Lacamoire, referring first to how composer Miranda isn't able to write down his compositions. Lacamoire's role, McCarter says, was to take Miranda's many ideas and shape them, or write them down, so that other musicians can/could play them. McCarter describes the complimentary ways the men think, using as an example the next song, "You'll Be Back," a song for King George that, in Lacamoire's hands, developed resonances with the music of The Beatles.

Chapter 7, Introduction: McCarter comments on how Miranda felt it was important to get both the creation and the performance of the character of George Washington correct, and on how, early in the process of the musical's creation, Miranda approached African-American actor Chris Jackson to work on the part. Jackson, McCarter says, had the air of integrity, calm, and strength both the historical figure had and the fictionalized figure had to have, all aspects that would provide a needed narrative contrast to the more fiery and impulsive Hamilton.

Summary of the Scenes: "Farmer Refuted" quotes from Hamilton's actual argument in opposition to those who wanted to stay British; "You'll Be Back" features the first of three appearances by the British King George III, who sings about his belief that America will not last long; and "Right Hand Man" introduces George Washington and dramatizes the process of Hamilton becoming one of Washington's most important political allies.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: in his commentary on "Farmer ...", Miranda discusses his struggles with the technical and vocal requirements of vocal music. In relation to "You'll Be Back," Miranda describes the origins of the idea for the song (a comment by a British friend/actor). Commenting on "Right Hand Man," Miranda references how the story and music of this song were influenced by the compositions of Gilbert and Sullivan, and how he used this song to pinpoint the moment when Hamilton's perspectives changed from a desire to be a martyr to a desire to be a leader.

### Analysis

Further references to the book's thematic interest in collaboration can be found in the commentary on Miranda's relationship with arguably two of the most important people



with whom he worked: the producer (whose job it was to find money to pay for development and production) and the musical director (whose job it was to help Miranda fully realize his musical vision. One other significant collaboration referenced here: that of the actor playing George Washington, one of the first of several examples in the book of how a performer's personality influenced how his character was developed. This is one of several examples in the book of how it explores and comments on the relationship between art and life. Other important points to note include the references to British elements of the show, including the comic King George and the quote from Gilbert and Sullivan, a pair of well-known and respected theatre artists from the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. Finally, there are several important references to Miranda's perceptions of who Hamilton was and how he (Miranda) felt the need to shape the historical reality in order to make for a strong story. Here again, the thematic idea is an exploration of the relationship between art and life.

## Vocabulary

rapt, scintillate, synagogue, audacious, mongrel, explicit, iconic, jaunty, harpsichord, eviscerate, homage, annotation, laborious, rudimentary, percolate, fixate, deficiency, sociopathic, majestic, gravitas, benediction, scabbard, armada



## Section 5

### Summary

Chapter 8, Introduction: McCarter describes first the historical reality of the relationship between the historical Alexander Hamilton and Eliza Schuyler, then comments on how the songs that tell their story follow the pattern of female rhythm and blues singers doing duets with rap singers. This section, which prologues the text of the show that dramatizes the meeting between Hamilton and Eliza, also includes a reproduction of a love note that the historical Hamilton wrote to the historical Eliza which, McCarter says, the latter carried with her for the remainder of her life.

Chapter 9, Introduction: McCarter writes about how actor Renee Elise Goldsberry almost missed becoming involved in the show, and how the song of her character, Angelica Schuyler, tells the story of Eliza's courtship and marriage from her sister's point of view. This chapter also discusses how the song reveals how attracted to Hamilton Angelica is, and how she chooses her sister's happiness (i.e. her marriage to the man they both love) over her own.

Chapter 10, Introduction: At the beginning of this introduction, McCarter references the difficulty and historical unlikelihood of the American Revolution's success, referring to the real-life Hamilton's diplomatic efforts towards making it happen. He compares those efforts to those made by Miranda and others to bring the musical to the stage. Meanwhile, McCarter adds, an actor named Leslie Odom Jr. became involved in the creation, and eventual performance, of the role of Aaron Burr, how much Odom invested in both the role and in Burr's song, "Wait for It."

Summary of the Scenes: "Winter's Ball," "Helpless," and "Satisfied" all portray the development of Hamilton's relationships with two of the most important women in his life: Eliza Schuyler, who became his wife, and Angelica Schuyler, who became a good and trusted friend. These are followed by a brief reprise of "The Story of Tonight," which further explores the relationship between Burr and Hamilton. "Wait for It" defines key differences in the characters of protagonist Hamilton and antagonist Burr.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: in his discussion of "A Winter's Ball" and "Helpless," Miranda comments on his exploration of Hamilton's juxtaposed, seemingly paradoxical cockiness and vulnerability. In his commentary on "Satisfied," Miranda comments on how the song is a tribute to a woman with a powerful intellect who was never given the respect or the opportunity to use it. In referencing "Wait for It," Miranda comments that his own struggle with the balance between following impulse and patience informed how he wrote the song.



## Analysis

The essays in this section describe how Eliza and Angelica return to the story (they first appeared in “The Schuyler Sisters”) in ways that actually influence its events and central characters. In their first appearance, their function was primarily expositional, part of how Miranda and his collaborators were setting up the world of the story. Here, though, they become dramatically active characters, their relationships with Hamilton, here as elsewhere, adding important layers of depth to a story that, in some ways, could have become almost entirely political and historical in its focus. Meanwhile, Angelica’s song is one of the earliest and most overt references in the piece to a theme that’s important to both the show and the commentary on the show given here: specifically, and as the author comments, the way Angelica’s song gives the show “another chance to suggest that history looks very different depending on who’s telling it” (78). Meanwhile, the references to the relationship between Hamilton and Eliza foreshadow references later in both the show and this book to how, historically, the love between the two survived very difficult circumstances, including Hamilton’s eventual death. Finally, there are several references to the book’s thematically central examination of the art/life relationship in this section, including one of several key references to how Miranda draw on his own personal experiences to gain insight into the situations, feelings, and reactions of the characters.

## Vocabulary

concision, distinctive, assonance, insidious, encapsulate, monumental, intricacy, velocity, intrinsic, onomatopoeic, insidious, lewd, ideological



## Section 6

### Summary

Chapter 11, Introduction: McCarter discusses how Miranda sampled included “shout outs” (94) to a range of artists, primarily those involved in rap but also those involved in music theatre. He then refers to how one of Miranda’s main sources of inspiration, in terms of both style and content, was rapper Notorious B.I.G., whose song “Ten Crack Commandments” was a key inspiration for the song, “Ten Duel Commandments.” Placing that shat song in the show’s first half, McCarter comments, left the way clear for the Act Two climax to focus on the relationships between the two characters who play out that climax, Burr and Hamilton.

Chapter 12, Introduction: McCarter describes how Miranda and his work on “Hamilton” came to the attention of Oskar Eustis, artistic director and dramaturg at The Public Theatre in New York, which had been the birthplace of another landmark American musical, “A Chorus Line.” McCarter describes how Eustis and Miranda came to a mutually respectful way of working together, and how like Shakespeare Miranda and his work are in relationship to how they use verse and rhyme.

Chapter 13, Introduction: McCarter comments that one of the questions that Ron Chernow (author of Hamilton’s biography) had was how to handle the character of Eliza: specifically, how to make goodness (such as that found in her character) compelling. McCarter describes the process of finding the perfect actress for the part (Philippa Soo); how she innately had the right qualities for Eliza; and how Chernow responded to what he saw as similarities between Eliza, Philippa (descended from immigrants), and his recently deceased wife Valerie.

Summary of the Scenes: “Stay Alive” briefly refers to Eliza’s hopes for Hamilton to do just that - stay alive - in a time of conflict. This is juxtaposed with “Ten Duel Commandments,” a song that places a list of rules for dueling within a narrative of an actual duel. In “Meet Me Inside,” Hamilton comes into conflict with mentor Washington, while in “That Would Be Enough,” Eliza urges Hamilton to control his ambition and try to find happiness in a quieter life at home.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: In his commentary on “Stay Alive” and “... Commandments,” Miranda refers to how determined he was to have the narration shift throughout both pieces (i.e. engaging the audience with different points of view), and to how Burr was opposed to dueling all his life – until, Miranda adds, he wasn’t. In reference to “Meet Me Inside,” Miranda comments on how the time signature of the music repeatedly shifts, communicating the messiness of the friendship between Hamilton and Washington that’s being challenged here. In his commentary on “That Would Be Enough,” Miranda describes how the song (in which Eliza asks to be brought into Hamilton’s internal life) emerged from the character he was creating, and not from history. He also comments that it sets up Eliza’s actions in Act Two.



## Analysis

The first essay in this section references how the song “Ten Duel Commandments” foreshadows events at the show’s climax. What it doesn’t say is that the song also foreshadows a duel that takes place earlier in the play, one that has a profound impact on Hamilton as a person, as well as a politician. There is a second key piece of foreshadowing in this section, specifically having to do with Eliza’s song, “That Would Be Enough.” The phrase / motif / image recurs several times throughout the story, as Eliza repeatedly urges Hamilton to enjoy what he has and not always strive for more.

