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# HAMILTON

An American Musical

**Lin-Manuel Miranda**



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## How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the text as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

With this particular unit, the study of rigorous text has been taken one step further. Students are asked to analyze, respond to, and interact with content through songs. If possible, students should have the lyrics of the songs in front of them, but all the activities in this guide can be done with only the soundtrack. To further your study of the play, have copies of *Hamilton: The Revolution* by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter readily available to students.

The next few pages will make clear how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful study of Miranda's astonishing masterpiece. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

### Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature and theater used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the play.

Before students begin listening to the songs or reading the lyrics, have them complete *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 14). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to have students keep their papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 63). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the play. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they listened to the songs or read the lyrics to what the characters discovered during the story.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Vocabulary

Each teacher overview page has definitions and sentences about how key vocabulary words are used in the section. These words should be introduced and discussed with students. There is also a student vocabulary activity page in each section. Students are asked to define the ten words chosen by the authors of this unit. With the assignment, you may want to have students get into pairs to discuss the meanings of the words. Allow students to use reference guides to define the words. Monitor students to make sure the definitions they have found are accurate and relate to how the words are used in the songs.

On each vocabulary student page, students are asked to answer a text-related question using at least one vocabulary word. The following question stems will help you create your own text-based vocabulary questions if you'd like to extend the discussion:

- How does this word describe \_\_\_\_\_'s character?
- In what ways does this word relate to the problem in this play?
- How does this word help you understand the setting?
- In what ways is this word related to the solution of the problem in the play?
- Describe how this word supports the play's theme of ....
- What visual images does this word bring to your mind?
- For what reasons might Miranda have chosen to use this particular word?

At times, more work with the words will help students understand their meanings. The following quick vocabulary activities are good ways to further study the words.

- Have students practice their vocabulary and writing skills by creating sentences, paragraphs, or stanzas in which multiple vocabulary words are used correctly and with evidence of understanding.
- Students can play vocabulary concentration. Students make a set of cards with the words and a separate set of cards with the definitions. Then, they lay the cards out on the table and play concentration. The goal of the game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions. Students should add other words from each section to make the game more challenging.
- Students can create word journal entries about the words. Students choose words they think are important and then describe why they think each word is important within the play.
- Have students write couplets or short poems using the words.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Analyzing the Literature

After students have read or listened to the songs in each section, hold small-group or whole-class discussions. Questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. Level 1 is indicated by a square, while Level 2 is indicated by a triangle. These questions focus on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Student pages are provided if you want to assign these questions for individual student work before your group discussion. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've heard or read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the play with students. (**Note:** For consistency, all answers are provided in the literary present tense based on the play even if the events also really took place in history.)

### Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below-average writers. Much time and energy is dedicated to reading that little time may be left for writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and argument. Students have a choice between two prompts for each reader response. The prompts require students to determine text-to-text connections, to make connections within the text, and/or to focus on historical information shared within the play.

### Close Reading the Literature

Within each section, students are asked to closely listen to or reread a specific song. After each close reading (listening), there are text-dependent questions to be answered by students. Encourage students to read each question one at a time and then go back to the song and/or lyrics to discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the lyrics as textual evidence to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Once students have answered the questions, discuss what they discovered. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Close Reading the Literature *(cont.)*

The generic, open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- Give evidence from the songs to support ....
- Justify your thinking using textual evidence about ....
- Find evidence to support your conclusions about ....
- What textual evidence helps the reader understand ...?
- Use the lyrics to tell why \_\_\_\_\_ happens.
- Based on events in the play, ....
- Use textual evidence to describe why ....

### Making Connections: Historical, Musical, and Theatrical

The activities on these pages help students make cross-curricular connections to American history, the study of music, and theater. Each of these types of activities requires higher-order thinking skills from students. At times, students will be asked to listen to the songs again, study the lyrics, or conduct further research online. You may consider having students choose from among these three activities in each section. That way, students' personal preferences will be considered.

