Alexander Hamilton:

Can a man’s character be the cause of his death?

DAY 1
1. Discuss the learning targets with students:
   a. I can use primary and secondary sources to find character traits for Hamilton.
   b. I can connect how Hamilton's character led to his death.
2. Hamilton – The Man
   a. Discuss quote from the PowerPoint: Character is revealed when pressure is applied
      i. Ask students what they believe the quote means and to apply it to their own lives.
   a. Source the document with the students. Who wrote it? When was it written?
   b. Read section aloud to class from slide. The slide also has pictures I took of Hamilton’s grave when I was in New York. He was buried in the graveyard at Trinity Church in New York City. Might also mention that his funeral rivaled the size of Washington’s.
   c. Have students annotate what they think shows that Hamilton was important.
   d. After reading the paragraph, have the students share what they underlined. Make sure to discuss the different groups represented and explain that Hamilton had an effect on each of those groups. Who would be at my funeral? I have not had that kind of effect on that many groups.
4. Document B: Hamilton Accomplishments
   a. Source the document
   b. Give students a chance to look over Hamilton’s accomplishments and answer the question. Students star the things they believe are Hamilton’s most important accomplishments.
   c. As a class discuss students’ answers about why Hamilton deserved such a dignified funeral as was described in Document A. Students should mention economic plan, advisor to Washington during the Revolutionary War, Federalist Papers, etc.
   d. If students do not point the abolitionist accomplishment, make sure to do so.
   e. Discuss what these accomplishments say about Hamilton’s character. What words could be used to describe him?
5. Document C: Hamilton’s letter to Eliza
   a. Before the students read the letter, point out Eliza’s grave on the PowerPoint slide. Explain that she was buried right next to Alexander, so she could spend eternity with him. Also, mention that she devoted the fifty years after his death to honoring his memory by sharing his accomplishments.
   b. After students source the document, give students context of when the letter was written in comparison to when Hamilton died on July 12, 1804.
   c. Explain to students there will be a word that jumps out at them as they read the document (the word is interview, but don’t tell them that). Have them circle the word and write out what they believe the word means.
d. Students will read the letter with a partner and answer the two questions about the letter.
e. Through a class discussion (using the Smart Board) make sure students identify what is most important to Hamilton based on the letter (the respect of his family & the respect he has for himself has to mentioned even though it is not in the letter). What does it say about Hamilton’s character that he was willing to die to not lose this respect?


a. The purpose of the song is for students to gather character traits that could later be used to justify why Hamilton would participate in the duel – do not tell students he was in a duel yet.
b. Play video of Lin Manuel Miranda singing Alexander Hamilton at the White House. The video has been edited so the portion where Lin Manuel Miranda states he is playing Aaron Burr has been removed, so students will not know who shot Hamilton.
c. Students are to follow along with the lyrics (Document D) as they watch the performance.
d. Have the students work with their partner to come up with character traits that could describe Hamilton based on the lyrics of the song.
e. Students will complete the two questions about Document D on the guided questions handout.
f. Discuss answers and character traits with students. Make sure to concentrate on the lines in the song about him being a man that would never back down and always speak his mind (second line of the last stanza). What does this say about him? How do we react in when the pressure is on? Do we back down or fight?
g. Refer to an example on him not backing down from an earlier class where we discussed Hamilton’s feud with John Adams.
   i. John Adams referred to Hamilton as a creole bastard, did not pick Hamilton to be the leader of the U.S. military forces, and fired two of Hamilton’s friends from the his Cabinet.
   ii. In return Hamilton wrote a 56-page letter to close friends and allies explaining why John Adams should not be elected in 1800 even though he and Adams were from the same political party. Show students the printed version of the letter (color printed and bond with materials) or the link to source - https://archive.org/details/letterfromalexan00hami2
h. Ask students how Hamilton died based on the song. Then ask if they have any idea who might have shot him. They might say Jefferson or Adams.
i. State the following: “We know he had beef with Jefferson (refer back to his time in Washington’s Cabinet) and Adams, now let’s look at the problems he had with Jefferson’s Vice President, and former Senator Aaron Burr”

7. Bring up the PowerPoint slide titled, Hamilton & Burr
   a. Discuss the quote: Character is destiny
   b. Could Hamilton’s character (never backing down, always speaking his mind, prideful, etc.) been a reason as to why he died? Can character lead to death?