Meanwhile, there are several references in this section to the book’s main themes: to the value of collaboration. One is particularly significant: the comments about the influence of Oskar Eustis, one of several references throughout the book to how Miranda’s work has echoes, both stylistically and ideologically, to the work of William Shakespeare. Then there are the references to the relationship between art and life – specifically, to how the creators found inspiration for their work in their own lives and relationships. Finally, there are also references to the relationship between past and present: in the references to Miranda’s adoption of creative / artistic influences and, perhaps most notably, in the references to “A Chorus Line,” an innovative Broadway musical that first premiered in the 1970’s and which, like “Hamilton” utilized a particular narrative vocabulary (i.e. dance) in a different and innovative way.

## Vocabulary

defiance, assimilate, precedent, feral, preposterous, capacity, subliminal, dissonant, despondent, camaraderie, civility, ruinous, effusive, pinnacle, proletariat, quintessential, battalion, vivacious, euphoria, archaic, consolidate, calcify, emancipate, covenant, parapet

## Section 7

### Summary

Chapter 14, Introduction: Here, McCarter describes the process of how the show's costumes were imagined and developed by designer Paul Tazewell, whose ideas for blending a feel for the present day, the realities of clothing of the past, and the needs to define story and character continued from the beginning of an important workshop through into the show's actual production. Finally, he describes how, at the conclusion of that workshop, which ended with a presentation of a large number, "The Battle of Yorktown," the company celebrated onstage.

Chapter 15, Introduction: McCarter comments that it had been tempting to end the first act of the show in the aftermath of "Yorktown," but that over time, the creators came to understand that a better ending would be to leave the audience with the question of how the realization of their dream and cause would affect the revolutionaries. This, McCarter adds, was the reason for the first act continuing beyond "Yorktown" with "What Comes Next" (which features the return of King George); and "Dear Theodosia" (which features both Hamilton and Burr commenting on becoming new fathers).

Chapter 16, Introduction: This lengthy piece of writing, the longest introduction in the book to this point, narrates the eight days of technical rehearsals the "Hamilton" company went through before its first preview (that is: its first performance for an audience). It details the work of the artists who created the props for the show (using as much that was historically accurate as possible) and the choreographer, Andy Blankenbuehler. McCarter describes how the mostly self-taught Blankenbuehler developed his dance and choreography skills, his theatrical sensibility, and his relationship with Miranda. He also talks about how Blankenbuehler created the show's movement (choreography and other forms) while his daughter was undergoing chemotherapy, how detail oriented he was, and how he and the other creators worked together over the eight day technical process in much the same way as the founding fathers worked together to figure out how the newly formed union was going to work.

Summary of the Scenes: "Guns and Ships" and "The Battle of Yorktown" dramatize / theatricalize key moments in the American Revolution in which Hamilton played an important role, while "History Has Its Eyes on You" reflects on how both Washington and Hamilton had an awareness of their place and presence in history. The finale of Act One, "Non-Stop," portrays Hamilton's enormous intellectual output and busy-ness in the years following the Revolution.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: Miranda refers to the value of having the King, at this stage of the story, point out how difficult it is to govern when one actually has power. In reference to "Dear Theodosia," Miranda describes how the song was written in the context of a death (of an aunt) and new life (two puppies) coming into his world; and how his ideas for both Burr and Hamilton in this song were based on his own





experiences of growing up without the regular presence of parents. In his commentary on “Non-Stop,” Miranda describes how the final version of the number was the product of an intense collaboration between all the artists involved, and how he worked to show Hamilton’s cleverness with words and ideas.

## Analysis

One of the most engaging aspects of the book is how the author, James McCarter, parallels the structure of his essays with the structure of the show: the narratives of his essays build to a kind of overall structural climax in the same way as the show (the text of which is included here) builds to the climax at the end of its first act. Thus the glancing, but intensely evocative, descriptions of emotional and personal difficulties experienced by the artists involved in the show parallel the emotionally intense experiences encountered by the characters as the first act concludes: these references, in turn, evoke the book’s overall thematic interest in the relationship between art and life, perhaps in a more subtle, sub-textual way than some of the book’s other references to this theme.

Other important themes referenced in this section include the book’s exploration of the relationship between present and past, which is explored here in the reference to the work of the costume designer, which is simultaneously a reference to the book’s theme of collaboration. That theme is again referenced in the discussion of the contribution of the show’s choreographer.

At this point, it’s worth noting how McCarter’s essays chronicle the creative process. Audiences for any kind of creative work tend to respond solely to the finished, perceivable product without a clear, solid awareness of the work and process that have gone into it. One of the values of this book is the way it reveals, in significant detail, the amount and variety of work that goes into the creation of something like “Hamilton,” a process that might be likened to an iceberg: what the audience sees (or reads, in the case of works of literature) is the tip of the iceberg, supported by massive amounts and types of work in the same way that the tip of an iceberg is supported by what amounts to a mountain of ice beneath it.

## Vocabulary

infallible, piebald, contentious, explicit, petulant, evocative, abstruse, , verisimilitude, fastidious, miniscule, plausible, malignant, abrasive, succinct

## Section 8

### Summary

Chapter 17, Introduction: McCarter refers to how two of America's so-called "founding fathers" (Thomas Jefferson and James Madison) both hated Alexander Hamilton, and how intriguing the creators of the show found the idea of having both characters played by two of the actors who played Hamilton's friends in Act One. Those actors, both African-American, comment on how, before they became involved in "Hamilton," they both felt like they had run out of opportunities as black artists. They also comment on the opportunity to play the roles of powerful white men, one saying how much it would have meant to him, as a young black man, to see someone onstage doing what he's doing now. Here again, McCarter draws a connection between the present-day stories of immigrants and rebels to the story of Hamilton.

Chapter 18, Introduction: McCarter discusses the relationship between "Hamilton" and education, describing how the show has been opened to classrooms and schoolchildren in New York and beyond, particularly young people of color who are seeing themselves and hearing their music onstage. He also references the particular impact of the cabinet conversations in the show, written in the form of rap battles. McCarter comments that in a few years, "Hamilton" will be available for production by school groups and community groups, which will expand the positive, affirming, insight-broadening impact of the show even more.

Chapter 19, Introduction: McCarter explores the question of whether Hamilton and Angelica had a sexual relationship. There is a sense from the actors and the creative team that there was an intellectual and emotional affair (since they each gave something to the other – primarily intellect – that they couldn't get from anywhere else), but not necessarily a sexual one. This, they all agree, was because both Hamilton and Angelica loved Eliza too much to hurt her. McCarter describes how the next song ("Take a Break") came out of letters between Hamilton and Angelica, and how Miranda simultaneously rewrote history and deepened the relationship when he had the characters meet beforehand: in actual fact, Angelica only met Hamilton after he and Eliza had married.

Summary of the Scenes: As Act Two begins, "What'd I Miss" introduces the character of Thomas Jefferson who, both in the story and in history, had been absent in France for much of the revolution. "Cabinet Battle #1" portrays the first debate between Hamilton and Jefferson about the goals and process of government as a rap battle. In "Take a Break," both Eliza and Angelica urge Hamilton to take a holiday.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: In his comments on "What'd I Miss?," Miranda suggests that his choice of music for Jefferson (jazzy and almost hip-hop, but not quite as rebellious as Hamilton's rap) represents Jefferson's position on the Revolution. There are also, Miranda comments, references to Jefferson's history as a slave owner. In



commenting on “Cabinet Battle 1,” Miranda refers to his pleasure in writing the battles, to how much skill they take, and the challenges inherent in writing about political ideas in such a way. In his comments on “Take a Break,” Miranda comments that the event it portrays didn’t actually happen, but that he felt it was necessary for the portrayal of Hamilton’s character. He also describes how he took a comment that the song wasn’t necessary as a challenge to make sure it was necessary.

## Analysis

The relationship between past and present is once again explored in this section – specifically, and once again, through references to how Miranda revised and/or augmented historical events in order to shape the story and the dramatic value of the piece’s central character. For many, this is a positive: for others, this is a negative.

Other significant elements include the related commentary on the value of black artists playing white characters and, perhaps most importantly, the references to the relationship between the show and education – specifically, the suggestion that young people who see the show are benefitting by seeing themselves and hearing their music onstage, and future generations will benefit as well. There is a sense that the show’s creators, and Lin-Manuel Miranda in particular, are as aware of the show’s potential place in history, or at least an area of history (i.e. securing the identity and self-worth of so-called “minorities”) as the characters in the show are: Washington and Hamilton in particular remind each other that history is watching them.

What’s also interesting about this section is that in addition to all the above, it subtly highlights the relationship, in the show, between Hamilton’s private and public lives. That relationship, and the single aspect of his personality that infuses both (i.e. an urgent, compelling need for respect and/or understanding), becomes particularly important in the following sections of the show, and in the following essays.

