

Lesson Title: The Quest for Success: The Alexander Hamilton Story

Grade Level: 4

Time Allotment: One 45-minute class period

Overview: In this lesson, students learn about how Alexander Hamilton overcame a difficult childhood to become successful lawyer, a military hero and an advisor to George Washington. In the Introductory Activity, students discuss what a mentor is and reflect upon the people who have served as their mentors, as well as other factors which have helped them to be successful. In the Learning Activity, students explore video segments from the PBS program *Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton* to learn about different factors that helped Hamilton succeed in life, including the roles Nicholas Cruger, Hugh Knox and George Washington played in helping to advance his career and social life. In the Culminating Activity, students explore Hamilton's vision of achieving success through talent and hard work, and write reflection pieces.

Subject Matter: Social Studies; US Government

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Define the word "mentor."
- Provide examples of how Nicholas Cruger, Hugh Knox and George Washington helped Alexander Hamilton during his life.
- Discuss some of Alexander Hamilton's strengths.
- Describe Alexander Hamilton's vision for American society.
- Discuss different factors that contributed to Alexander Hamilton's success.

Media Resources

Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton, selected segments

- Skills and Connections
A look at how Alexander Hamilton's skills and social connections helped him advance in life.
- Working for Washington: The Early Years
A look at the early years of Alexander Hamilton's work with George Washington.
- Alexander Hamilton's Vision
A look at Hamilton's vision for a society where everyone can succeed with hard work.

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.

Websites:

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

- **Alexander Hamilton: The man who made Modern America**
<http://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**
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/online/hamilton/>
This online exhibit developed by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History contains information about the life and contributions of Alexander Hamilton.

Materials

For the class:

- Computers with internet access
- Computer, projection screen and speakers (for class viewing of online/downloaded video segments)
- "Alexander Hamilton's Mentors" answer key (attached at end of lesson)

For each student:

- "Alexander Hamilton's Mentors" student organizer (attached at end of lesson)

Before the Lesson

Prior to teaching this lesson, you will need to:

Print out a copy of the "Alexander Hamilton's Mentors" student organizer for each student.

Print out one copy of the "Alexander Hamilton's Mentors" answer key.

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.

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Introductory Activity

1. Ask students to think about things they are good at doing (sports, music, school, art, etc.) and to brainstorm how they learned those things (from parents, teachers, friends, on their own, etc.).
2. Ask students to think about people that encourage them to try their best and work hard and people who have helped them feel better when they were sad.
3. Explain to students that today they will be learning about Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was born on the island of Nevis and moved to the island of St. Croix with his parents when he was 8 years old. His father left him and his mom when Alexander was about 9 years old and his mother died when he was 11 years old. Explain that in today's lesson, students will learn how Alexander Hamilton became very successful despite having a hard childhood.
4. Let students know that in the lesson they will learn about some people who served as *mentors* to Hamilton. Discuss the meaning of the word "mentor" with your students (*a tutor, coach or advisor*). Ask students to think about any mentors or role models they have had in their lives. Ask students to discuss how their mentors have helped them.

Learning Activity

1. Distribute the "Alexander Hamilton's Mentors" student organizer.
2. Explain that you will now be playing a video segment from the PBS program ***Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton***, which shows different people and skills which helped Hamilton become successful. Ask students to identify different factors that helped Hamilton succeed. Explain that the segment features two of Hamilton's mentors. Ask students to use their student organizers to write down the names of the two mentors featured in the segment and to describe what roles they played in helping Hamilton.
3. Play Skills and Connections. After showing the segment, ask students to list two men who helped Hamilton (*Nicholas Cruger and Hugh Knox*). Ask students to describe who each man was and how he helped Hamilton. Refer to the "Alexander Hamilton's Mentors" answer key as needed to facilitate the discussion.
4. Ask students to discuss some things Hamilton was good at doing. (*He was a good worker, good at taking on responsibility and had strong writing skills. He was good at making connections with people in positions of power.*)
5. Explain that Hamilton came to the United States and attended Kings College in New York City (now known as Columbia University), thanks to the money raised by Cruger and Knox. He left college early to fight in the American Revolution and, in 1777, fought in the Battle of Princeton (in Princeton, NJ), where he and his unit won.

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6. Explain that you will now be playing another video segment which shows one man who was impressed by Hamilton and hired him to work for him two weeks after the Battle of Princeton. Ask students to identify this person as they watch the next segment and to fill in the remaining row on their student organizer with details about who this person was and how he helped Hamilton.
7. Play Working for Washington: The Early Years. After showing the segment, ask students to identify the man who helped Hamilton (*George Washington*). Ask students to describe how George Washington helped Hamilton. Refer to the “Alexander Hamilton’s Mentors” answer key, as needed, to facilitate the discussion.
8. Explain that Hamilton also worked for George Washington as the first Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, during George Washington’s presidency. Let students know that Hamilton oversaw the US Department of the Treasury, which is responsible for maintaining a strong economy and making sure the United States is financially secure. He was responsible for giving Washington advice on economic and financial issues. Explain that Hamilton died when he was 47 years old in a duel (fight) with a man named Aaron Burr.