8. Read the PowerPoint slide about the Election of 1800 from Gilder Lehrman
   a. The presidential election of 1800 had resulted in a tie between the two Democratic Republicans, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. The founders had not foreseen the rise of political parties and the effects that development would have on the operations of the
Electoral College. As that body was created at the Constitution Convention of 1787, each elector had two votes to cast and had to cast his votes for different individuals. The candidate receiving the highest number would become president; the candidate with the second highest number would become vice president. The presidential election of 1800 provided Alexander Hamilton, former secretary of the treasury, with a dilemma: a tie between Thomas Jefferson, a man whose principles were in direct opposition to Hamilton’s own, and Aaron Burr, a man Hamilton believed to have no principles at all. As the House of Representatives prepared to vote to break the deadlock, Hamilton conducted a furious letter-writing campaign to urge fellow Federalists to vote for Jefferson. The letter from Hamilton to Otis shows Hamilton’s feelings about Burr:

b. Discuss why Hamilton would endorse Jefferson (his mortal enemy and the man he disagreed with on everything), over Burr. Lead students to an understanding that Hamilton was a man of principle and would have no respect for a man without any principles. Point out the Burr moved political parties when he could for political gains.

**DAY 2**

9. Restate the learning targets from the previous class and show the series of slides that ended the previous class i.e. *Character is destiny*, and the Gilder Lehrman slide about the Election of 1800. Concentrate on the second paragraph to introduce the next document.

10. **Document E: Letter from Alexander Hamilton to Harrison Gray Otis**
    a. Source the document
    b. With a partner, students will read the letter from Hamilton to Otis (Document E) and annotate all the negative things that Hamilton says about Burr.
    c. Students will answer the questions and discuss them with a partner.
    d. Discuss the letter and have student share what they underlined (on the Smart Board).
    e. Students might conclude that Burr killed Hamilton because he cost him the presidency. Explain (again) that Hamilton did not die until July 12, 1804.

11. **Document F: Timeline of Hamilton and Burr from PBS**
    a. Students need to source the document
    b. Have students underline or star the biggest reasons that Burr and Hamilton would dislike one another. Students should also circle the part in the timeline that surprises them most (Hamilton’s son was killed in a duel...discuss what happens in a duel, so they know that information for later).
    c. Also, mention the Reynolds pamphlet of 1797. It might have been Burr that released the information to the press. In return, Hamilton writes the pamphlet thinking he could write his way out of the affair. He was wrong. It is because of the affair and the pamphlet that Hamilton will never be president.

12. **Document G: Hamilton’s letter to Burr**
    a. Read the background information about the Cooper letter and Burr’s response the Cooper letter to students aloud. Answer any questions students might have before they read the letter from Hamilton to Burr.
    b. Have students source the letter (once again reminding them of when Hamilton died). Students will read (Document G) Hamilton’s response to Burr with a partner. Have students annotate as they read and write down any questions they have.
c. Students will answer the questions about Hamilton’s response.

d. Discuss the letter with students (using the Smart Board). Concentrate on the second paragraph where Hamilton never answers Burr’s question. Instead, he tries to show how much smarter he is and educate him on the levels of despicability. Ask the students how they would react if they were in Burr’s position.

e. Make sure to point out the last paragraph where Hamilton says he will abide by the consequences if Burr does not see it in the same light as Hamilton.


a. Students need to source the letter (once again remind them of the date Hamilton dies).

b. Have students read the letter and annotate for understanding as they read. Have them circle the part in the letter that they believe led to the duel (hopefully, they will circle “false pride”) with a partner and answer the corresponding questions.

c. Point out (using the Smart Board) that Burr is correct when he states Hamilton did not answer the question and that he uses the same word - consequences as Hamilton. Burr also blamed the encounter that is about to take place on Hamilton.

d. Ask students what part of the letter would make Hamilton accept the “interview”. What would make him go to a place he could possibly die? Hopefully, they will point out Burr states Hamilton has “false pride”. Knowing what they do about Hamilton’s character, could he have ever back down from the “interview”? By backing down, would he have lost respect he has for himself or that his family has for him?