## Vocabulary

debonair, abyss, jubilant, magnitude, doctrinaire, etymology, diuretic, cathartic, jettison, reticent, intransigent, ambiguity, consummate, polymath, diligence, provocative, pinnacle, synonymous, monotony

## Section 9

### Summary

Chapter 20, Introduction: In the first part of this introduction, McCarter explores how Miranda was influenced by senior theatre artists Mike Nichols, John Kander, John Weidman, and in particular, Stephen Sondheim. The latter, McCarter says, gave him one of the most important (and useful) pieces of advice he received: to make sure that the rhythms of the various songs didn't become repetitive or monotonous. This principle played out most significantly, McCarter says, in "Say No to This," the story of Hamilton's affair with Maria Reynolds. McCarter describes how some musical experimentation between the actress playing Maria (who doubled as Peggy Schuyler in Act 1) and the actresses playing Eliza and Angelica let Miranda to change the music of "The Schuyler Sisters" to reflect the trio's blend. All this, McCarter, concludes, once again created a resonance between the subject of the show (how the new learned from history) and its creation (how Miranda learned from both new artists and experienced mentors).

Chapter 21, Introduction: In this introduction, McCarter comments on how "Hamilton" premiered in the same theatre as the previously referenced landmark musical "A Chorus Line." The second half of the Introduction reveals the planning behind the decision to delay moving "Hamilton" to Broadway: in the same way as the creators of "Chorus Line" stayed at The Public Theatre to make sure the show was ready before moving, the creators of "Hamilton" decided to use the remaining time of their run to fine tune THEIR project.

Chapter 22, Introduction: This introduction focuses on the reaction of renowned hip-hop producer Questlove to the show and its content, commenting that Questlove was blown away by what he saw. McCarter describes how Broadway has previously integrated different types of popular music (including rock), how other well-known rappers enjoyed the show and its style, and how Questlove influenced the recording and shaping of the original cast album. The introduction concludes with a reference to the "Hamilton" recording winning an award for rap album of the year, and with a comment about how the show is changing the way that the public views hip-hop and rap.

Summary of the Scenes: "Say No to This" dramatizes the initiation of a long-standing affair between Hamilton and the troubled Maria Reynolds. This is followed by a return to the piece's political narrative line: "The Room Where It Happens" dramatizes Burr's unhappiness at being excluded from important government decisions, an unhappiness leads to him making a change in his political situation as referred to in "Schuyler Defeated". This section concludes with another cabinet confrontation, "Cabinet Battle #2".

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: In his comments on "Say No to This," Miranda discusses on how moments in this scene were based on history, and how its final line came from an inspired desire to quote the work of contemporary composer Jason



Robert Brown. In his commentary on “The Room ...,” Miranda refers to “Rashomon,” a well-known Japanese film that introduced the narrative technique of telling a story from three very different points of view and letting the audience decide what the truth actually is. In relation to “Cabinet Battle #2”, Miranda comments that there are, again, several quotes from well-known and well-respected rap songs.

## Analysis

The primary element to note about this section has to do with the ways in which it comments on the relationship between the past and the present. There are a number of variations on this particular theme: the references to how Miranda was influenced by both important musical theatre artists and rap artists of the past; the references to how the presentation pattern of “Hamilton” echoed that of “A Chorus Line”; and how structural elements echo the once-innovative (but now near-cliché) structure of “Rashomon.” At the same time, there are also explorations of the book’s thematic interest in collaboration: in its references to how the music of the three artists playing the Schuyler sisters affected how their characters were portrayed, and to how rap artist / producer Questlove collaborated with Miranda and other creative artists on the show to produce the recording.

A word here about the development process of Broadway shows, and in many cases of new theatre works in general. Ever since “A Chorus Line,” which pioneered the process, musicals and/or plays headed for production on Broadway or anywhere else have gone through a workshop process in which creative and interpretive artists gather prior to rehearsals to discover and resolve problems with the project – to build on strengths and to either shore up or eliminate weaknesses. Ideally, the process enables the piece to become more of itself, and/or more of what its creators intend for it to be. Pieces become stronger, storytelling becomes clearer, and potential difficulties in both writing and production are, if not headed off, at least seen coming. This is not to say that all potential difficulties are eliminated, but the workshop process has, in general, become an indispensable (and economically prudent) component of investment in a project, both creative and financial. In the case of “Hamilton,” that process was funded by the Public Theatre; culminated in what might be described as a workshop production, at that same theatre; and continued during and after the run, with the goal of really focusing on making sure the show was the best it could possibly be.

## Vocabulary

extortion, abusive, embodiment, accolade, pecuniary, cuckold, commotion, endurance, ensemble, cumulative, sashay, trajectory, pyrotechnics, rapturous, replicate, inconspicuous, venerate, accumulate



## Section 10

### Summary

Chapter 23, Introduction: McCarter here describes the transition from the smaller public theatre to the larger Richard Rodgers Theatre on Broadway, a transition that included intense rehearsals to sharpen choreography, staging, and interpretation; integrate some additional members of the ensemble; and developing and integrating some rewrites, including major rewrites of Washington's song of resignation, "One Last Time." McCarter then refers to an event that took place during that transition: a violent and deadly assault on a black church by a white supremacist, an event that led to considerations of Washington's historical failure to end slavery, a failure that, McCarter suggests, has social and cultural repercussions even today. This, he concludes, is yet another reason why the various elements of "Hamilton" remain relevant.

Chapter 24, Introduction: McCarter describes the process by which teen idol (and popular Broadway actor) Jonathan Groff joined the company to play King George; how Groff interprets the part of the king; and how Groff describes himself as fortunate to be part of such an important, transformative piece of theatre, even for only nine minutes (the total amount of time the King is onstage).

Chapter 25, Introduction: Here, McCarter discusses how relatively few songs were cut during the creative and developmental processes of "Hamilton," saying that despite the intensity and overwhelming amount of Lin-Manuel Miranda's creative energy, he used it with focus and discipline. McCarter lists several examples of how and why songs were cut, suggesting that the main reason behind each one's disappearance from the narrative was the same: the need to keep the story moving and focused. McCarter then refers to how undisciplined the historical Hamilton became once Washington retired, referring to his frequent and furious attacks on Washington's successor, John Adams, and to the mistakes Hamilton made in reacting to how the news of his affair with Maria Reynolds became public.

Summary of the Scenes: In "One Last Time," Washington announces his departure from politics in a letter written by Hamilton. In "I Know Him," King George comments wryly and cynically on Washington's successor, John Adams, also referred to in "The Adams Administration."

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: in his brief commentary on "One Last Time," Miranda focuses on his intention for the song to capture Washington's humanity. In commentary on "I Know Him," Miranda reveals that he was surprised, but happy, when the King showed up in his thoughts for one last reprise. Commentary on "The Adams Administration," meanwhile, contains brief references to the cuts made to the number (because, in its original form, it put too much emphasis on an unseen character); to the intensifying pace of the show as a whole (which needed to be maintained, another



reason for the cut); and how it contains a reference to another Broadway musical about the revolution, “1776.”

## Analysis

The key element to note about this section is how it develops the book’s thematic exploration of the relationship between art and life. Several times throughout the book, but most significantly here, comparisons are made between the energy and drive that propelled both Hamilton and the artist who both wrote about him and played him onstage, Lin-Manuel Miranda. The well-known phrase is “Art imitates life”: in this case, art and life are both imitating and influencing each other.

Other important elements to note include the continued references to the creative and development processes (with references here reinforcing the idea that the purpose of such development is to get as close as possible to the truth of the character, the truth of the story, and the truth of the show’s themes) and the references to George Washington and slavery. The implications of these references, as well as the similarly glanced references to Thomas Jefferson’s relationship with slavery, can be seen here and in the show as extending to the way in which any non-white, immigrant community, or individual is treated by the white establishment.

A note here about the presence and value of King George III in the story. Historically, George III was both afflicted with a mental / emotional disorder and king at the time of the American Revolution. In the show, he is one of the few white characters actually played by a white actor. There is the sense throughout the narrative and in the show itself that in the same way as a statement is being made by having white (American) characters like Hamilton, Washington, and Jefferson played by non-white actors, a similar (and related) statement is made by having a white British character actually played by a white actor. That statement seems to have something to do with the idea of whites, and white control over America, being simultaneously (and paradoxically) insightful and petulant, selfish and sensible – and ultimately, an echo of the often patronizing, sometimes fearful, generally resentful reaction of the white male patriarchy to any action that challenges its power and status.

## Vocabulary

savant, luminary, rambunctious, concoct, eminence, cohesive, exhilarate, polysyllabic, vacuous, complicit, pragmatism, nostalgia, grandiose, mezzanine, parody, impudence, haughty, torrential, profuse, efficient, innuendo, dirge, carnage, propulsive, belligerent, protean





# Section 11

## Summary

Chapter 26, Introduction: McCarter introduces a “sequence of four songs that illustrate the destructive power of language, and the perplexing fact that Alexander Hamilton never use words more devastatingly than when he used them himself” (225). McCarter then sums up the history: how political manipulation by three politicians led to the truth about the affair between Hamilton and Maria Reynolds being revealed, as well as the money paid to Reynolds’ husband; how in response, Hamilton published a pamphlet trying to explain himself; and how, as a result, his political and personal reputation were ruined.

Chapter 27, Introduction: McCarter describes the excited, volatile intensity of the audience during the first preview performance at the Richard Rodgers Theatre, and how the members of the company were shaken, frightened, and exhilarated by that intensity. He comments that at a post-preview company meeting, one of its youngest members (Anthony Ramos), who came from a very rough background. McCarter then comments on how the early deaths of two parts Ramos played (Laurens and Philip Hamilton) echo strongly with what might have been Ramos’ own experience. The introduction concludes with narration of a visit by U.S. President Barack Obama to the show, a visit that ended with the President making a special effort to congratulate Ramos.

