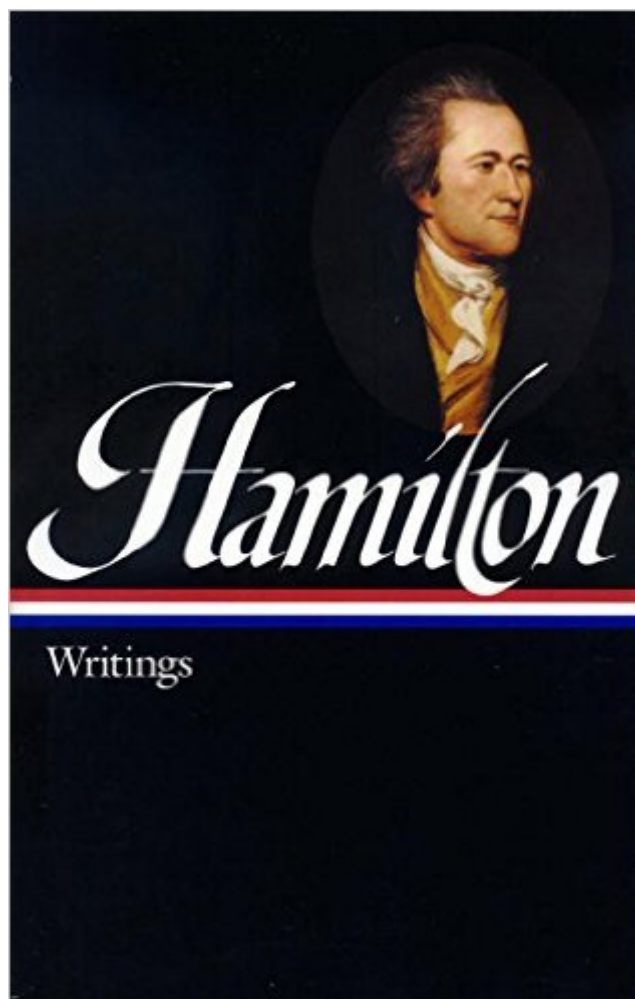


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Alexander Hamilton: Writings (Library Of America)



Synopsis

Alexander Hamilton, the subject of Lin-Manuel Miranda's smash hit Broadway musical, comes to life in his own words in this critically acclaimed collection, which also includes conflicting eyewitness accounts of the duel with Aaron Burr that led to his death. One of the most vivid, influential, and controversial figures of the founding of America, Hamilton was an unusually prolific and vigorous writer. As a military aide to George Washington, critic of the Articles of Confederation, proponent of ratification of the Constitution, first Secretary of the Treasury, and leader of the Federalist Party, Hamilton devoted himself to the creation of a militarily and economically powerful American nation guided by a strong, energetic republican government. His public and private writings demonstrate the perceptive intelligence, confident advocacy, driving ambition, and profound concern for honor and reputation that contributed both to his astonishing rise to fame and to his tragic early death. Arranged chronologically, this volume contains more than 170 letters, speeches, pamphlets, essays, reports, and memoranda written between 1769 and 1804. Included are all fifty-one of Hamilton's contributions to *The Federalist*, as well as subsequent writings calling for a broad construction of federal power; his famous speech to the Constitutional Convention, which gave rise to accusations that he favored monarchy; and early writings supporting the Revolutionary cause and a stronger central government. His detailed reports as Secretary of the Treasury on the public credit, a national bank, and the encouragement of manufactures present a forward-looking vision of a country transformed by the power of financial markets, centralized banking, and industrial development. Hamilton's sometimes flawed political judgment is revealed in the *Reynolds Pamphlet*, in which he confessed to adultery in order to defend himself against accusations of corrupt conduct, as well as in his self-destructive pamphlet attack on John Adams during the 1800 presidential campaign. An extensive selection of private letters illuminates Hamilton's complex relationship with George Washington, his deep affection for his wife and children, his mounting fears during the 1790s regarding the Jeffersonian opposition and the French Revolution, and his profound distrust of Aaron Burr.