### Creating with the Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing the common story elements in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, and plot can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the play. If teachers discuss these elements daily, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

Students are given four options for working with the story elements. They are asked to create something related to the characters, setting, or plot of the play. For this guide, music has been added as a fourth category. Students are given a choice in this activity so that they can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to them. Different multiple intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

## Analyzing the Literature

Provided below are discussion questions you can use in small groups, with the whole class, or for written assignments. Each question is given at two levels so you can choose the right question for each group of students. Activity sheets with these questions are provided (pages 19–20) if you want students to write their responses. For each question, a few key discussion points are provided for your reference.

Story Element	■ Level 1	▲ Level 2	Key Discussion Points
Character	Describe some of the difficult aspects of Hamilton's early life.	How do Hamilton's difficult beginnings affect his life?	Hamilton is born out of wedlock in poverty. His father leaves when he is 10, and his mother dies when he is 12. He ends up working to save himself. These difficult formative years shape him into a man who does not give up fighting for what he believes. He may be afraid to stop pushing himself because he has seen how hard life can really be.
Setting	How does New York City play an important role in the early scenes of the play?	What role does New York City play in the early part of the American Revolution?	Much of the play takes place in New York City. That bustling city is one of the hubs of the Patriots during the pre-Revolutionary years. Hamilton finds other Patriots to fight alongside. Hamilton fights the British through the city and, in doing so, catches the eye of Washington.
Character	What kind of help does Washington need from Hamilton?	For what reasons does Hamilton not want to work closely with Washington?	Washington needs someone to help strategize and organize. He is "outgunned, outmanned, outnumbered, outplanned." He heard that Hamilton is smart, hardworking, and brave. Hamilton wants to be on the battlefield. He doesn't want to be a secretary concerned with logistics. Hamilton's gift with words is a benefit to Washington.
Plot	How might connecting with the Schuyler family change Hamilton's life?	In what ways is Eliza a perfect spouse for Hamilton?	The Schuyler family is a politically connected family from New York. Mr. Schuyler is a state politician, and his daughters are intelligent Patriots. Hamilton develops a close relationship with both Eliza and Angelica; Angelica challenges him intellectually, while Eliza is a better match for him emotionally. Eliza expects love and respect from him and will support him moving forward.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ■ Analyzing the Literature

**Directions:** Think about the section you just read. Read each question and state your response with textual evidence.

1. Describe some of the difficult aspects of Hamilton's early life.

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2. How does New York City play an important role in the early scenes of the play?

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3. What kind of help does Washington need from Hamilton?

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4. How might connecting with the Schuyler family change Hamilton's life?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ▲ Analyzing the Literature

**Directions:** Think about the section you just read. Read each question and state your response with textual evidence.

1. How do Hamilton's difficult beginnings affect his life?

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2. What role does New York City play in the early part of the American Revolution?

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3. For what reasons does Hamilton not want to work closely with Washington?

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4. In what ways is Eliza a perfect spouse for Hamilton?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Close Reading the Literature

**Directions:** The song “My Shot” took Lin-Manuel Miranda almost a year to write. Closely listen to or reread the song. Read each question and then revisit the song to find evidence that supports your answer.

1. According to the song, what constitutes Hamilton’s “shot”?

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2. In what ways is the United States “young, scrappy, and hungry”?

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3. Compare and contrast the reasons Lafayette, Mulligan, and Laurens want to take their shots.

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4. Based on the song, why does Hamilton often think about death?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Creating with the Story Elements

**Directions:** Thinking about the story elements of character, setting, plot, and music in a play is very important to understanding what is happening and why. Complete one of the following activities based on what you've heard or read so far. Be creative and have fun!

### Characters

Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton have a complicated relationship. Create a graphic flow chart that illustrates the points in this section of the play where they meet. For each meeting, describe where they meet, what happens, and how they feel about each other.

### Setting

Pick one song from this section of the play. Draw a picture or a diagram of how you envision the stage design during the song.

### Music

Describe how two songs from this section are melodically related to one another.

### Plot

Write a text message conversation between Washington and Hamilton as they discuss whether Hamilton will join Washington's staff. Include strong arguments from Washington to encourage Hamilton to support him.