

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

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RON CHERNOW

Author of

TITAN *and* THE HOUSE OF MORGAN



ALEXANDER
HAMILTON

"MOVING AND MASTERLY...BY FAR THE BEST BIOGRAPHY
EVER WRITTEN ABOUT THE MAN."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



Praise for *Alexander Hamilton*

“In *Alexander Hamilton*, Ron Chernow, author of *The House of Morgan*, *The Warburgs*, and *Titan* and a biography of John D. Rockefeller, has brought to vivid life the founding father who did more than any other to create the modern United States... [a] magisterial biography.” —Michael Lind, *The Washington Post*

“Ron Chernow’s new *Hamilton* could not be more welcome. This is grand-scale biography at its best—thorough, insightful, consistently fair, and superbly written. It clears away more than a few shopworn misconceptions about Hamilton, gives credit where credit is due, and is both clear-eyed and understanding about its very human subject....The whole life and times are here in a genuinely great book.”

—David McCullough, author of *John Adams* and *Truman*

“Ron Chernow ranks as one of today’s best writers of history and biography. Not only is his work compelling but, unusual among such writers, Chernow also has a sound understanding of finance and economics. These skills shined through in his previous books....They are once again on full display in *Alexander Hamilton* .”

—Raymond J. Keating, *Newsday*

“Chernow’s *Hamilton* is a success. Rarely does a biographer uncover so much new information about a long-dead, much-chronicled individual. Rarely does a biographer fill in the gaps with such incisive, justified speculation. Rarely does a biographer write narrative so well.” —Steve Weinberg, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

“Ron Chernow has produced an original, illuminating, and highly readable study of Alexander Hamilton that admirably introduces readers to Hamilton’s personality and accomplishments. Chernow penetrates more deeply into the mysteries of Hamilton’s origins and family life than any previous biographer ...Chernow’s accounts of Hamilton’s contributions to political theory, politics, and the law are compelling.” —Walter Russell Mead, *Foreign Affairs*

“Like a few hundred thousand other people, I’ve been reading Ron Chernow’s enthralling biography of Alexander Hamilton. It serves as a timely reminder that the era of the founding fathers, which we usually think of (correctly) as a time of highminded philosophical discourse, was also full of venomous vituperation that has no parallel in modern America.” —Max Boot, *Financial Times*

“A brilliant historian has done it again! The thoroughness and integrity of Ron Chernow’s research shines forth on every page of his *Alexander Hamilton*. He has created a vivid and compelling portrait of a remarkable man—and at the same time he has made a monumental contribution to our understanding of the beginnings of the American republic.”

—Robert A. Caro, author of *The Power Broker* and *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*

“Fascinating.” —*People* “Chernow’s gripping story sheds new light not only on Hamilton’s legacy, but also on the conflicts that accompanied the republic’s birth.... *Alexander Hamilton* is based on prodigious research, and it will likely prop up Hamilton’s reputation in the same way David McCullough’s biography bolstered John Adams’s....impressive detail.”

—Matthew Dallek, *Washington Monthly*

“Magisterial....Mr. Chernow has done a splendid job of capturing the backbiting political climate of Hamilton’s times....Mr. Chernow delivers a comprehensiveness that rivals Hamilton’s... [and gives] the full measure of such a tireless, complex, and ultimately self-destructive man.”—Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

“A superb study....Chernow’s book is remarkable...for his unblinkered view of Hamilton’s thought and behavior ...Chernow’s Hamilton is a whirlwind of a man, always in action, always in pursuit of a goal not quite within his grasp, and beset by the demons that have so often afflicted great minds....It has been said that Hamilton was a great man but not a great American. Chernow’s Hamilton is both.”

—Edmund Morgan, *The New York Review of Books*

“Alexander Hamilton has been overshadowed by the founding fathers he served under, notably George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Ron Chernow’s magisterial new biography will certainly change that.... The first must-read biography of 2004.”

—John Freeman, *TimeOut New York*

“A splendid new biography ...Chernow unearths new information about Hamilton, but more importantly this beautifully written book recounts the formidable obstacles he surmounted to become, next to George Washington, the indispensable American founder. Chernow’s *Alexander Hamilton* is the best biography of Hamilton ever written, and it is unlikely to be surpassed.”

—Stephen F. Knott, *Claremont Review of Books*

“Superb ...Chernow is a shrewd student of power, and he couldn’t have

chosen a more compelling subject.” —James Aley, *Fortune*

“Chernow writes beautifully and skillfully, and opens up aspects of Hamilton’s life that others have not yet understood.” —Andrew Burstein, *Chicago Tribune*

“Now, Ron Chernow, whose previous books have chronicled the American Beauty roses and kudzu vines of mature American capitalism—*Warburg s*, Morgans, John D. Rockefeller, Sr.—examines the man who planted the seeds.... *Alexander Hamilton* is thorough, admiring, and sad—just what a big book on its subject should be.”

