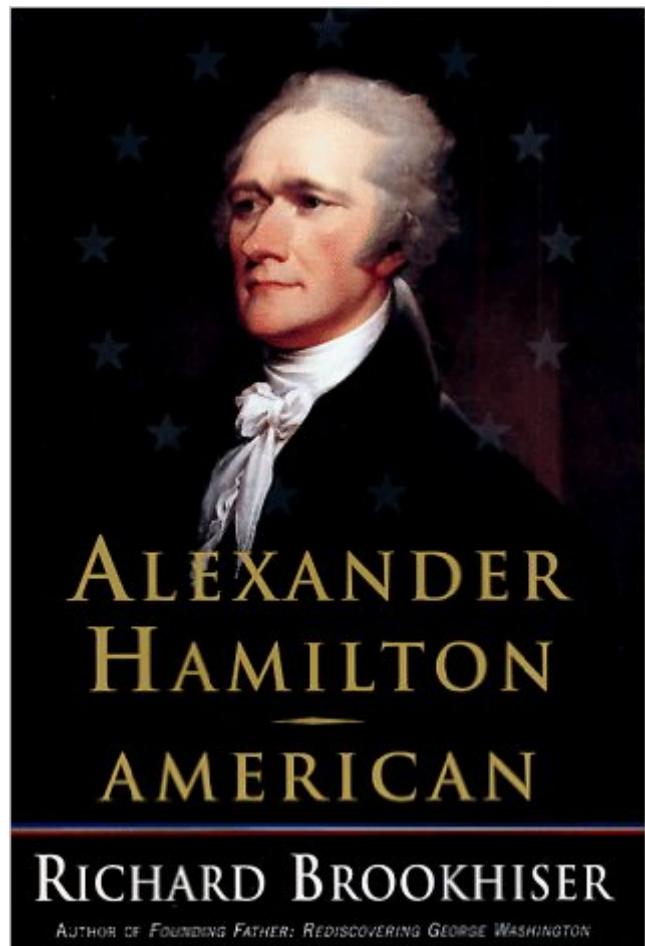


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Alexander Hamilton, American



Synopsis

Alexander Hamilton is one of the least understood, most important, and most impassioned and inspiring of the founding fathers. An impoverished immigrant when he first came to American shores at age fifteen, Hamilton defined what it meant to be American in an age when the definition was up for grabs. He pounced on the opportunities available in New York and rose rapidly as a patriot, war hero, prominent lawyer, pioneering journalist, and author of two-thirds of The Federalist Papers. An aide to Washington in the Revolutionary war, he was named the first Secretary of the Treasury at the age of thirty-two, in which post he audaciously mapped a system of law and finance that almost single-handedly lifted the new nation into a capitalist era. His economic vision was expansive, celebratory, idealistic, and yet also pragmatic. He deserves to be honored today as the founding father of American capitalism. As the author of so many of The Federalist Papers, not to mention Washington's Farewell Address and several key arguments used by Chief Justice John Marshall, Hamilton fashioned key elements of the American political system. As the founder of the New York Post, and one of the most prolific writers in the age of pamphleteers like Tom Paine, Hamilton also deserves to be remembered as one of the fathers of American journalism. Finally, as evidenced by his extraordinary preemptive confession of a sexual affair and subsequent blackmailing, Hamilton deserves to be remembered for an honesty, passion, and conviction that was as rare in his day as it is in ours.

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Customer Reviews

What a wonderful book! "Alexander Hamilton, American" manages to pack quite a bit into 217 pages: the story of Hamilton, a plausible version of his essence and personality, and a survey of the clashes of Revolutionary War generation titans. Richard Brookhiser accomplishes all this beautifully in this brief, highly readable book. Brookhiser is not interested in all the little details of Hamilton's life and times. He is not interested in reproducing volumes of Hamilton's writings, letters to Hamilton, or articles about Hamilton. He is interested in telling a story, and then making points about the role of words, rights, and passion in Hamilton's character. I'm guessing that most Americans don't know the story of Alexander Hamilton, the relatively poor immigrant who became one of this nation's most important founders. Hamilton today is respected, but not always revered as some of his opponents like Jefferson and Madison are. Brookhiser reveres him. But he writes with a kind of awe for many who did not share the same feelings for each other. "It is impossible not to love John Adams," (p. 130) Brookhiser writes. Really? Who loved him back then? Not Hamilton, not Jefferson. Hamilton and Jefferson were, of course, at odds with each other, too. But not enough so as to prevent them from joining forces against Aaron Burr in 1800, who eventually killed Hamilton in a duel four years later. The soap opera intrigue of the founders as highlighted by this book stands out as more severe than any product of current politics.

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