14. Document I: excerpt from TIME article – A "Dangerous" Man Lives Up to the Insult

a. Before giving students the document, explain that Burr questioning Hamilton’s pride led them to Weehaken, New Jersey on the morning of July 11, 1804 where they would fight each other in a duel.


c. Give students an excerpt of the Time magazine article (Document I), so they know how the duel ended.

d. The article also has a small blip about Hamilton and the possibility that he threw away his shot. Briefly discuss that with the class. What does that say about Hamilton? If it is true, what does it say about Burr?

15. Give students a graphic organizer about Hamilton and his character and have them fill out the organizer with the help of a partner.

16. Students will then answer the culminating question(s) on their own (either the two 4-point responses or the 10-point question could be used). The graphic organizer will help students with both questions. Students’ answers should use specific evidence from the provided documents and explain how each piece of evidence supports their claim.

**DAY 3**

17. Students will turn in their responses for a grade.

18. Give students handout titled Burr the Rest of the Story from

   http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/duel/peopleevents/pande01.html, so they can figure out what happened to Burr after the duel.

**Note:** All documents, questions and PowerPoint slides are in the Appendix

**Appendix A: Documents and Culminating Questions**

**Appendix B: PowerPoint Slides**
APPENDIX A:

Documents & Culminating Questions
Document A: Funeral Procession (Modified)

That Saturday morning, guns fired from the Battery, church bells rang with an unhappy sound, and ships in the harbor flew their colors at half-mast. Around noon, to the somber thud of military drums, New York militia units set out at the head of the funeral procession, bearing their arms in reversed position, their muzzles pointed downward. Then came the most affecting sight of all. Preceded by two small black boys in white turbans, eight pallbearers shouldered Hamilton’s corpse, set in rich mahogany casket with his hat and sword perched on top. Hamilton’s gray horse trailed behind with the boots and spurs of its former rider reversed in the stirrups. Then came Hamilton’s four eldest sons and other relatives, followed by representatives of every segment of New York society: physicians, lawyers, politicians, foreign diplomats, military officers, bankers, merchants, Columbia College students and professors, ship captains, mechanics, and artisans: Collectively, they symbolized the richly expanded economic and political variety that Hamilton imagined for America.

Document B: Hamilton’s Accomplishments

- By 17 he had published multiple essays in support of American Independence
- At 18 Hamilton joined the war. Two years later, General Washington, promoted him to aide-de-camp. He became George Washington’s most able and trusted aid during the Revolutionary War. He was entrusted to attend high-level meetings and to help draft letters to governors, generals, and Congress. Later Hamilton issued orders on behalf of Washington.
- At Yorktown he commanded an infantry & helped force the British to surrender.
- Hamilton opposed slavery & wanted slavery eradicated. In 1785 (almost 50 yrs before the abolitionist movement) Hamilton formed the New York Manumission Society, an organization dedicated to abolishing slavery in New York.
- He wrote 51 of 85 of The Federalist Papers, which helped to ensure the ratification of the Constitution.
- Hamilton was an outstanding trial lawyer in New York.
- He published the first manual on civil procedure in the United States.
- Hamilton established the 1st National Bank.
- As Treasury Secretary he stabilized the economy (was in shambles) by spearheading the establishment of a gold-based dollar, ensuring that the war debt was paid, and stating that the purchasers (instead of the original holders) of war bonds would be paid their current value. This demonstrated that the federal government respected property rights and the sanctity of contract.
- The financial reforms advocated by Hamilton led to a growth in the number of American corporations from 8 to 311 in the 1790s.
- Hamilton helped shape Washington’s foreign policy based on American self-interest. Hamilton advised Washington on the Neutrality Proclamation, which declared that America would not become entangled in foreign affairs but would be friendly to both nations and impartial in their dispute.
- Hamilton advocated for a paid military, founded the U.S. Coast Guard, & introduced a bill to establish West Point Military Academy.
- Wrote some 28 essays, which helped secure the ratification of the Jay Treaty with Great Britain.
- Hamilton was the founder of the oldest continuously published daily U.S. newspaper — the New York Post, which he began in 1801.
- Hamilton’s gravestone sums up his career well — “The PATRIOT of incorruptible INTEGRITY/The SOLDIER of approved VALOUR/The STATESMAN of consummate WISDOM.”