Chapter 28, Introduction: On pages that are fully inked black with white type (as opposed to the rest of the text in the book, which is generally reversed), McCarter discusses the experience of writing and rehearsing “It’s Quiet Uptown,” the song that brings Hamilton and Eliza back together after Philip’s death. This leads to discussion of how Miranda found his way into writing the song by embracing the sense that there can be no words for the intensity of such a grief. The introduction concludes with a story of how Miranda, in the aftermath of the death of Oskar Eustis’ son, sent Eustis and his wife an early recording of “It’s Quiet Uptown,” and how they found comfort in it.

Summary of the Scenes: “We Know” dramatizes the confrontation with his enemies in which Hamilton became aware that they, in turn, were aware of the Reynolds affair. “Hurricane” both portrays Hamilton’s process of making the decision how to respond to the publication of the affair, and the childhood trauma that led him to make the decision. “The Reynolds Pamphlet” contains quotes from Hamilton’s actual response, while “Burn” dramatizes Eliza’s reaction to news of the affair (she burns all Hamilton’s letters to her). “Blow Us All Away” dramatizes the impulsive intention of Hamilton’s young son Philip to avenge his father’s ruined reputation by fighting a duel; “Stay Alive” dramatizes the anguish of his parents after their son is killed in that duel; and “It’s Quiet Uptown” dramatizes the intensity of their grief and their eventual reconciliation.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: in his commentary on the sequence dramatizing the fallout of the revelation about the Reynolds affair, Miranda describes how he





focused on exploring how and why the usually intelligent Hamilton made the entirely wrong decision about how to handle the situation. He also describes how and why he chose an edgy, contemporary beat to underscore “The Reynolds Pamphlet”: to create a link between sex scandals then and now. He also describes how, in the song, he quotes the actual pamphlet Hamilton wrote, and how Eliza sings about exactly what happened to the real Hamilton. Miranda also comments on how there is no recorded evidence of how the historical Eliza reacted to the pamphlet and the revelation of Hamilton’s infidelity. In his references to both “Blow Us ...” and the reprise of “Stay Alive,” Miranda refers to how difficult and intense the scenes were to both write and to perform, commenting that he based some aspects of Philip’s character on himself when he was a child. He offers no comments on “It’s Quiet Uptown.”

## Analysis

Perhaps more than any other sections of the musical, this section clearly and vividly portrays the relationship between the two sides of Hamilton’s life: the personal, and the political. It’s perhaps not surprising, therefore, that this is also one of the sections in the book where the thematically central exploration of the relationship between art and life becomes both more vivid and more poignant. The point could be made, in fact, that in the same way as Hamilton’s personal life has a profound effect on his professional life as a politician, Lin-Manuel Miranda’s personal life profoundly affects his professional life as a creative artist. Here again, the book draws parallels between the subject of the show (Alexander Hamilton) and the show’s creator (Lin-Manuel Miranda). Such parallels can also be seen, in turn, as a manifestation of another of the book’s themes: the relationship between past (Hamilton) and present (Miranda). Both themes also being glimpsed in the commentary on the parallels between Laurens/Philip and Anthony Ramos; in the reference to the experience of Oskar Eustis and his wife in the aftermath of their experience of their son’s death; and in Miranda’s commentary on his choice of music for “The Reynolds Pamphlet.”

One other particularly noteworthy element of this section: the very powerful editorial choice to publish the essay and excerpt dealing with Philip’s death on a black background, instead of the usual white background. This adds a sense of emotional weight / intensity to the material being discussed, an underscoring sensibility of both the darkness and confusion that result from extreme pain or grief.

## Vocabulary

ricochet, detonate, salvo, inestimable, retribution, patois, persistence, dissonance, conspicuous, sequester, enormity



## Section 12

### Summary

Chapter 29, Introduction: The introduction begins with a description of the political situation in which the historical characters portrayed in the show found themselves: a presidential election (in 1800) which resulted in a virtual tie between Burr and Jefferson. This leads McCarter to a description of debates between a pair of journalists, one conservative and one liberal, about which candidate (Burr or Jefferson) they would have voted for, and why. The debates end with no resolution, but with the journalists' shared recognition of the ultimate Americanism of the question that the columnists see the show asking: "Are my dreams big enough? Am I making the most out of my life" (257)?

Chapter 30, Introduction: Here, McCarter begins his exploration of the creative / interpretive relationship between Miranda and the enigmatic character of Aaron Burr with a description of Miranda's process of continually refining the character, and of how that process continued in collaboration with the actor playing him, Leslie Odom Jr. McCarter also describes the history that led to the final duel between Burr and Hamilton: how the latter insulted the former to the point where Burr felt he had to defend himself. McCarter then comments on how Miranda, came to understand Burr's jealousy and need for success.

Chapter 31, Introduction: The introduction to the show's climax, the duel between Burr and Hamilton, begins with references to how the historical record offers no clear answers of what happened on the day that Hamilton died. McCarter describes how Miranda arrived at the final version of the moment: by first writing a sequence in which time stopped while Hamilton contemplated what his choices and his situation meant; and how later, during revisions for the opening at the Richard Rodgers, revising so that the questions became sharper, more pointed, and more open ended. This, McCarter suggests, was the result of Miranda being pushed by Oskar Eustis to define the moment, Eustis likening the situation to Shakespeare, who doesn't always let the audience have all the answers.

Summary of the Scenes: "The Election of 1800" dramatizes events of the election that led to the tie between Jefferson and Burr, while "Your Obedient Servant" dramatizes events that led to the duel between Burr and Hamilton. "The World Was Wide Enough" portrays the states of mind of both Hamilton and Burr during the duel.

Commentary from Lin-Manuel Miranda: In his commentary on "The Election ...," Miranda suggests how similar the process of politics seems to be in contemporary elections. In his commentary on "Your Obedient Servant," Miranda comments that more historically accurate reproductions of the Burr / Hamilton letters lost the audience, so he constructed his own versions. In reference to "The World..." Miranda comments on how Burr's final comments in the aftermath of Hamilton's death (i.e. that the world had enough room for both him and Hamilton) were based on comments that Burr himself



made in his writings. Miranda also comments that he wasn't sure how to write Hamilton's final moments – that is, until a moment of silence in his home life made him realize that there had been, up to the final moment in the show, virtually no silence at all. That, he says, was the trigger for his realization of how to write Hamilton's soliloquy.

## Analysis

This section develops several of the book's thematic elements: the idea of collaboration (referenced in the commentary about how Miranda's shaping of Aaron Burr was affected by the actor playing him, and also in the commentary about the influence of Oskar Eustis); the idea of the past / present relationship (in the political analysis); and the relationship between art and life. This manifests in Miranda's commentary on how he shaped Hamilton's final moments. Other important elements include another reference to the similarities between Miranda's work and that of Shakespeare (i.e. another reference to how both writers poeticized the language of the streets) and the way that Miranda once again used history as a springboard for development of the story.

Arguably, though, the most significant element of this section comes at the end of the essay on Chapter 29 – specifically, when the journalists discussing the show point to the questions they see in the show – that is, both the characters (who ask those questions of themselves) and the show itself (which seems to be asking the questions of America as a country and as a concept). Here it's interesting to note a tension in the show that this book doesn't explicitly identify, but which is dramatized in the show. That conflict has to do with Eliza's urging Hamilton to accept that what he has is “enough,” and Hamilton's continued, restless, relentless pursuit of “more” – more freedom for the states of the union, more influence and respect for himself, more reassurance / love from other women. This tension is arguably one associated with life in general, not just life in America and not just in either America's past, or its future. This is arguably one of the most universal, broadly applicable ideas and/or themes in the show: the idea that it is a fundamental condition of humanity to struggle, as Hamilton and the other characters do, between the allure of “enough” and the similarly powerful allure, but the ultimate discontentment, of wanting to have more.

## Vocabulary

visceral, elusive, enigma, ferocity, volubility, animosity, peremptory, vitriolic, equivocate, intemperate, expertise



## Section 13

### Summary

Chapter 32, Introduction: McCarter describes how the show's final scene reminds audiences of the historical reality that for the most part, Hamilton's rivals tried to eliminate his role in America's history. Those efforts, McCarter further comments, were challenged by Eliza who, for 50 years until her death, strove to keep Hamilton's legacy alive, a striving that, McCarter comments, is finally being fully realized by the presentation of the show. McCarter then describes the opening night party, an excited frenzy of music, improvised rap, fireworks – and the realization that family members had come from all over America to see what their children had accomplished. McCarter comments that “it looked like the Fourth of July” (279).

Summary of the Scene: the show's finale explores Eliza's determination to preserve Hamilton's legacy while, at the same time, communicating one of the show's overall themes – the question of how history is defined by who tells the story

Comments from Lin-Manuel Miranda: In his discussion of the Finale, Miranda comments on the heartbreak of Eliza's situation, and refers to the echo of Washington's words from Act One in the Finale, an echo that asks the question about who tells the story of the past.