Culminating Activity

1. Explain that Hamilton had a vision for America. Ask students to watch the next video segment and describe that vision.
2. Play Alexander Hamilton’s Vision. After showing the segment, ask students to discuss Alexander Hamilton’s vision. (*His vision was to have a mixed economy, including trade, manufacturing and farming. Hamilton wanted a society where all men, including immigrants, could succeed based on hard work and talent.*)
3. Ask students to write an essay about one of the following:
 - **The Key to Hamilton’s Success.** Discuss what you think was one of the most important factors in helping Alexander Hamilton succeed and provide reasons to support your view.
 - **“Do What You Can.”** President Theodore Roosevelt, who lived from 1858 to 1919, is quoted as saying, “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” Even though Roosevelt was not saying this in reference to Alexander Hamilton, write about how this quote could apply to Alexander Hamilton’s life.
 - **My Mentor:** Describe the role that a mentor has played in your life or someone else’s life and how that mentor’s support made a positive influence your (or someone else’s) life.

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- **Hamilton’s Vision Today.** Alexander Hamilton wanted a society where individuals can succeed based on hard work and talent. Think of someone you know (in your home, school, community, etc.) who is talented, works hard and is making a positive difference in his or her own life and/or the life of other people. Describe what this person does and what makes him or her successful.

Encourage students to use a variety of resources to gather information to include in their essays, including the following websites:

- **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/>

4. After students have written their essays, ask them to share them with the class.

Standards:

History Standards for Grades K-4

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

Historical Thinking

- **Standard 3/ Historical Analysis and Interpretation:** The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation. Therefore, the student is able to:
 - Analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind multiple causation including (a) the importance of the individual in history; (b) the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs; and (c) the role of chance, the accidental and the irrational.
 - Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.
- **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 2: The History of Students' Own State or Region/Standard 3C:** The student understands the various other groups from regions throughout the world who came into his or her own state or region over the long-ago and recent past. Therefore, the student is able to draw upon historical narratives to examine the sources of strength and determination, such as family, church, synagogue, community, or fraternal organizations that various groups drew upon in attempts to overcome problems during this period.

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- **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 4B:** Demonstrate understanding of ordinary people who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.
 - Analyze in their historical context the accomplishments of ordinary people in the local community now and long ago who have done something beyond the ordinary that displays particular courage or a sense of responsibility in helping the common good.
 - **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.

National Standards for Civics and Government

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

K-4 Content Standards

II. What are the basic values and principles of American democracy?

A. What are the most important values and principles of American democracy? *Content summary and rationale:* The fundamental values and principles of American democracy provide common ground for Americans to work together to promote the attainment of individual, community, and national goals.

Key Words: Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Hugh Knox, Nicholas Cruger, government, history, mentor, success, United States.

Lesson Plan Annotation: Using segments from the PBS program *Rediscovering Alexander Hamilton*, students learn about the skills and people that helped Alexander Hamilton succeed.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Alexander Hamilton's Mentors

Student Organizer

Alexander Hamilton rose from poverty to become a successful lawyer and the first US Secretary of the Treasury. The combination of his intelligence, skills and good mentors helped him to rise up the ladder. Use the chart below to describe how Alexander Hamilton's mentors helped him succeed.

Name/ Title	How the Mentor Helped Hamilton
<i>Name:</i> <i>Title/Position:</i>	
<i>Name:</i> <i>Title/Position:</i>	
<i>Name:</i> <i>Title/Position:</i>	

Alexander Hamilton's Mentors

Answer Key

Alexander Hamilton rose from poverty to become a successful lawyer and the first US Secretary of the Treasury. The combination of his intelligence, skills and good mentors helped him to rise up the ladder. Use the chart below to describe how Alexander Hamilton's mentors helped him succeed.

Name/ Title	How the Mentor Helped Hamilton
<p><i>Name:</i> Nicholas Cruger</p> <p><i>Title/Position:</i> Shipping Merchant, Beekman and Cruger</p>	<p>Nicholas Cruger hired Hamilton to work as a clerk for his shipping company, Beekman and Cruger. When Alexander was 14, Cruger put him in charge of the company for four months. Cruger and Knox raised money to send Hamilton to college in America.</p>
<p><i>Name:</i> Reverend Hugh Knox</p> <p><i>Title/Position:</i> Presbyterian Minister, St. Croix</p>	<p>Hugh Knox exposed Hamilton to books and different viewpoints. He had connections to the Royal Danish American Gazette (later renamed the St. Croix Avis) and encouraged Hamilton's writing. He and Cruger raised money to send Hamilton to college in America.</p>
<p><i>Name:</i> George Washington</p> <p><i>Title/Position:</i> Commander-in-Chief, Continental Army (1775-1783) President of the United States (1789-1797)</p>	<p>George Washington appointed Hamilton to be one of his aides and gave him the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel. Working for Washington helped Hamilton move up into a new social circle where he met his wife, Elizabeth Schuyler. Washington gave him a battlefield command at the Siege of Yorktown (October, 1781).</p>