Source: Two sources used to compile the information:
Alexander Hamilton: A Short Life with Great Moments by Ed Mannino (2013)
Celebrating Alexander Hamilton’s Achievements on His Birthday by Robert Begley (2014)

Documents A and B

1. Using Document B, explain why Hamilton was so important that he deserved to have such a dignified funeral as was described in Document A.
Document C (Modified):

This letter, my very dear Eliza, will not be delivered to you, unless I shall first have terminated my earthly career; to begin, as I humbly hope from redeeming grace and divine mercy, a happy immortality.

If it had been possible for me to have avoided the interview, my love for you and my precious children would have been alone the reason. But it was not possible, without sacrifices which would have rendered (reduced) me unworthy of your esteem (respect). I need not tell you of the pangs (pains) I feel, from the idea of quitting you and exposing you to the anguish which I know you would feel.....

Source: From a letter Alexander Hamilton sent to his wife Elizabeth Hamilton, New York, July 4, 1804

1. In the letter Hamilton stated "the interview" was unavoidable “without sacrifices which would have rendered me unworthy of your esteem”. Explain what he meant by this statement. What would have made him unworthy of his wife's esteem?

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2. What does this tell you about his character? Use specific evidence from the document to support your answer.

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Document D

How does a bastard, orphan son of a whore
And a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean
By providence, impoverished, in squalor, grow up to be a hero and a scholar?
The 10 dollar founding father without a father
Got a lot farther by working a lot harder, by being a lot smarter
By being a self-starter, by 14 they had placed him in charge of a trading charter
And everyday while slaves were being slaughtered and carted away across the waves, our Hamilton kept his guard up
Inside he was longing for something to be a part of
The brother was ready to beg, steal, borrow or barter
Then a hurricane came, and devastation reigned
Our man saw his future drip, dripping down the drain
Put a pencil to his temple, connected it to his brain
And he wrote his first refrain, a testament to his pain
Well the word got around, they said
"This kid is insane, man!"
Took up a collection just to send him to the mainland
"Get your education, don't forget from whence you came
And the world's gonna know your name. What's your name man?"
Alexander Hamilton
His name is Alexander Hamilton
And there's a million things he hasn't done
But just you wait, just you wait

When he was 10, his father split, full of it, debt ridden
2 years later, see Alex and his mother bed-ridden
Half-dead, sitting in their own sick, the scent thick
And Alex got better but his mother went quick
Moved in with a cousin, the cousin committed suicide.
Left him with nothing but ruined pride, something new inside
A voice saying, "Alex you gotta fend for yourself"
He started retreating and reading every treatise on the shelf
There wouldn't been nothing left to do for someone less astute
He woulda been dead and destitute without a cent of restitution
Started working, clerking for his late mother's landlord
Trading sugar cane and rum and all the things he can't afford
Scanning for every book he can get his hands on
Planning for the future, see him now as he stands on
The bow of a ship headed for a new land
In New York you can be a new man
The ship is in the harbor now see if you can spot him
Another immigrant coming up from the bottom
His enemies destroyed his rep America forgot him
And me, I’m the damn fool that shot him

Alexander Hamilton, we're waiting in the wings for you
You could never back down, you always had to speak your mind
But Alexander Hamilton we could never take your deeds from you
And our cowardice and our shame we will try to destroy your name
The world will never be same Alexander
Yeah, I’m the damn genius that shot him

**Source:** Lyrics are from the opening song, *Alexander Hamilton*, from *Hamilton the Musical* written by Lin Manuel Miranda.

**Document D**

1. Based on the song, what was Hamilton’s upbringing like? What does this tell you about his character? Use specific evidence from the song to support your answer.