Epilogue – McCarter describes how, shortly after the end of a special performance early in the show's run (a performance scheduled as a fundraiser for the American Democratic Party), U.S. President Obama celebrated the spirit and ideals of the show, saying they embodied the ideal spirit of America. McCarter comments that the ideas of the show and those of the President often echo each other, raising the question of how / why, when Obama says them, they are viewed as so revolutionary. “Why,” he asks, “do so many different kinds of people leave a performance of ‘Hamilton’ feeling newly connected to their country” (284)? McCarter answers his own question by suggesting that the ideas and story of the show “don't reinvent the American character: they RENEW it” (284). McCarter also comments that during his speech, Obama suggested that as “Hamilton” continues to run on Broadway and eventually across America, that process of renewal will continue, as will the show's belief in the power of stories, and in particular, stories of struggling, ambitious, determined people (particularly young people) like Alexander Hamilton who, like Hamilton, will help themselves and America understand themselves and America a little bit more.

### Analysis

Both the final scene of the show and the commentary here on that scene reference two of the most significant themes of both works: the idea of how stories become history, and the need for such processes to happen; and the idea of perspective defining story –



in other words, how the story being told is defined by the person doing the telling. The show's finale dramatizes this by exploring the different approaches to telling Hamilton's story taken by Eliza (who loved Hamilton and believed in him) and his political enemies (who hated and despised him). Meanwhile, the ending of Chapter 32 (specifically: its reference to the show's opening night party feeling like The Fourth of July) suggests, without saying so explicitly, that in the same way as celebrations of July 4th are celebrations of a new country being formed, the celebrations of the opening of "Hamilton" were celebrating the formation of a new kind of theatre, a new perspective on history, and a new perspective on how to discuss history.

The final essay in the book returns to one of its earlier points: the parallels McCarter draws between the experience of the historical Hamilton, the show's creator (Lin-Manuel Miranda), and of the man who was President of the United States at the time of the show's premiere, Barack Obama. These parallels are deepened in this section: previously, they had existed in relation to the experience of all three as immigrants, but here the parallels are portrayed as existing on the level of ideas, ideals, and vision. There is also the sense that on that level, all three – Hamilton, Miranda, Obama – are looking at the possibilities not only for the individuals who come to America, live in America, and change America, but for America itself.

## Vocabulary

laudatory, prosperity, posthumous, affinity



# Important People

## Jeremy McCarter

Jeremy McCarter is the author of the essays that form the first part of each of the book's chapters. He is a theater professional who has worked in many areas of that particular business: as a writer, story editor, producer, and director. He is also a researcher, working and writing with an analytical, academic perspective; the theoretical and practical aspects of his perspective and experiences reinforce and/or balance each other, to the point that he is able to write from an outside point of view but with an insider's knowledge.

McCarter's essays here function on a number of levels. First, they place both the creation of *Hamilton* and the narrative itself within a variety of contexts. These include the actual historical events in which the real-life Alexander Hamilton and other characters in the show participated; the history of musical theatre in America (and, to a lesser extent, in other parts of the world); and the history of rap music. McCarter's researched and experienced knowledge of all three is significant and informed, with his commentary on all three adding significant meaning and value to the words, text, and story within the show. The second level of function of McCarter's essays has to do with the way each explores the book's overall themes. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this is in how McCarter repeatedly refers to the value and process of collaboration between the project's primary creator (Lin-Manuel Miranda) and the other artists with whom he worked. That said, McCarter also refers to the book's other themes, developing them in parallel with their developments within the show. This, in turn, is the third primary function of McCarter's essays: to draw clear, vivid, accessible connections between what went into the show and what the show does and/or says, how it does and/or says it, and how audiences respond.

All in all, and in metaphorical terms, an actual performance of *Hamilton* can be seen as the tip of an iceberg: McCarter's essays illuminate the vast amount of different sorts of work that lie beneath the surface of that performance.

## Lin-Manuel Miranda

Rap composer and theatre artist Lin-Manuel Miranda is the primary creator of *Hamilton*. He originated the idea of telling the story of founding father Alexander Hamilton in musical form; he developed the idea from a series of songs to a full-fledged narrative in the form of a Broadway musical; he wrote all the music and the lyrics; and has, since the piece's opening, initiated many of the ways in which its influence has expanded beyond the theatre-going audience in New York and into American culture (i.e. through developing relationships with the educational system). Prior to working on *Hamilton*, Miranda's previous experiences with Broadway included the creation and development of another award-winning musical, *In the Heights*; co-writing the music and lyrics for the



musical version of the film *Bring It On*; and translating original English lyrics for the classic *West Side Story* into Spanish for a 2009 production. He also, as he indicates in the book (both in McCarter's essays and in his own footnotes to the show), has an extensive knowledge of other musicals, both their individual content and the traditions that went into their individual creation, as well as of the traditions of music theatre in general.

Both McCarter's essays and Miranda's own commentary offer glimpses into Miranda's creative process: how he draws upon personal experience to shape what he writes; how he draws upon previous influences, in both rap music and the Broadway musical, to shape his own work; and, perhaps most significantly, how he openly and respectfully collaborates with other artists in order to bring his vision to life. He is portrayed as a generous, responsible, and respectful collaborator, driven to realize his vision but without a sense of being controlling or selfish. He comes across as passionate, but not obsessive; clever and intelligent, but not pretentious; and sensitive, but confident. Ultimately, he seems very aware of the big pictures within which he and his work are operating: the history of America, the history of immigrants to America, the history of the Broadway musical, and the future trajectories of all three.

## Ron Chernow

Historian Ron Chernow wrote the official biography of Alexander Hamilton that inspired Miranda to consider writing the show, and which Miranda used as a primary source of material. Chernow is portrayed, throughout the book, as being generally supportive of the project as a whole and of Miranda's ideas, although there are indications that he needed to be persuaded of the value of some of those ideas (i.e. the use of rap music as a narrative vocabulary, the use of non-Caucasian actors to play Caucasian characters).

## Jeffrey Seller

Jeffrey Seller is Hamilton's primary producer, the man who initially invested in the show's development and who took the lead in bringing in other financial investors. He was also one of the earliest, and most significant investors in Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights*, and in several other Broadway shows, including the groundbreaking *Rent* and *Avenue Q*.

## Oskar Eustis

Oskar Eustis is the Artistic Director at the Public Theatre in New York where *Hamilton* was initially developed and produced. Eustis is also a widely respected dramaturg - that is, a theatre artist who assists in / supports the development of story and/or narrative in a particular piece. Eustis is credited, in the book, with influencing the development of the show in several key areas. He is also quoted as drawing clear, intriguing, and





significant comparisons between Miranda's work (on the show and in general) and the work of William Shakespeare.

## **Thomas Kail**

Thomas Kail is Hamilton's director, and served in a similar capacity on Lin-Manuel Miranda's previous Broadway production, *In the Heights*. He is responsible for the ultimate, overall shape of the musical's presentation. He is portrayed, throughout the book, as one of Miranda's most respected and trusted collaborators.

## **Alex Lacamoire**

Alex Lacamoire wrote and constructed the orchestrations for *Hamilton*: that is, he took Miranda's musical ideas and expanded upon them, both adding layers of instrumentation to them and actually transcribing them (i.e. writing them down) because Miranda's skills in that area are limited. The book portrays Lacamoire as making significant contributions to the meaning of the show as a whole: his choice of instrumentation, for example, added layers of both emotion and story to several moments and scenes.

## **Andy Blankenbuehler**

Andy Blankenbuehler was the choreographer of *Hamilton* and, like director Thomas Kail, worked with Lin-Manuel Miranda on *In the Heights*. He was responsible not only for designing the dances, but also assisting director Thomas Kail with designing an overall movement vocabulary. The description of Blankenbuehler's struggles with his son's health, which were taking place even while the show was being put together, are among the most poignant examples in the book of how art and life intertwine in the creative process in general, and in the creation of this show in particular.

## **The Designers**

Four designers are described as making significant contributions to the overall narrative and/or production success of *Hamilton*: set designer David Korins; lighting designer Howell Binkley; sound designer Nevin Steinberg; and costume designer Paul Tazewell. The contributions of Korins and Tazewell are discussed in terms of how they explored aspects of the past and integrated the influences of the present; the work of Steinberg is discussed in terms of how he shaped the work of both composer Miranda and orchestrator Lacamoire; and Binkley's work is discussed in terms of how it brought individual characters or moments to the clearer attention of the audience.





## The Male Actors

Several of the book's essays, along with a number of Miranda's footnotes, reference the ways in which the show's male and female actors influenced the development of the characters they played. In terms of the male actors, the contributions of Leslie Odom Jr. (Aaron Burr); Daveed Diggs (Lafayette/Jefferson); and Chris Jackson (Washington). Meanwhile, there are also pointed, poignant references to the experiences of Anthony Ramos, the youngest actor in the show who played two characters who died very young (Laurens, Philip Hamilton) and whose experience as a young Latino in New York City might have ended with a similar fate as those characters.

## The Female Actors

The contributions of the actors playing the show's most significant female roles are also discussed in some depth: Philippa Soo (playing Eliza), Renee Elise Goldsberry (playing Angelica), and Jasmine Cephas Jones (playing Maria Reynolds). As opposed to the narrative influences of the male actors (i.e. on the creation and development of their characters), the book suggests that the influences of the female actors had more to do with the show's music: its stylistic emphasis on more rhythm and blues-style for the woman, and the harmonies the women sang.