—Richard Brookhiser, *Los Angeles Times*

“Terrific...Ron Chernow’s magisterial *Alexander Hamilton* treats the first secretary of the treasury with the weight and gravitas of a nineteenth-century novel.” —John Freeman, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Powerful...Chernow’s magisterial work combines a biography of Hamilton and a political history of the United States in the early years of the republic. Exhaustively researched and beautifully written, the volume tells us a great deal about the founding fathers and helps restore one of them to his rightful place in the pantheon.” —Terry W. Hartle, *The Christian Science Monitor*

“Chernow has chosen an ideal subject....No other founding father more richly deserves the modern-eye-on-the-colonial-guy treatment... electrifying...Chernow does an admirable job.” —Justin Martin, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“[T]he life of Alexander Hamilton was ‘so tumultuous that only an audacious novelist could have dreamed it up.’ Such is the assessment of Ron Chernow in this splendid new biography of Hamilton.” —Steve Raymond, *The Seattle Times*

“In this engaging new book, Ron Chernow reassesses the historical legacy of the brilliant founding father, political theorist, and politician Alexander Hamilton.... Lively and beautifully written.” —Anne Lombard, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*

“ *Alexander Hamilton* is a balanced portrait of the man and his many contradictions...Admirers of David McCullough’s *John Adams* or Walter Isaacson’s *Benjamin Franklin* will thoroughly enjoy this excellent book.”

—Roger Bishop, *BookPage*

“On July 11, 1804, on a ledge overlooking the Hudson River in Weehawken, New Jersey, Burr mortally wounded Hamilton ...For thirty days, the city’s residents wore black armbands.... The extraordinary and

improbable career of Alexander Hamilton had come to and end, and here we have another fitting tribute to it: Ron Chernow's massively researched and beautifully written biography."

—James Chace, *The New York Observer*

"Ron Chernow's absorbing, exhaustively researched *Alexander Hamilton* justifies his claim that Hamilton's was the most dramatic and improbable life among the founding fathers....Chernow, who won the National Book Award for *The House of Morgan*, shows all Hamilton's complexity." —David Gates, *Newsweek*

"Chernow's splendid, thorough and brilliantly written biography of Hamilton gives us a new understanding of Hamilton's vital role during the war and immediately after as secretary of the treasury....There have been other biographies of Hamilton, but Chernow's is far and away the most comprehensive and compelling of any I have read. It is a fitting tribute to the man who set the U.S. on the path that has made our nation the economic leader of the world."

—Caspar W. Weinberger, former secretary of defense, and chairman of *Forbes*

"As Ron Chernow points out in this magnificent biography, Hamilton was the boy wonder of early American politics." —*The Economist* "A splendid life of an enlightened and reactionary founding father . . . Literate and full of engaging asides. By far the best of the many lives of Hamilton now in print, and a model of the biographer's art." —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred)

"In *Alexander Hamilton*, his mammoth and comprehensive study of the nation's first treasury secretary, Chernow has captured the essence of the man....Chernow is especially skillful at evoking a sense of time and place, an achievement that dominates *Alexander Hamilton*. He goes beyond the stick-figure characters that often emerge from most stories about the founders to present three-dimensional portrayals....Now, with this carefully crafted revision of the record, Hamilton's accomplishments should be seen in a different light, one bright enough to show what he has meant for America." —Ray Locker, *The Associated Press*

"In this majestic and thorough biography, Chernow explores the conundrums and paradoxes of Hamilton's private and public life and gives the man his due." —John C. Chalberg, *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis)

"Ron Chernow's fascinating new biography of Alexander Hamilton is the best written about the man....Chernow sorts out this period of history and

humanizes Hamilton....Chernow obviously believes Hamilton has not received much of the credit he deserves, but this book will help rectify the situation.” —Larry Cox, *Tucson Citizen*

“In the first full-length biography of Alexander Hamilton in many years, Ron Chernow, known for his impressive work on the titans of American industry, has made an exceptional contribution to American history.”

—Dennis Lythgoe, *Deseret Morning News*

“Chernow’s achievement is to give us a biography commensurate with Hamilton’s character, as well as the full, complex content of his unflaggingly active life.... This is a fine work that captures Hamilton’s life with judiciousness and verve.”

