The story of
Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton

Words by
Margaret McNamara

Artwork by
Esmé Shapiro
About the Book
We all know the story of scrappy Alexander Hamilton and his rise in American politics—but how much do we know about his workmate, inspiration, and stabilizing force, Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton? Margaret McNamara employs the letter-writing style of the period to tell the story of Eliza Hamilton, who was born into a family of considerable wealth, power, and influence in Albany, New York, in 1757. Eliza was expected to marry into a similarly powerful family... until she met and fell in love with the charismatic yet orphaned and unestablished Hamilton. She stood by him throughout his tumultuous life, and after his death, she collected his papers and preserved them for historians (and musical-theater writers) of the future. Eliza outlived Hamilton by fifty years; during that time, she founded the first orphanage in New York State, raised funds for the Washington Monument, and kept the flame of her husband’s memory and achievements alive. Featuring Esmé Shapiro’s exquisite art, which mirrors paintings from eighteenth-century America, this is a beautiful, thoroughly researched, and informative biography of one of America’s founding mothers.

About the Author
MARGARET McNAMARA is the award-winning author of four picture books about Mr. Tiffin’s class: How Many Seeds in a Pumpkin?, The Apple Orchard Riddle, A Poem in Your Pocket, and most recently The Dinosaur Expert. She was married at St. Michael’s Church in New York, where Eliza Hamilton was once a parishioner. Ms. McNamara lives in New York City. Visit her on the Web at margaretmcnamara.net, or follow her on Twitter at @bfeworty99.

About the Illustrator
ESMÉ SHAPIRO is an award-winning illustrator of books for children. She wrote and illustrated her debut book, Yak and Dove, and her other books include The Apple Orchard Riddle, A Poem in Your Pocket, and The Dinosaur Expert. Shapiro lives in New York City. Visit her on the Web at esmesapiro.com, or follow her on Instagram at @esmesapiro.

Pre-Reading Activity
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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Singing Her Life
Hamilton: An American Musical has brought the story of Alexander and Eliza to the attention of the whole country. Have students read the afterward by Phillipa Soo, who originated the part of Eliza on Broadway. Then, as a class, listen to the song “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?” from the musical of Alexander Hamilton’s life. Write out the song online as well. Have students discuss how the book helps them understand the song and how the song enriches reading the book. They should compare the strengths of each medium in conveying information and emotion.

Song: youtube.com/watch?v=ArMK2ZgiyYI
Lyrics: atlanticrecords.com/HamiltonMusical

Presidents One Through Fourteen
Eliza Hamilton explains in her letter that she met the first fourteen presidents of the United States, many of whom may be unfamiliar to your students. She also mentions Martha Washington, wife of the first president. Have pairs of students research one of these presidents or one of their wives, such as Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, or Dolley Madison. After recording their findings in the biographical organizer on this poster, students can share their research with the class through presentations in which one student acts as an interviewer and the other as the president or first lady.

Wonderful Words
As an educated woman of her time, Eliza Hamilton uses a range of words and phrases, such as odious, subtle, froze, foremost, and inscrutable. Some of her vocabulary will be new to your students. Have them read her letter the first time without stopping, trying to understand new words in context. Then have each student compile a list of at least five unfamiliar words or phrases to look up. For each one, they should write out the definition and illustrate it or add a border. Display their work so students can compare what they found.

Every Picture Tells a Story
A heavily illustrated biography such as this one conveys a great deal of information through pictures as well as through words. Have students work in pairs to study a two-page spread to see what shows in terms of clothing and hairstyles, food, pets, buildings, furnishings, the countryside, cities, and so on. The students should note which details in the illustrations are also in the text and which aren’t. Finally, have them consider the emotions that the pictures express. Have each pair report back to the class about what they found most interesting in their study of the illustrations.

PLANNER FOR A PERSONAL LETTER
Fill out this graphic organizer to reflect on Eliza Hamilton’s letter. Then use it to plan a letter of your own, modeled on the book’s narrative. The letter could be written to someone you know now or to an imaginary grandchild when you are as old as Eliza.

BIOGRAPHICAL ORGANIZER
Fill out this graphic organizer by drawing or writing in the boxes to help summarize and understand the key points in a biographical work like Eliza. Use this as a study aid for biographical research on historical figures such as the first fourteen presidents and their wives.

Name: ________________________________
Childhood:

Born:______________________________
Died:______________________________

Key Accomplishments:

Family Members:

Three Adjectives or Interesting Facts:
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Legacy:

Questions in the letter

Information in the letter

Person who will receive the letter

Reason for writing the letter

Information in the letter

Questions in the letter

Reproducible activity!
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**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Singing Her Life**

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Sung: [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArMk2ZagqYI)

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**Every Picture Tells a Story**

A beautifully illustrated biography such as this one conveys a great deal of information through pictures as well as through words. Have students work in pairs to study a two-page-spread to see what shows in terms of clothing of the time, hairstyles, food, pets, buildings, furnishings, the countryside, cities, and so on. The students should note which details in the illustrations are also in the text and which aren’t. Finally, have them consider the emotions that the pictures express. Have each pair report back to the class about what they found most interesting in their study of the illustrations.

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| Person who will receive the letter |
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**Reproducible activity!**

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1. _______________________________

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**Legacy:**

**Reproducible activity!**
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ESMÉ SHAPIRO is an award-winning illustrator of books for children. She wrote and illustrated her debut book, Ooko and Yak and Dove, and illustrated Yoko and Puff, and Taproot, and illustrated Ooko. Ms. Shapiro’s paintings from eighteenth-century America, this is a beautiful, thoroughly researched, and informative biography of one of America’s founding mothers.

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Eliza

THE STORY OF ELIZABETH SCHUYLER HAMILTON

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY GUIDE

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Reproducible activity?

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ESMÉ SHAPIRO is an award-winning illustrator of books for children. She wrote and illustrated her debut book, A Poem in Your Pocket, and illustrated Yik and Dors by Kyo Maclear. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, she has painted his papers and preserved them for historians (and musical-theater writers) of the future. Eliza outlived Hamilton by fifty years; during that time, she founded the first orphanage in New York State, raised funds for the Washington Monument, and kept the flame of her husband’s memory and achievements alive. Featuring Esmé Shapiro’s exquisite art, which mirrors paintings from eighteenth-century America, this is a beautiful, thoroughly researched, and informative biography of one of America’s founding mothers.

Pre-Reading Activity
Tap into students’ prior knowledge by asking them to name the first fourteen presidents of the United States. Many of whom may be unfamiliar to your students. She also introduces an activity in which students research one of these presidents or one of their wives, such as Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, or Dolley Madison. After recording their findings in the biographical organizer on this poster, students can share their research with the class through presentations in which one student acts as an interviewer and the other as the president or first lady.

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Every Picture Tells a Story
A hands-on activity during which students can identify details in the illustrations. Have them compare the strengths of each medium in conveying information and emotion. Read the lyrics online as well. Have students discuss how the book helps them understand the song and how the song enriches reading the book. They should compare the strengths of each medium in conveying information and emotion. Read the lyrics online as well. Have students discuss how the book helps them understand the song and how the song enriches reading the book.