2. Based on the song, what kind of man was Hamilton? Give character traits using specific evidence from the song to support your answer.
Dr Sir, N York Dec. 23. 1800

My opinion is, after mature reflection, that if Jefferson and Burr come with equal votes to the House of Representatives, the former ought to be preferred by the Federalists. Mr. Jefferson is respectably known in Europe—Mr. Burr little and that little not favorably for a President of the United States—Mr. Jefferson is a man of easy fortune—Mr. Burr, as I believe, is bankrupt beyond redemption. Mr. Jefferson is a man of fair character for integrity—Very different ideas are entertained of Mr. Burr... Mr. Jefferson, though too revolutionary in his ideas, is yet a lover of liberty and will be eager of something like orderly Government—Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself—thinks of nothing but his own enhancement—and will be content with nothing short of permanent power in his own hands...

If Mr. Jefferson is likely from fondness for France to draw the Country into War on her side – Mr. Burr will certainly attempt to do it for the sake of creating the means of personal power and wealth.

This portrait is the result of long and attentive observation on a man with whom I am know personally well – and in respect to whose character I have had peculiar opportunities of forming a correct judgment.

By no means, my Dear Sir, let the Federalists be responsible for his Elevation – In a choice of Evils let them take the least—Jefferson is in every view less dangerous than Burr...

Yrs. with great respect,
A. Hamilton

Source: Letter from Alexander Hamilton to Harrison Gray Otis, written on December 23, 1800

Document E
1. List the specific objections Alexander Hamilton had to Aaron Burr.

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2. Why does Hamilton believe Jefferson, as president, would be the lesser of two evils?

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— Mr. Emrich American History – Alexander Hamilton: Can a man’s character cause his death? —
Document F: Hamilton & Burr Timeline of Events

1791 Republican Aaron Burr wins the New York US Senate seat from Federalist Philip Schuyler (Alexander Hamilton's father-in-law). To take the seat, Burr will use the support of the powerful Clinton and Livingston families, who are enemies of Hamilton and Schuyler.

1800 Aaron Burr publishes a document written by his political enemy, Alexander Hamilton. This document titled "The Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States" attacks Adams and his presidency. Hamilton had intended this to only be shared with his close friends & allies. The document causes an permanent split in the Federalist Party.

When Burr and Jefferson tied in election of 1800, Congress had to vote to decide who should be president. Hamilton was opposed to Jefferson, but he distrusted Burr. Hamilton campaigns against Burr. Congress votes to make Jefferson president.

1801 George I. Eacker and Alexander Hamilton’s son Philip duel at Weehawken. Eacker had made a speech accusing Alexander Hamilton of being willing to overthrow Jefferson's presidency by force. On Nov. 20th, 19 year old Philip Hamilton and his friend Richard Price confronted Eacker. The resulting duel on November 23 left Phillip Hamilton dead.

1804 February: After Jefferson tells Burr he would not be his Vice President if he was elected to a 2nd term, Burr changes political parties & allies himself with a group of Federalist in New England who wanted to secede from the Union. Burr decides to run for New York governor (it is rumored he will use this position to lead New York out of the Union). Alexander Hamilton learns of Burr’s involvement & tries to convince New York Federalists not to support Aaron Burr in the New York governor’s race. Hamilton's attacks on Burr have little effect on the governor’s race. Burr loses the general election largely as a result of public attacks by George and DeWitt Clinton. Burr is furious over remarks allegedly made by Hamilton during the campaign and anxious to repair his failing career.


Document F

1. Using the timeline, list reasons why Hamilton and Burr would dislike each other.

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Source: Mr. Emrich American History – Alexander Hamilton: Can a man's character cause his death?
Background Information:

A New York Republican, Dr. Cooper attended a dinner party in February, 1804 during which Alexander Hamilton spoke forcefully and eloquently against the Federalist plan to nominate Aaron Burr as its candidate for the New York governor’s office. Cooper later wrote a letter to Philip Schuyler, a New York politician and Alexander Hamilton’s father in law, in which he made reference to particularly "despicable opinion" Hamilton had expressed about Burr.

The letter, when published in a New York newspaper, was tame compared to the other attacks Burr had incurred in the press. Still, Cooper's letter proved the last straw in the ongoing rivalry between Burr and Hamilton.