## Barack Obama

Obama was the President of the United States at the time that Hamilton was developed and premiered. Obama's influence shows up in three different ways in the book. First, the first public performance of some of the show's songs came at the White House. Second, the story of Hamilton himself, according to essayist Jeremy McCarter, is similar to that of Obama (i.e. both men having disadvantaged childhoods as the result of being the sons of immigrants, and both men striving to improve their lives). Third, Obama's presence at the show on a couple of different occasions served to emphasize the ways in which it both reflects America's past and illuminates a possible, more inclusive path into the country's future.



# Objects/Places

## History

Throughout the book, the creation of the show is portrayed as having been profoundly, definitively influenced by at least three different levels of history: the history of America, the history of musical theater, and the personal histories of the creative artists involved in bringing the show to life. The relationship between the past (i.e. history) and the present is, in fact, one of the book's central themes, with the book also suggesting that while history (on all three levels) is an important source, it is also not an immutable one: that is, it can be changed, shaped, and reworked in order to strengthen story, character, and theme.

## The Broadway Musical

The Broadway musical is a particular form of theatrical performance that, arguably, is America's primary contribution to theatrical presentation. It has its roots in other forms (i.e. European operetta), but its style; its integration of song, dance, and text; and the types of stories that tend to be most successful are all primarily influenced by American perspectives, values, history, and arguably (and most interestingly in the context of Hamilton) its immigrant populations. The text, score, and production of Hamilton are all heavily influenced by the history of the Broadway musical at the same time as they are all creating / presenting innovations in that particular form of theatrical art.

## Rap Music

In the same way as the history of the Broadway musical contributed to the shape and content of Hamilton, the history of rap music also played a significant role in how creator Lin-Manuel Miranda shaped both the music and the lyrics for the show. Several of his footnotes to the text, and comments in McCarter's essays, offer examples of just how the work and performances of other rap / hip-hop artists were quoted or otherwise integrated into the piece.

## New York City

New York is the setting for both the creation of Hamilton and the show itself. There are several references throughout the book to how the city's history, its energy, its artistic perspectives and values, and its ethnic communities (both past and present) influenced both the historical events upon which the show is based and the development of the show's content and style.

## **The Public Theatre**

This theater company in New York City is one of the most prominent, most respected developers of new theater scripts in America. It is the company that supported and produced the initial workshops and production of Hamilton, with its artistic director, Oskar Eustis, providing significant amounts of guidance to its creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda.

## **A Chorus Line**

A Chorus Line is the name of a Broadway musical that was a significant artistic and popular success in the 1970's, in much the same way as Hamilton was. There are other similarities between the two shows, similarities referenced in the book: both shows made significant innovations in musical theater form, content, and style; both shows premiered, and were supported, at The Public Theater; and both shows went through significant development and improvement processes after their runs at that theater before moving onto Broadway stages.

## **The Writings of William Shakespeare**

Several times in the narrative, the work of Lin-Manuel Miranda is compared to that of William Shakespeare. The primary grounds of comparison lie in how both artists use(d) language: utilizing rhythm and rhyme (i.e. elements of poetry) to move the story forward and/or define action; and ennobling the experiences and characters of the streets and/or of history through the use of such heightened and intensified language.

## **The Richard Rodgers Theatre**

This Broadway theater in New York City is the theater to which Hamilton moved after it finished its run at The Public Theatre.

## **Hamilton - The Script / Text**

The script and/or text of Hamilton is written almost entirely in the form of rap. Powerful rhythms, multiple layers of rhyme, edgy language and imagery - all are innovative ways in which creator Lin-Manuel Miranda has adapted the traditions of both the Broadway musical and street music into a unique, powerful, and contemporary way of communicating and exploring history.

## **Hamilton - The Score / Music**

The score for Hamilton is primarily influenced by rap music in much the same way as the text and lyrics are. There does, however, seem to be more variations in musical



technique and styles: as both Jeremy McCarter (in his essays) and Lin-Manuel Miranda (in his commentary) describe it, there are also influences of rhythm and blues, the Broadway musical, and popular music. These, both writers also suggest, are influenced and/or defined by character and the needs of the story as they are by the goals of composer / lyricist Miranda.



# Themes

## The Relationship between History and Narrative

Throughout its essays, throughout the included text of *Hamilton*, and throughout Miranda's commentary on both, the book suggests that there is a difference between history as narrative (i.e. a story of actual events) and a narrative of history (i.e. a story that expands upon and explores history from other points of view). The difference, the book further contends, is defined on one level by perspective and, on another level, by the purpose and context of each: while history is oriented towards communication of fact, narrative of history is oriented towards giving meaning. As it explores these ideas, the book draws clear distinctions between what history says about Hamilton's life and influence and what Lin-Manuel's narrative, expanding that history, can lead us to understand about both.

It could be argued that on some level, narrative (or story) uses history and/or reality as a springboard for imagination – or re-imagination. In its exploration of the creative process that developed *Hamilton*, the book does make that argument, showing how Miranda and his collaborators utilized the facts of history as source material, but did not feel themselves enslaved by it: imagination supplemented fact, illuminated fact, and in some cases explained fact, albeit from a particular perspective. Another creative artist working on a dramatization of Hamilton's life might come up with other ways of building story and/or defining meaning from history. Ultimately, though, the book's point seems to be that while history cannot be communicated without being given shape by some manifestation of narrative (i.e. structure, focus), narrative can expand the boundaries of history so that possibilities for meaning can expand; become more inclusive; and, in the present, give the past a value that extends beyond "this happened, then that happened, and this was the result."

## Collaboration

*Hamilton* would not exist, in its current popular, successful, artistically validated form if it were not for the collaborative efforts of all the artists involved. Both McCarter's essays and Miranda's commentary throughout the book suggest that while Miranda's vision, commitment, skills, and talent were ultimately the driving and defining force of both the show and its eventual production, all were simultaneously enhanced and challenged by the artists with whom he collaborated. It was, both sets of commentary suggest, a give-and-take relationship, Miranda simultaneously inspiring, and being inspired by, the work of those who brought their A-games to the process as Miranda was bringing his.

While the book contains references to a number of important collaborators (director Tommy Kall, choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler, the various actors and designers) that made defining contributions to the show, it argues (through implication more than direct suggestion) that the work of three individuals as being somewhat more significant.



The first of these individuals is Ron Chernow, the author of what is often called the definitive historical biography of Alexander Hamilton. It was his recognition of the value and perspective of Miranda's work that, the book suggests, gave Miranda a kind of permission to look at, and portray, Hamilton's life from Miranda's unique contemporary perspective. The second primary collaborator, it seems, was orchestrator Alex Lacamoire: Miranda was unable to transcribe his musical ideas into actual notation – that is, into a form that other musicians could read and interpret. Lacamoire not only did the transcriptions: his choice of instrumentation and orchestration built layers of meaning on the foundations of Miranda's ideas. The third individual who made significant, primary contributions to the development of the piece was dramaturg Oskar Eustis. In theatrical terms, a dramaturg is an individual who looks at a piece of theatre and works with the playwright or creator to ensure that the latter's vision is realized in the most narratively effective way. The book portrays Eustis as pushing Miranda towards more vivid, more challenging, more evocative choices that, ultimately, proved truer to both Hamilton's life and Miranda's vision of Hamilton's story than Miranda alone might have achieved.

## The Relationship between Past and Present

While it's virtually unarguable that America would not exist in its current form without the historical events that brought it into being, there is a difference, the show argues, between looking at the past merely as a series of events and looking at with an awareness of circumstances, situations, and motivations. The essays here argue that while the show uses both the historically documented events of the American Revolution (and, on another level, the historically documented events of Alexander Hamilton's life) as the narrative foundations for its story, the true meaning of those events – as opposed to just their historical consequences – lies in what contributed and/or shaped them. This under-level of context, both essays and show argue, defines the true meaning of history and, therefore, the true meaning of the present: both the past and the present, the essays and the show contend, are defined by the repercussions of BOTH event and context.

While there are a number of instances throughout both the essays and the show where development of this theme plays a defining role in what is said and/or discussed, there is no more vivid example of how exploration of past circumstances defines present perspectives than in how, on both levels (i.e. essay and show), the work explores what happened in the duel between Burr and Hamilton that resulted in Hamilton's death. In commentary, both the essays and Miranda's notes communicate both the known facts and the additional fact that actual, verifiable details of what happened (i.e. the history) are sketchy and unclear. At the same time, both the essays and the show explore, from the perspective of the present (with, among other things, its increased knowledge and/or awareness of psychology) the circumstances of those facts, using them as a springboard for imagination and, potentially understanding and insight. Thus the essays and the show both demonstrate that while the events of the past define the present, exploration of the past in the context of the present can give a deeper understanding of



BOTH past and present, making the relationship between the two complex, symbiotic, and capable of virtually unlimited possibilities of inter-related meaning.

