



## Writings

*Alexander Hamilton , Joanne B. Freeman (Editor)*

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One of the most vivid, influential, and controversial figures of the American founding, Alexander Hamilton was an unusually prolific and vigorous writer. As a military aide to George Washington, forceful critic of the Articles of Confederation, persuasive 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 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 rise to fame and to his tragic early death. Arranged chronologically, *Writings* contains more than 170 letters, speeches, essays, reports, and memoranda written between 1769 and 1804. Included are all 51 of Hamilton's contributions to *The Federalist*, as well as subsequent writing calling for a broad construction of federal power under the Constitution; his famous speech to the Constitutional Convention, which gave rise to accusations that he favored monarchy; early writings supporting the Revolutionary cause and a stronger central government; his visionary reports as Treasury secretary on the public credit, a national bank, and the encouragement of American manufactures; a detailed confession of adultery made by Hamilton in order to defend himself against charges of official misconduct; and his self-destructive attack on John Adams during the 1800 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. Included in an appendix are conflicting eyewitness accounts of the Hamilton-Burr duel.

## Writings Details

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# From Reader Review Writings for online ebook

## Bill says

He was a brilliant man. This is more of an historical reference book than a cover to cover book.

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## Matt Carton says

Used this as a companion to my second rewarding of Chernow's bio. This is an exceptional collection from LOA.

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## Craig Bolton says

Alexander Hamilton: Writings (Library of America) by Alexander Hamilton (2001)

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## Allyce says

If you are an American you need to read this to shatter your illusions, and understand how this country came about.

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## Roger says

excellent insight into Hamilton - one of the most under appreciated of our Founders/Forefathers

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## Christopher says

A comprehensive, chronological collection of the writings of one of, if not the most, brilliant Founding Fathers, this collection gives you Alexander Hamilton in all of his facets with zero editorial interpretation. And that is one of the things that make this book so great. If you have already read a biography of Alexander Hamilton (Ron Chernow's is a great, comprehensive one to start with), this book will give the reader a closer, "over-the-shoulder" look at him that is incredibly enlightening. Not only will one appreciate Hamilton's mind and dedication, but also the passions of the Early Republic era (c. 1789-1804) that threatened to destroy the country before it could even take off. However, the reason I give this four stars instead of five is because the most important works of his (his contributions to the Federalist Papers, his reports on national finance and manufactures, etc.) are very long and difficult to get through. It is not that they are bad, quite the opposite in fact. The problem is that the length of many of these works are daunting and the nearly archaic language of the late 18th century is a chore to unpack. This is definitely not a work for casual readers. But, for those who love U.S. history and want to learn about this enigmatic Founding Father in his own words, there is no better

one-volume collection than this edition presented by the Library of America.

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## **Christi says**

Skimmed thru most of the readings. I will admit to skipping most of the Federalist papers. But I will refer back to this reference book again and again!

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## **Anna says**

Didn't read *the whole thing*, was only interested in the Reynolds Pamphlet & his personal letters. There's some great stuff here! ...eeh, once can detangle some of the language. And tryin not to laugh like a crazy person at a note mentioning some 15-year-old and "*Every body makes love to her, and she receives every body kindly*" as your brain is waving a giant sign "flirt!! They mean flirt like a mofo!! Get me outta the gutter dammit"

but yes, personal letters. Highlights include: Hamilton gushing to Meade about 7 month-old Philip. Joking with Laurens about finding a wife ("*If you should not readily meet with a lady that you think answers my description you can only advertise in the public papers* " gold!), THE HURRICANE

Nowhere near enuff letters to Eliza are put into the book tho (but the last one is a punch in the feels) and some other stuff to various people. And a quick back-and-forth with Burr, you know the one

Etiquette ideas for the brand-new President Washington was a thing too!

There's even Ham totalz is throwing shade on himself ("*...as I have been so long silent on an occasion, which most people will be fond of celebrating to their friends*")

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## **Anne Powell says**

As someone who loves reading history, sometimes the best and most valuable reading comes directly from the creators of history themselves. And as someone who loves Hamilton: the musical, I was curious to learn about the man himself in his own words. Firstly, this book is NOT for the faint of heart. Or of weak eyesight. Although, if you have insomnia, you might want to give it a try. To paraphrase the musical, the man really did write like he was running out of time. ;-)

That said, reading some of Alexander Hamilton's most important papers gave me an insight into the history of Revolutionary and Federal Era that I could never have found in reading modern, authored history books. In slogging my way through the Federalist Papers for the first time since high school, I really (finally) understood how precarious things were in 1787. In reading all the papers from Hamilton's duel with Burr, I really got a sense of the very different personalities of both men and how human (and infuriating) they both were.

Reading this book wasn't easy for me. Sometimes it was almost painful. And exhausting. But it was also incredibly rewarding.

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## **Trey says**

Read this mostly for the personal letters and so skimmed, or skipped, some of his treatise-level writings on government. I justified that because I had previously read several of his Federalist essays as well as his excellent Report on Manufactures. Hamilton really was a brilliant and very capable thinker, who seems, nevertheless, to have never been able to get past his own sense of personal inadequacy and was thus incapable of deflecting criticism but had to respond with more words than was politic. His writings show him to have lived the quintessential 'American' life: rags-to-riches, orphan immigrant to key figure at the nexus of politics and economics, all the while knowing that he hadn't quite measured up in this new world meritocracy.

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## **Robin Friedman says**

### Alexander Hamilton Speaks For Himself

With this volume, the Library of America continues its project presenting the best of American culture and thought in an accessible way. Alexander Hamilton has received a great deal of attention in recent years.

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.

Robin Friedman

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