When Burr read the letter weeks later, after being crushed in the governor's race, he was enraged by Hamilton’s alleged remarks.

Source: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/duel/peopleevents/pande15.html

After reading the letter from Dr. Cooper initially, Aaron Burr sent a message to Alexander Hamilton asking for a clarification of the situation. He specifically wanted Hamilton to either admit or deny the statement. Hamilton’s response is as follows:

Document G (Modified)

Sir, New York June 20, 1804

I have reflected on the subject of your letter; and the more I have reflected the more I have become convinced, that I could not make the avowal (confirmation) or disavowal which you seem to think necessary.

The clause pointed out by Mr. Van Ness is in these terms “I could detail to you a still more despicable opinion, which General Hamilton has expressed of Mr. Burr.” The language of Doctor Cooper plainly implies, that he considered this opinion of you, which he attributes to me, as a despicable one; but he affirms (confirms) that I have expressed some other still more despicable; without however mentioning to whom, when, or where. 'Tis evident, that the phrase “still more despicable” admits of infinite shades, from very light to very dark. How am I to judge of the degree intended?

How could you be sure, that even this opinion had exceeded the bounds which you would yourself deem admissible between political opponents?

It cannot reasonably be expected, that I shall enter into an explanation upon a basis so vague as that which you have adopted. I trust, on more reflection, you will see the matter in the same light with me. If not, I can only regret the circumstance, and must abide the consequences.

The publication of Doctor Cooper was never seen by me ’till after the receipt of your letter. A. Hamilton

Source: From Alexander Hamilton to Aaron Burr – June 20, 1804
Document G

1. What is the issue between Hamilton and Burr mentioned in the background information and Document G?

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2. Why does Hamilton refuse to apologize in the letter?

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After another round of correspondence between the two men failed to accomplish anything regarding the dispute, Aaron Burr sent the following message to Alexander Hamilton:

**Document H (Modified)**

I was greatly disappointed in receiving from you a letter which I could only consider as evasive and which in manner, is not altogether well-mannered. In one expectation however, I was not deceived, for at the close of you letter I find a hint, that if I should dislike your refusal to acknowledge or deny the charge, you were ready to meet the consequences. This I seemed a sort of defiance.... Yet, ...I believed that your communication was the offspring, rather of false pride... and, as I felt the utmost reluctance (unwillingness) to proceed to extremes while any other hope remained, my request was repeated in terms more definite. To this you refuse all reply.... Thus, Sir, you have invited the course I am about to pursue.... If therefore your determinations are final... Mr. Van Ness is authorized to communicate my further expectations....

**Source:** Letter from Aaron Burr to Alexander Hamilton – June 22, 1804

**Document H**

1. Identify & describe the three ways Burr describes Hamilton’s character in Document H.

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2. What “course” is Burr “about to pursue”? Why would he feel the “utmost reluctance” to take this course?

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Each leveled his pistol at the other, and two blasts sounded, with puffs of smoke, in close succession. Burr’s ball caught Hamilton on his right side. He gave out a cry of pain as the impact of the bullet twisted him onto the balls of his feet and then sent him sprawling back onto the ground. He lay there stunned, ashen-faced, gasping. Burr took a step toward his fallen enemy, a flash of “regret” on his face, said his second, before he hurriedly left the field without a backward glance.

“I am a dead man,” Hamilton told his own second, Pendleton, and added to Hosack, who rushed to his aid, “This is a mortal wound.”

And so it was. The bullet had cracked through his ribs, shredded his lungs and pierced his liver before lodging tight against his lower spine, leaving him paralyzed all down his legs as blood pooled in his gut. Pendleton and Hosack eased him down the steep slope and into the rowboat, which conveyed him back to Manhattan, every stroke of the oars excruciating.

The news from Weehawken went up as a bulletin at the Tontine coffeehouse, a gathering spot for the city’s business class. General Hamilton was shot by Colonel Burr this morning in a duel, the general is said to be mortally wounded. The electrifying news spread quickly in every direction, and an eerie quiet settled over much of the island. Much of the city’s business stopped, and on the street, people were desperate to find out what others had heard.

