

Hello and Welcome to The Historians—

As you stare in bemusement at the 800 pages of Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton, perhaps the most important thing for you to know is that there is not going to be a test! Do not worry if you do not have time to complete the book before our meeting. You can certainly look up information on Alexander Hamilton to give you an overview of the parts of his life you did not have time to read about. And there are even two summaries of the book available on Amazon. So you can easily bring knowledge of Hamilton, the person, to our meeting.

I am hoping that once you start the book, you will find that there is a reason Lin-Manuel Miranda chose this book at random for his summer reading back in 2004. While you will not get an award winning musical out of your reading, you will find, as he did, that Chernow is an engaging writer with a real gift for bringing history alive. The 800 pages will go much faster than you anticipate. For those of you who are students of literature, I need to let you in on the secret of reading history books. History readers often skim as we read for information or dip in and out of the sections we find the most interesting. All of you should feel free to do the same.

When we meet, we will focus on Hamilton as a man in whose life war and politics intersected in interesting ways, forging a leader unafraid to bring his vision to fruition in a new country. You will note that Chernow often focuses on the two sides to Hamilton that appear in different ways throughout his life. How are his driving ambition and his personal flaws inexorably combined? We will also look at what makes Chernow's Hamilton an example of biography at its best. All of us have been subjected to dull biographies. How does Chernow bring history alive?

I am looking forward to sharing a book that I enjoy with you. And that is our purpose in The Historians, sharing the joys of reading and discussing history. So enjoy Alexander Hamilton as you read as far as you are able, and come prepared to share that joy with all of us.

*Donna McBride*