## The Relationship between Art and Life

Without the capacity to draw on personal experience as a primary resource, the story, characters, and music of Hamilton would not have the effect on audiences that they seem to. On one level, this might seem to be a variation on the above referenced relationship between past and present: there is no way that the work of art that is Hamilton would exist without the life of its subject, American revolutionary Alexander Hamilton. But the book's development of this theme goes much deeper than that, as it repeatedly offers examples of how the various life experiences affected the work of the various theatre artists involved in its development and presentation. The primary example of this is the work of composer-lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda. There are references throughout the essays and his footnotes to ways in which he both discovered and drew on parallels between himself and Hamilton in order to create a fully fleshed out characterization. There are references to how Miranda tapped into his own experience of having a restless, unceasing drive to write in order to effectively portray Hamilton's similar drive; to how he tapped into his experiences of being a new parent to effectively portray similar experiences in both Hamilton and Burr; and to how he tapped into his own beliefs about America, about perspective on history, and about the immigrant experience to flesh out portrayals not only of Hamilton or Burr, but other characters as well.

The book's exploration of the art/life relationship is not confined to commentary by Lin-Manuel Miranda. There are also references to how the various creative artists (director, designers, choreographer) tapped into and/or connected with their own personal experiences in their work; how the shaping of characters other than Hamilton was affected by the talents, skills, and experiences of the actors portraying them; and, perhaps most significantly, how the events and themes of the show found echoes in, or were echoed by, contemporary experiences. There is the sense throughout the book that, although the show explores a specific set of historical circumstances, the human circumstances within which those specifics unfolded were, in fact, universal or archetypal. Art, in this case, may imitate life, but as the book contends, would not exist without it.

## Perspective Defining Story

It is significant, and significantly ironic, that the essays written by Jeremy McCarter (a man of privilege: i.e. a white, male American of middle/upper middle class background) repeatedly argue that one of the primary values of the show, and of the work of its collaborative artists, is its dramatization of how there is more than one way to view history – that is, from the perspective of those who don't have the privilege of writing it. This thematically central idea is most overtly dramatized in the show's final scene. As McCarter's essay points out, Eliza's words suggest, in the aftermath of the actions of



Hamilton's peers, that alternative perspectives on history must be fought for so that they don't become swamped, or overwhelmed, by the efforts of those with agendas that have more to do with obtaining power than offering perspective.

McCarter's essays and Eliza's action are not the only ways in which the book develops this theme. Miranda's comments, both in McCarter's essays and in his liner / foot-notes, suggest that developing this idea – that perspective defines both story and history – was foremost in his mind not only as he developed the story, but also as he developed the means by which the story is told. Miranda's writings suggest that he chose and shaped the story elements he did AND selected the means by which the story was being told (i.e. rap / hip-hop) in order to frame and manifest this theme in the most dramatically effective and narratively engaging way possible. Essays, commentary, and show content are, in fact, united in this intention. The expressions of this idea are more overt in McCarter's essays and Miranda's comments, while being mostly sub-textual (i.e. implied) in the action and language of the show. Ultimately, though, as the book draws to its conclusion, the epilogue essay not only places this theme firmly at the anchor point of both book and show: it also places the responsibility for building future perspectives on history on the same foundation.

The old saying goes something like this: history is written by the winners. In both this book and the show itself, Hamilton, its creators, and the series of essays about its creation published here suggest that history, for future generations to perceive it fully and accurately, is most accessible when it is written not just by winners, or for that matter just by losers. The argument here seems to be that the full meaning of history (if such a thing is in fact possible) comes to those who seek it through a variety of perspectives.



# Styles

## Structure

The book's overall structure is one of its most intriguing, engaging elements. Following an introduction to both the show "Hamilton" and the book itself, a structural pattern is established: each chapter contains an essay, by theatre critic / artist Jeremy McCarter, on some aspect of the development, rehearsal, and production of "Hamilton," which is followed by an excerpt from the text of the show. Chapter by chapter, the scenes from the show are presented in the order in which they appear (that is, in the order in which the story unfolds): chapter by chapter, each essay examines elements related to that chapter's scene. For example: in the middle of the show's second act, a significant secondary character dies. The essay in the chapter that contains the scene dramatizing that death comments on ways in which the writing of that scene and the onstage portrayal of that moment affected its creators, affects the actor playing the dying character, and affects the audience. Meanwhile, it's important to note that the essays simultaneously follow a rough chronological order, examining the development of the project from Miranda's earliest contemplations, through the casting and rehearsal processes, through its workshop production at the Public Theatre, through its opening on Broadway and beyond. In short: the scenes tell the story of the show; the essays tell the story of how the show came into being.

It's also important to note several other elements in the book, which includes a large number of photographs (both of the production and of moments backstage / in the development process), and reproductions of various original documents (including some of Hamilton's actual writings and pages from Lin-Manuel Miranda's notebooks). Perhaps most intriguingly, the scenes also contain sidebar commentary from Miranda on the processes and inspiration that went into the creation of each individual scene or the show as a whole. These notes are supplementary to McCarter's analysis and/or commentary in the essays, offering more detailed insight into Miranda's particular, multi-faceted creative process.

## Perspective

There are three overall perspectives to the book's two primary elements (i.e. the essays and the script), each having to do with the authors of each element (i.e. Jeremy McCarter in the case of the former; Lin-Manuel Miranda in the case of the latter). In the case of McCarter and the essays (arguably the book's primary perspective), the sense is of analysis, commentary, and investigation. McCarter, while having been around during the creative process of the show, is writing from the perspective of an observer, an interviewer, or a teacher: he is, for the most part, writing objectively, from outside the process. There are clear overtones of an emotional engagement with the story and its ideas, a deep interest in the work and what the work has to say: but unlike Lin-Manuel Miranda, McCarter is not actually inside the creative process. He is not one of its



creators, subjectively deep within the work of researching, developing, and bringing the story of Alexander Hamilton to the stage. McCarter is not doing it: he is describing on how it was done.

In contrast, the commentary of Lin-Manuel Miranda comes from both a different perspective and is present in a different amount. He is referred to and quoted several times within the context of McCarter's essays, while his references to specific elements within the text of the show are contained within sidebar-style footnotes on each scene. In terms of perspective, and as suggested above, Miranda's is that of someone from within the creative process – primarily the writing process, but because he is also playing the lead role of Alexander Hamilton and was directly and immediately engaged with the work of other artists (i.e. the director, orchestrator, designers, et al), he also comments on those processes. While there are elements of analysis in his comments, particularly in relation to his commentary on where ideas came from and how they developed, there is a much more subjective feel to his writing, a sense of being at the heart of both the process and the central character whose story is being told.

## Tone

On one level, the book's tone is closely related to its perspectives. The more analytical perspective of McCarter's essays has a somewhat more intellectual, objective tone: the more interpretive, explanatory of Miranda's commentary has a somewhat more emotional, subjective tone. Interestingly, there is a greater sense of excitement and enthusiasm about McCarter's writing: it's an unlikely combination, analysis and enthusiasm, but the sense here is that the analysis, on one level, serves to explain why the enthusiasm exists, while the enthusiasm serves to fuel the analysis. There is, in fact, the very strong sense that McCarter analyzes the piece, its ideas and its creation, in such depth because he is so enthusiastic about what it says, how it says it, and why what it says is important.

The same sort of enthusiasm can be sensed in the tone of Miranda's commentaries, although there is also the sense that for him, that enthusiasm is grounded more in passion and in drive – again, arguably a much more subjective, personal perspective than McCarter's somewhat more academic appreciation. Throughout Miranda's writing, there is a feeling that for him, this story HAD to be told, and he HAD to be the one to tell it, and the way in which he wanted it to be told HAD to be the way it was told. This is not to say that he was dictatorial at all: there is no sense, anywhere in the book, that his approach was anything but collaborative. The point is made, rather – and this is something McCarter's more analytical writing bears out – to suggest that Miranda had a very clear, powerful conception of what he wanted to say and how he wanted to say it, fueled by his reasons WHY he wanted to say it. Perhaps that's the key difference between the two tonal qualities in the piece (which, incidentally, are more complementary than conflicting): Miranda was/is driven and visionary, while McCarter is more considered and respectful, affected by Miranda's vision but not necessarily caught up in it, as were the other creative and interpretive artists engaged in the show.



## Quotes

The lyrical density and storytelling ingenuity I heard on my headphones seemed closer to the verbal energy of the great plays of the past than almost anything I saw onstage. This enthusiasm wasn't widely shared. 'Don't hang back among the brutes,' one of my senior colleagues advised me ...

-- Jeremy McCarter (Introduction )

**Importance:** In this quote, essayist / commentator Jeremy McCarter describes the intensity of his initial attraction to Lin-Manuel Miranda's style of writing and storytelling. The comment foreshadows later (and favorable) comparisons between the intent and style of Miranda's work and those of William Shakespeare.

The account of what happened in the intervening six years is based on what I saw in script meetings, set meetings, presentations, workshops, dressing-room hangouts and at some excellent parties. It also draws on interviews with more than 40 people close to the show and on timely glimpses into their notebooks, inboxes, and Twitter feeds – Lin's in particular.

-- Jeremy McCarter (Introduction)

**Importance:** This comment summarizes the process of research that McCarter undertook to develop his perspectives on the creation of "Hamilton."

...something else was in the air, something that would become clearer in the years to come. Sometimes the right person tells the right story at the right moment, and through a combination of luck and design, a creative expression gains new force. Spark, tinder, breeze.