Despite his agony, as he lay on his deathbed at a friend’s house in Manhattan, Hamilton tried to comfort his delicate wife, who had rushed to his side from the Grange, thunderstruck at the news. She’d dissolved into a fit of explosive weeping the moment she saw him. “Remember, my Eliza, you are a Christian,” Hamilton urged her. To soothe herself, she fanned him throughout the rest of the hot day. Her beguiling sister Angelica came and crumpled into tears too.

Hamilton sought Communion, but neither minister he summoned would oblige a man dying from a duel, “I have no ill will against Colonel Burr,” he assured the second one, the Episcopal bishop Benjamin Moore. “I met him with a fixed resolution to do him no harm. I forgive all that happened.” With that, Bishop Moore gave Hamilton the sacrament after all. He labored through the night, and in the morning Eliza brought in his seven children and stood them at the foot of his bed, a sight that left Hamilton unable to speak. More friends came, 20 in all, a scene of desperate grief. Only Hamilton, it appeared, was able to keep his composure. His last words were political: “If they break this union, they will break my heart.” He died so easily, his wife weeping beside him, that people did not immediately realize he was gone.

Source: Excerpt from a TIME magazine article titled A “Dangerous” Man Lives Up To The Insult by John Sedgwick (2015)
Document I

1. If Hamilton indeed did “throw away” his shot (as some historians believe he did), what does this tell you about his character?

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2. If Hamilton indeed did “throw away” his shot, what does this tell you about Burr’s character?

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Culminating Questions: Hamilton vs. Burr
A historian’s job is to research and explain their reasoning as to why certain events occurred in history.

A. Using evidence (at least three), explain the aspects of Hamilton’s character that led him to accept the challenge of a duel with Aaron Burr. Use information learned in class, documents provided, and/or lyrics from Hamilton the musical to support your answer. Make sure to cite your sources (4 points).

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B. Based on the sources provided explain why the duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr was/was not inevitable (unavoidable)? You will need to use at least 3 pieces of evidence to support your argument. Make sure to cite your evidence and explain how it supports your argument (4 points).

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Culminating Questions: Hamilton vs. Burr

A historian’s job is to research and explain their reasoning as to why certain events occurred in history.

The eventual duel between Alexander Hamilton & Aaron Burr was arguably an inevitability (unavoidable). Explain two traits of Hamilton’s character that led him to accept the challenge of a duel with Aaron Burr. You will need at least one piece of evidence for each trait (evidence must come from two different sources). You may use any of the documents to support your answer. Make sure to cite your sources (example – Document A or Doc. A) and explain how your evidence shows the trait AND led to the duel.

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— Mr. Emrich American History – Alexander Hamilton: Can a man’s character cause his death? —
Mr. Emrich American History - Alexander Hamilton: Can a man's character cause his death?

Traits (accurate) – 1 pt. each: _____/2
Direct Evidence (accurate) – 1 pt. each: _____/2
Explanation (accurate and meets expectations from question) – 2 pts. each: _____/4
Cite (specific document) – 1 pt. each: _____/2

Total Points _____/10
Burr: The Rest of the Story

On July 11, 1804, on the dueling grounds at Weehawken, New Jersey, Burr shot Hamilton dead. In New York and New Jersey, Burr was charged with murder. And in much of the Northeast, Hamilton was mourned as a fallen hero. But to many Americans, particularly in the South, Burr was viewed as a man who had rightfully defended his honor.

Although he was a wanted man, Burr nonetheless enjoyed immunity from prosecution in Washington, D.C. There, he presided over the impeachment trial of Samuel Chase, an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Burr set a remarkable standard for decorum and fairness during the trial, in which Chase was acquitted. This would not be the last time Burr appeared in a highly publicized federal trial. The next time he would be the defendant in a trial for treason.

The United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. Aaron Burr saw the territory as a place where his political hopes could be revived. Conspiring with James Wilkinson, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army and Governor of Northern Louisiana Territory, Burr hatched a plot to conquer some of Louisiana and maybe even Mexico and crown himself emperor.

Burr sought help from both Britain, who considered his proposals but turned him down. With private backing, Burr trained and outfitted a small invasion force. But Wilkinson betrayed him, and Burr was captured in Louisiana in the spring of 1807 and taken to Richmond, Virginia, to stand trial for treason. Acquitted on a technicality, he faced resounding public condemnation and fled to Europe.