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“[Chernow’s] sweeping narrative chronicles the complex and often contradictory life of Hamilton....A first-rate life and excellent addition to the ongoing debate about Hamilton’s importance in shaping America.” —*Library Journal*

“Ron Chernow’s altogether splendid, full-scale biography is a weighty and meticulously researched tome of more than 800 pages. It nonetheless reads like a great historical novel, because Chernow brings his central characters to such vivid life. This is a life not only of Hamilton the politician, lawyer, and technocrat, but of Hamilton the man.” —John Steele Gordon, *American Heritage*

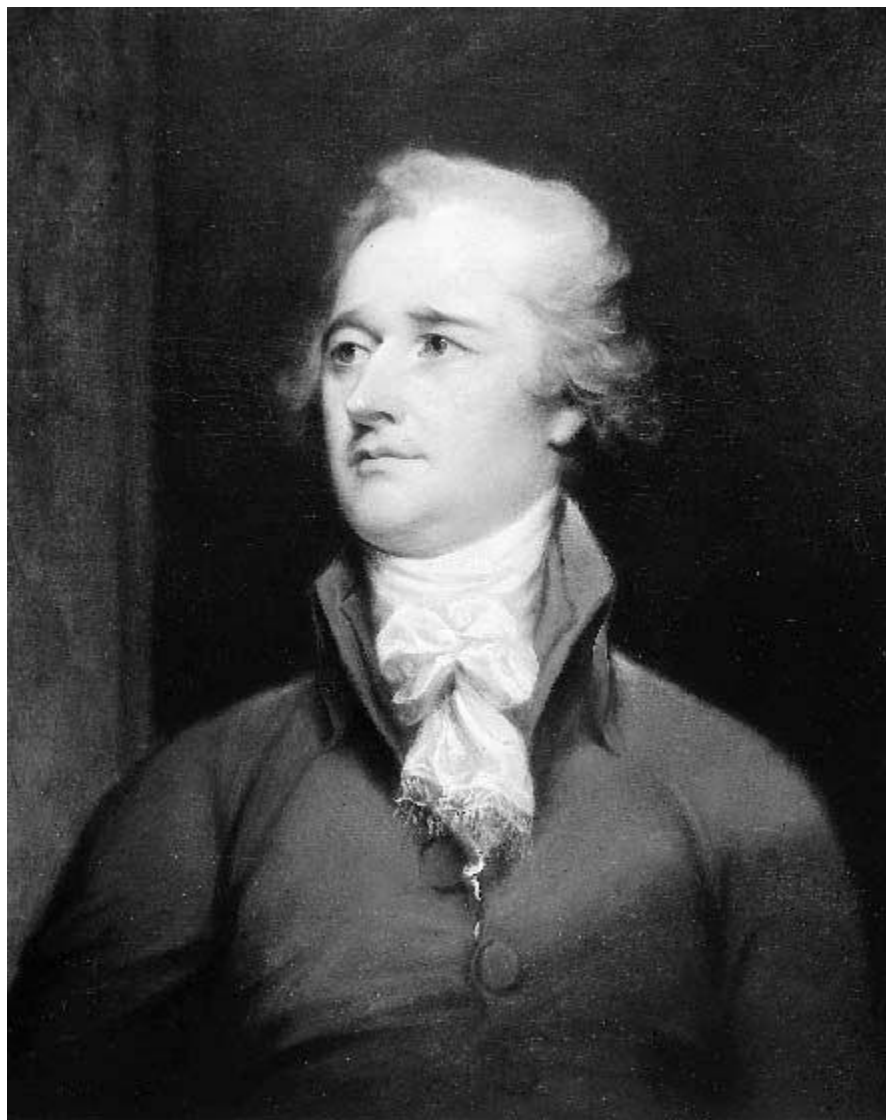
pinguin books ALEXANDER HAMILTON

A graduate of Yale and Cambridge, Ron Chernow won the National Book Award in 1990 for his first book, *The House of Morgan*, which the Modern Library cites as one of the hundred best nonfiction books of the twentieth century. His second book, *The Warburgs*, won the Eccles Prize as the best business book of 1993. His biography of John D. Rockefeller, *Titan*, was a national bestseller and a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. Both *Time* magazine and *The New York Times* listed it among the ten best books of 1998. Chernow lives in Brooklyn, New York.

author’s note

In order to make the text as fluent as possible and the founders less remote, I have taken the liberty of modernizing the spelling and punctuation of eighteenth-century prose, which can seem antiquated and jarring to modern eyes. I have also cured many contemporary newspaper editors of their addiction to italics and capitalized words. Occasionally, I have retained the

original spelling to emphasize the distinctive voice, strong emotion, patent eccentricity, or curious education of the person quoted. I trust that these exceptional cases, and my reasons for wanting to reproduce them precisely, will be evident to the alert reader.



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TO VALERIE,

best of wives and best of women