

Lesson Title: Discovering Alexander Hamilton

Grade Level: 4

Time Allotment: One 45-minute class period

Overview: In this lesson, students explore the question, “Who was Alexander Hamilton?” In the Introductory Activity, students look at US paper currency and identify which of the featured individuals served as President of the United States. In the Learning Activity, students explore video segments from the PBS program ***Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton*** to learn about Hamilton’s contributions to the United States and his role during George Washington’s presidency. In the Culminating Activity, students write an article, poem, song, speech or story about Alexander Hamilton.

Subject Matter: Social Studies; US Government

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Identify the individuals featured on US paper currency.
- Describe 5 facts about Alexander Hamilton.
- Explain the role of the Secretary of the Treasury.
- Discuss the role Hamilton served during George Washington’s presidency.

Media Resources

Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton, selected segments

- [Introducing Alexander Hamilton](#)
An introduction to Alexander Hamilton.
- [Alexander Hamilton and President George Washington](#)
A look at Alexander Hamilton’s role during George Washington’s presidency.

Websites:

These sites can be used in this lesson’s Culminating Activity:

- **Alexander Hamilton: The man who made Modern America**
www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/
This online New York Historical Society exhibit contains a variety of information, images and activities about Alexander Hamilton.
- **Alexander Hamilton and the Creation of the United States**
www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/online/hamilton/

Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton is a production of Manifold Productions, Inc., in association with WNET/Thirteen in New York City. Funding for **Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton** was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, BNY Mellon, the John Templeton Foundation, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Roger and Susan Hertog, the Robert H. Smith Family Foundation, The Lynde & Harry Bradley Foundation, and the Gilder Foundation. 1

This online exhibit, developed by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, contains information about the life and contributions of Alexander Hamilton.

This site can be used in the Optional Activity at the end of this lesson:

- **Design your own bill**

<http://www.newmoney.gov/newmoney/dyob/index.html>

In this interactive, students can design their own \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 or \$100 bills.

Materials

For the class:

- Computers with internet access
- Computer, projection screen and speakers (for class viewing of online/downloaded video segments)

For each group of 3-4 students:

- “US Bills” handout (attached at end of lesson)

Before the Lesson

Prior to teaching this lesson, you will need to:

Print out the “US Bills” handout, printing out each page on a separate sheet of paper. Make enough copies so that each group of 3-4 students has the entire handout (7 pages).

Preview all of the video segments and websites used in the lesson.

Download the video clips used in the lesson to your classroom computer(s) or prepare to watch them using your classroom’s Internet connection.

Bookmark all websites which you plan to use in the lesson on each computer in your classroom. Using a social bookmarking tool such as [delicious](#) or [diigo](#) (or an online bookmarking utility such as [portaportal](#)) will allow you to save the links in one location.

Introductory Activity

1. Divide your students into groups of 3-4 students each. Distribute a copy of the “US Bills” handout to each group. (Each group should receive all 7 pages of the handout.)
2. Ask each group to identify the people featured on the bills and divide the bills into two piles. One pile should include the people who were presidents and the other should include those who were not. Let students know that only 2 of the men were never president.

Note: Encourage students to discuss and debate about who should go in each pile. Ask students to use process of elimination to try to sort the piles. (For example, they can

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start by placing the men they definitely know were president in the correct pile.) Encourage students to use books, classroom posters, the Internet and other available resources, as needed, to correctly sort the piles.

3. After students have created their piles, ask them to reveal which men were presidents. (*George Washington- \$1 bill; Thomas Jefferson-\$2 bill; Abraham Lincoln- \$5 bill; Andrew Jackson- \$20 bill; Ulysses S. Grant- \$50 bill.*)
4. Ask students to reveal the names of the men who were not presidents. (*Benjamin Franklin- \$100 bill; Alexander Hamilton \$10 bill.*)
5. Ask students to tell you what they know about Benjamin Franklin. (*He was a scientist and inventor and considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States.*)
6. Ask students what they know about Alexander Hamilton. Write their responses down for all to see. (*Include the following facts: He was not a president. He is featured on the \$10 bill.*)