Burr’s European adventures proved less than rewarding. Again, plotted to take territory in North America, but failed to gain support from European powers. He returned to the United States, a fugitive from debtors’ prison.

When Burr arrived in New York, the US was on the brink of war with Britain. His treason plot and the killing of Hamilton largely forgotten, Burr was able to get the murder charges against him dropped, and he once again began to practice law. The death of his daughter Theodosia, whose ship was lost at sea in 1813, devastated Burr, who said he felt "severed from the human race."

In 1833, Burr married again, this time to Eliza Jumel, a wealthy widow; the marriage soon ended in divorce. He died three years later, at the age of 80, a nearly forgotten man.
Appendix B:

PowerPoint Slides
Alexander Hamilton:

Can a man’s character cause his death?

Learning Targets

I can use primary and secondary sources to find character traits.
I can connect how Hamilton's character led to his death.
Hamilton – The Man

That Saturday morning, guns fired from the Battery, church bells rang with an unhappy sound, and ships in the harbor flew their colors at half-mast. Around noon, to the somber thud of military drums, New York militia units set out at the head of the funeral procession, bearing their arms in reversed position, their muzzles pointed downward...Then came the most affecting sight of all. Preceded by two small black boys in white turbans, eight pallbearers shouldered Hamilton’s corpse, set in rich mahogany casket with his hat and sword perched on top. Hamilton’s gray horse trailed behind with the boots and spurs of its former rider reversed in the stirrups. Then came Hamilton’s four eldest sons and other relatives, followed by representatives of every segment of New York society: physicians, lawyers, politicians, foreign diplomats, military officers, bankers, merchants, Columbia College students and professors, ship captains, mechanics, and artisans. Collectively, they symbolized the richly expanded economic and political variety that Hamilton imagined for America....

Document B: Hamilton’s Accomplishments

- Look over Document B titled *Hamilton’s Accomplishments*.

- Why was Hamilton so important to have such a dignified funeral as was described in Document A?

Document C: Letter from Hamilton to his wife

- With your partner, read Document C and answer the two questions on the guided questions handout.
Document D: *Alexander Hamilton* from the musical

- Song time 😊
- Follow along with the lyrics and highlight parts that show Hamilton’s character traits.

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**Hamilton & Burr**

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Mr. Emrich American History - Alexander Hamilton: Can a man’s character cause his death?
Document E: Letter from Hamilton to Otis

Introduction from Gilder Lehrman about the presidential election of 1800

The presidential election of 1800 had resulted in a tie between the two Democratic Republicans, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. The founders had not foreseen the rise of political parties and the effects that development would have on the operations of the Electoral College. As that body was created at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, each elector had two votes to cast and had to cast his votes for different individuals. The candidate receiving the highest number would become president; the candidate with the second highest number would become vice president.

The presidential election of 1800 provided Alexander Hamilton, former secretary of the treasury, with a dilemma: a tie between Thomas Jefferson, a man whose principles were in direct opposition to Hamilton’s own, and Aaron Burr, a man Hamilton believed to have no principles at all. As the House of Representatives prepared to vote to break the deadlock, Hamilton conducted a furious letter-writing campaign to urge fellow Federalists to vote for Jefferson. The letter from Hamilton to Otis shows Hamilton’s feelings about Burr.

Document E continued: Letter from Hamilton to Harrison Gray Otis

- With a partner read the letter and answer the questions that follow.
Document F: Timeline of Events

- With a partner read the timeline and answer the question that follows.

Document G: Letter from Hamilton to Burr

- With a partner read the background information and letter. Then answer the questions that follow.

Document H: Letter from Burr to Hamilton

- With a partner read the background information and letter. Then answer the questions that follow.

Document I: TIME Magazine Article

- The World Was Wide Enough from Hamilton the Musical

- Read portion of Time article to find out what happened to Hamilton
Complete culminating questions

- Make sure to address all parts of the questions, use specific evidence, and explain how the evidence supports your claim.

What happened to Burr?

- Now, for the rest of the story…