Book Information

Series: Library of America (Book 129)

Hardcover: 1108 pages

Publisher: Library of America; First Edition edition (October 15, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1931082049

ISBN-13: 978-1931082044

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.3 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #32,928 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #18 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Letters #49 in Â Books > History > Americas > United States > Colonial Period #50 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Anthologies

Customer Reviews

With this volume, Alexander Hamilton assumes his rightful place in the ranks of the Library of America -- not only as a key historical figure in the founding of the Republic, but as a master of political argument and writing. With care and sensitivity, Prof. Joanne B. Freeman of Yale University has assembled the best and most comprehensive one-volume Hamilton collection ever assembled -- but she has done something even more important: She has presented us with a thorough, judicious, and enlightening documentary life of Hamilton. This book will be indispensable to anyone who wants to understand the origins of the Constitution, of the American economy, and of the nation's political system and public life. It also will be indispensable to anyone who wants to understand Alexander Hamilton as a political, constitutional, and economic thinker, as a key shaper of American government and public policy, and as a human being.-- R. B. Bernstein, Adjunct Professor of Law, New York Law School

Alexander Hamilton is one of the most important, most misunderstood and most under studied Americans ever. He is the central figure in establishing the Federal Bank, as different as it is today from what it was then. He is responsible for the majority of the Federalist Papers, the most important documents produced in support of the Federal Constitution and the heated debates it entailed. But another thing most people don't know is that he is an American Revolution hero, serving, with distinction under George Washington, receiving his highest praise and becoming his right hand man. He is the most elegant and gifted of writers. To understand his beginnings, read Alexander Hamilton: American by Richard Brookhiser, and understand the humble beginnings he was born into, working as a store clerk in the West Indies, educating himself in America and turning himself into one of the Americans who has a true grasp on the English language. His politics aside, he was a brilliant man. He was a gentleman and he was honest. He was a man full of pride and great courage. He refused to let himself be bad mouthed, accepting Aaron Burr's duel, but he refused to

fire at his opponent, instead firing into the air. A very honourable end to a great American. His writing are essential to understand his life and his mind, his political orientation and lifelong goals. Not only that, but this is great literature. This receives my highest recommendation.

With this volume, the Library of America continues its project presenting the best of American culture and thought in an accessible way. The subject of this volume is Alexander Hamilton. Although John Adams has frequently been regarded as the least understood of the Founders, Hamilton has his own plausible claim to this honor. History has not treated Hamilton kindly. He has certain obvious flaws in terms of arrogance, temper, and judgment. These flaws are amply revealed in this collection of writings. Hamilton, nevertheless, has much to teach us about government and about our country. This collection of his writings is a treasure. At the outset, I was reluctant to begin a project of reading this volume through in its entirety. As my reading progressed, I couldn't put the volume down. The book covers all phases of Hamilton's political and personal life, from its beginnings in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands to his death at age 49 in the notorious duel with Aaron Burr. The heart of the book begins with Hamilton's role in the Constitutional Convention, in which he advocated for a strong Federal government and, in particular for a strong Executive. The book continues with Hamilton's 51 contributions to "The Federalist" in which he explained the Constitution to the people of the State of New York in terms which remain a seminal exposition of the basic governing document of the United States. Again the focus is on the need for a strong central government with a will and ability to act for the public good. Hamilton was the first Secretary of the Treasury. This book gives us long selections from his work in which he advocated forcefully for having the Federal government pay the Revolutionary War Debt, for founding the Bank of the United States, and in promoting industry in the fledgling United States. These works divided Hamilton from Jefferson and Madison and became the basis of partisan politics in the United States. In defending the constitutionality of the National Bank from attacks from Jefferson and Madison, Hamilton set the foundation for an expansive view of the power of the Federal government under the constitution. This view was controversial in its time and remains so. Hamilton's position, however, has largely come to prevail over the years and is an important basis for our governmental structure as it has developed over time. The book includes Hamilton's public confession of an adulterous affair, his criticism of John Adams which divided and doomed the Federalist party, and Hamilton's own political career, and documents regarding Hamilton's fatal duel with Aaron Burr. There is much to be learned from this book. Hamilton was a paradoxical figure both behind and ahead of his time. This is a valuable work for understanding our country. Kudos to the Library of

America for allowing us to learn.

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