

How Alexander Hamilton Influenced a Nation

Version A

Early Years in the Caribbean

As a teenager, Alexander Hamilton worked as a clerk in a trading company. There he learned about trade, business, and finance. He also wrote newspaper articles, poetry, and sermons. In addition, he read many books about the great leaders of Greece and Rome. Later, as an adult, he drew on all of these skills and experiences as he helped create a new United States government.

The Federalist Papers

In 1787, Hamilton was a delegate from New York to the Constitutional Convention. After the convention, Hamilton began to write a series of essays to encourage New Yorkers to ratify the U.S. Constitution. The essays, called "The Federalist," were published in New York newspapers. They made the case for a strong national government. Over a period of seven months, Hamilton and two other delegates (John Jay and James Madison) wrote nearly 80 more essays. Hamilton wrote 50 of them himself!

"The Federalist" essays were later published as a book called *The Federalist Papers*. Today, the Supreme Court uses *The Federalist Papers* more than any other document to interpret the Constitution's meaning.

Treasury Secretary Years

Soon after he became the nation's first Treasury secretary, Hamilton created a national bank. The bank would be able to lend the government money, hold its savings,



Source: Wikipedia.org (public domain)

create a national currency, and provide credit to business and industry.

Hamilton also arranged for the federal government to take on the states' debts. He felt this would make the national economy stronger, establish America's credit overseas, and put the federal government in charge of taxes. Many states were not happy to give the federal government control over their economies. Hamilton arranged compromises with representatives from those states to get the debt plan passed in Congress.

Glossary

currency: forms of money; units of exchange for goods and services

ratify: to formally approve an official document, such as a constitution

Writing Assignment

Using your notes from the lesson, write a one- to two-page paper on one of the following topics:

1. Describe at least two of Alexander Hamilton's greatest accomplishments in helping create the new country. How did his accomplishments move the individual states into a more unified country?
2. How does Hamilton's role in shaping the nation reflect his early experiences?

If you would like more information about Alexander Hamilton to complete your paper, check out the following Web sites:

American Experience: Alexander Hamilton

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/hamilton/index.html>

Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America

<http://www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/>

Alexander Hamilton and the Creation of the United States

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/online/hamilton/index.html>