Learning Activity

1. Explain that in today's lesson students will explore the life of Alexander Hamilton. Let students know they will be viewing a video segment from the PBS program ***Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton***. Ask students to identify at least five facts about Alexander Hamilton as they view the segment.
2. Play Introducing Alexander Hamilton. After showing the segment, ask students to discuss facts about Alexander Hamilton, which were presented in the video clip. (*Possible facts to include: He created the American financial system and started the federal banking system. He created the first monetary system, the government's first accounting systems, the first central bank, the first Coast Guard and the first Customs Service. He was never president of the United States.*)
3. Let students know that Alexander Hamilton worked very closely with the person who served as president from 1789 to 1797 and who is also featured on one of the US bills. Ask students if they can identify that person. (*George Washington.*) If needed, provide a hint that this man was the first president of the United States.
4. Ask students to watch the next segment to identify what role Alexander Hamilton played during George Washington's presidency.
5. Play Alexander Hamilton and President George Washington. After showing the segment, ask students what role Hamilton played in George Washington's presidency. (*Hamilton served as George Washington's first Treasury Secretary and as an advisor to Washington. He helped take care of the country's debt. He wrote Washington's farewell address.*)

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6. Ask students to look at the backs of the different US bills and observe what buildings are featured. Ask them what building is featured on the back of the \$10 bill and why they think it is featured on the same bill with Alexander Hamilton. (*The US Treasury building. Alexander Hamilton was the first Secretary of the US Department of the Treasury.*)
7. Ask students to describe what they think the Secretary of the Treasury does. Explain that the Secretary of the Treasury oversees the US Department of the Treasury, which is responsible for maintaining a strong economy and making sure the United States is financially secure. The Secretary of the Treasury advises the President on economic and financial issues and is a member of the President's Cabinet (which includes the Vice President and the heads of 15 executive departments).

Culminating Activity

1. Ask students to summarize what they know about Alexander Hamilton. Write these down for the class to see.
2. Explain that Alexander Hamilton was a good writer and was praised for his use of words. He relied on his strong writing skills throughout his career and wrote newspaper articles, letters, essays, official documents and speeches (including George Washington's famous farewell address). Ask students to write an article, essay, letter, poem, song, speech or story about Alexander Hamilton, including at least 5 facts about him.

Encourage students to use resources, including the following websites, to gather more information about Alexander Hamilton, as needed:

- **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/>

3. After students have written their pieces, ask them to share them with the class.

Optional Activity:

Ask students to think about who they would like to see on a US bill. They can draw their new design on a sheet of paper or design their own bill online at:

<http://www.newmoney.gov/newmoney/dyob/index.html>

Standards:

History Standards for Grades K-4

www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/standards-for-grades-k-4

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Historical Thinking

- **Standard 4/ Historical Research Capabilities:** The student conducts historical research; therefore, the student is able to obtain historical data from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films; and so on.

Content Standards:

- **Topic 3: The History of the United States: Democratic Principles and Values and the People from Many Cultures Who Contributed to Its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage**
 - **Standard 4C:** The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy. Therefore the student is able to:
 - Identify historical figures who believed in the fundamental democratic values such as justice, truth, equality, the rights of the individual, and responsibility for the common good, and explain their significance in their historical context and today.
 - Describe how historical figures in the United States and other parts of the world have advanced the rights of individuals and promoted the common good, and identify character traits such as persistence, problem solving, moral responsibility, and respect for others that made them successful.
 - **Standard 4E:** The student understands national symbols through which American values and principles are expressed. Therefore the student is able to:
 - Describe the history of American symbols such as the eagle, the Liberty Bell, George Washington as the "father of our country," and the national flag.
 - Explain why important buildings, statues, and monuments are associated with state and national history, such as the White House, Lincoln Memorial, Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Angel Island, Mt. Rushmore, and veterans memorials.

National Standards for Civics and Government

http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=stds_toc_intro

K-4 Content Standards

III. How does the government established by the constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?

B. What does the national government do and how does it protect individual rights and promote the common good?

US Bills Handout

Sample



Sample



US Bills Handout

Sample



Sample



US Bills Handout

Sample



Sample



US Bills Handout

Sample



Sample



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Sample



Sample



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