-- Jeremy McCarter (chapter 1)

**Importance:** In this quote, McCarter summarizes (in somewhat more poetic language than he usually uses in his essays) what he felt was the personal inspiration for Miranda's intensity of focus on Hamilton and his story.

For all of its variety of style and subject, rap is, at bottom, the music of ambition, the soundtrack of defiance, whether the force that must be defied is poverty, cops, racism, rival rappers, or all of the above.

-- Jeremy McCarter (chapter 2)

**Importance:** In this analysis of rap and its essential perspectives, McCarter implies an echoing sort of relationship between the communicative intentions of rap and the socio-political intentions of the revolutionaries portrayed in "Hamilton."

'That's this whole show,' says Lin. 'Ron tells you a story and he's the star of the story. I tell you a story and I'm the star of the story. History is entirely created by the person who tells the story.'

-- Jeremy McCarter (chapter 3)



**Importance:** In this quote from the creator of "Hamilton," Miranda evokes one of the show's central themes: that perspective defines both the style and the content of story, whether historical (as in the case of Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton) or fictionalized (as in the case of Miranda's musical about Hamilton, based on Chernow's book).

This is a story about America then, told by America now."  
-- Lin-Manuel Miranda (chapter 3)

**Importance:** This quote sums up the reasoning behind many of the interpretive choices made by Miranda and his team: specifically, the choice to use rap / hip-hop as the show's primary narrative vocabulary, and the choice to cast non-Caucasian actors as Caucasian characters.

Lin wrote a song about Hamilton's New York that reveals it to be largely the same as our own New York.  
-- Jeremy McCarter (chapter 4)

**Importance:** In this concise summation of one of the book's key themes (i.e. the relationship between past and present), McCarter also defines the importance of the show's sense of place - specifically, the city of New York, with its history of being a magnet / home for immigrants, for differing cultures, and for those with ambition to improve their lives and those of the country in which they live.

"Lin uses the conventions of a pop song to help a 21st Century audience understand 18th Century social distinctions."  
-- Jeremy McCarter (chapter 8)

**Importance:** This quote deepens the idea referred to in Quote 6 by offering an example (just one of several in the show) of how the language of today used in the show enables contemporary audiences to understand the morals, values, and qualities of the past.

Lin does exactly what Shakespeare does ... he takes the language of the people, and heightens it by making it verse. It both ennobles the language and the people saying the language. That's precisely what Shakespeare did in all of his work, particularly in his history plays. He tells the foundational myths of his country. By doing that, he makes the country the possession of everybody."  
-- Oskar Eustis (chapter 12)

**Importance:** This is the first of two important quotes in the book likening the work and perspective of Lin-Manuel Miranda to those of Shakespeare.

The time I spent on my own was when I learned to keep my own company and pursue my own creative endeavors, and I wouldn't trade it for anything, despite any loneliness I might have felt at the time. Mostly, the lyric moves me because [Burr and Hamilton] are both new fathers, without role models of their own, vowing to do their best.



-- Lin-Manuel Miranda (chapter 15)

**Importance:** As it evokes another of the book's key themes (i.e. the relationship between art and life), this quote - in which Miranda describes a key aspect of his childhood - also echoes aspects of the show's story ... specifically, how the solitude of a child influences the perspectives and choices of his / her life.

...I see myself, almost painfully, in every character onstage. As Alexander, I relate as a father with an enormous workload. As Eliza, I relate because of the pains I take to slow down and carve out time for my family. But most of all, I'm Philip: I've written something and I'm proud of it and I want to show it to the people I love."

-- Lin-Manuel Miranda (chapter 19)

**Importance:** Here again, using specific examples drawn from his portrayal of Hamilton's family, Miranda evokes the book's general theme of the relationship between art and life, making the connections between his fictionalized family and his own.

Is this the most revolutionary thing to happen to Broadway, or the most revolutionary thing to happen to hip-hop?"

-- Questlove (chapter 22)

**Importance:** This quote, from renowned and respected rapper and producer Questlove, is a response to his initial encounter with Miranda's score for the show. Overall, the book suggests that both are true: that "Hamilton" is a revolution in both Broadway storytelling and in the power, value, and resonance of rap music.

Hamilton", like many of the plays of Shakespeare, focuses on characters that give "an audience the chance to watch a bunch of conspicuously intelligent and well-spoken characters fill the stage with words words words, only to discover, again and again, the limits to what they can comprehend."

-- Oskar Eustis (chapter 28)

**Importance:** This is the second quote from dramaturg Oskar Eustis that sums up the creative and artistic similarities between the writing of Lin-Manuel Miranda and William Shakespeare.

High octane strivers don't operate in a vacuum: there are all those OTHER high octane strivers around. Until the country has enough brass rings for everybody to grab (and maybe even then), being Alexander Hamilton, the all-American over-achiever, also means being Aaron Burr: restless, watchful, unsatisfied."

-- Jeremy McCarter (chapter 30)

**Importance:** The first part of this quote can be paraphrased into something like this: people who are high-energy, emotionally and intellectually driven, and powerfully ambitious tend to become connected with people who share similar perspectives and/or intentions. While McCarter draws a clear connection between the historical Hamilton and Burr, the book also suggests, throughout its many essays and commentaries, that a

connection such as the one described exists, across time, between Alexander Hamilton and Lin-Manuel Miranda.



## Topics for Discussion

### Section 1 - The choice of musical vocabulary for the show.

How do you feel about the use of rap music to tell a historical story – specifically, a story about the founding of America?

### Section 2 - Collaboration and Friendship

What is the connection between the show's inclusion of Hamilton's friendships to the book's descriptions of how Lin-Manuel Miranda collaborated with other artists in the realization of his work, ideas, or imagination?

### Section 3 - Non-Caucasian Actors Playing Caucasian Characters

One of the most noteworthy elements about "Hamilton" is the way it casts non-Caucasian performers (i.e. African-American, Latino) as Caucasian characters (i.e. Alexander Hamilton, George Washington). What is your response to this idea?

### Section 4 - Martyr vs. Leader

In this section, Miranda refers to a key moment in the musical where Hamilton's perspective changes from that of a martyr to that of a leader. What do you see as the values of each: how are they different? What does such a shift suggest about the kind of person Hamilton is becoming?

### Section 5 - Angelica

Miranda comments that one of the most important aspects of the story, for him, was the way in which the highly intelligent Angelica lived in a time when intelligence in women was neither positively regarded nor allowed to flourish. Given the show's narrative and thematic interest in the relationship between past and present, discuss whether / how much the situation for women like Angelica has changed. Are things different now? If yes, how different? If no, why not?



## Section 6 – Accepting Guidance

Oskar Eustis served as a dramaturg (i.e. writing support) for Lin-Manuel Miranda throughout the creation of the musical. Narration in this section indicates the relationship wasn't always an easy one, but did both the author and the script a lot of good. What experiences do you have with struggling to accept guidance from others? How did the presence of that guidance eventually work out?

## Section 7 – The Iceberg of Creativity

There is considerable examination, in this book, of the amount and variety of work that goes into the creation of a Broadway show like “Hamilton”. To one degree or another, those sorts of work go into every creative endeavor. What are your experiences of that kind of process – a huge amount of work going into a relatively short, or small, presentation? What do you think is the value of that work in preparing that presentation?

## Section 8 – Rewriting the Past

Some have argued that in reshaping actual historical events, casting non-Caucasian actors, and using a language style that's not historically accurate, Lin-Manuel Miranda is re-writing history for his own agenda, and that that's a negative thing. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

## Section 9 – Different Points of View

The so-called “Rashomon” technique tells the same story from different points of view, generally leaving it to an audience to decide what the truth is. What experiences have you had of encountering an event, on either a large scale or a personal scale, of hearing the same event described in different ways? How is it possible to discern the truth in circumstances like that?

## Section 10 – Race Relations

There is a clear, if implied, connection in this section of the book to the show's references to slavery, the real-world experience of slavery in America, and the referenced attack on a black church by a white supremacist. Are these connections valid? Discuss other ways in which these connections manifest in relationships between whites and non-whites, and also possible ways of addressing such racially defined tensions.





## **Section 11 – Choice vs. Impulse**

Several of the ideas explored in this section – ideas related to both the show and to McCarder’s essays – relate to the question of considered choice vs. impulse. For example, both Hamilton’s response to the release of the Maria Reynolds information and Philip’s decision to engage in a duel are discussed here in terms of their being impulsive actions, reacted to emotionally and without thought. Discuss the relative values or dangers of calculation vs. impulse. Which generally leads to better, more effective, choices? Why? Why is the more dangerous way of decision making – not just in terms of the show, but in general? Why?

## **Section 12 – Questioning of the Self**

In its discussion of Chapter 29, McCarder’s essay lists the thoughts of a pair of journalists about what they see as the show’s most universal questions: “Are my dreams big enough? Am I making the most out of my life?” Do you agree that those questions are quintessentially American? What are the reasons they might be considered to be such? What would be your personal answers to those questions? What, do you think, would be the country’s answers to those questions?

## **Section 13 – The Show’s Impact**

Based on what you’ve read, or come to understand, about the show, what do you think is the answer to McCarder’s question: “Why,” he asks, “do so many different kinds of people leave a performance of ‘Hamilton’ feeling newly connected to their country?”