



Who Tells Your Story?: History, Pop Culture, and Hidden Meanings in the Musical Phenomenon Hamilton

Valerie Estelle Frankel

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Hamilton, the hip-hop rap musical, has revolutionized theater. It's the story of an immigrant, "young, scrappy, and hungry," who kicked off the Revolutionary War and built the central government of today. Within this book appears the musical's backstory with many deeper insights. How do the Schuyler Sisters' signature colors reveal their personalities? Which stage equipment best amplifies the themes? What of the words like "Satisfied" and "My Shot," with so many double and triple meanings? Most importantly, we'll explore how the show hauntingly echoes today's political climate and hottest issues. As the musical extends a mirror of vibrant, diverse, passionate America, it captivates all who discover it.

Who Tells Your Story?: History, Pop Culture, and Hidden Meanings in the Musical Phenomenon Hamilton Details

Date : Published December 15th 2016 by Createspace Independent Publishing Platform

ISBN : 9781541115217

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Format : Paperback 166 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Drama, Plays, Theatre, Politics, Art, Military History, American Revolution

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From Reader Review Who Tells Your Story?: History, Pop Culture, and Hidden Meanings in the Musical Phenomenon Hamilton for online ebook

April Helms says

Rather meh about this one. This book covers the Broadway hit Hamilton, my favorite musical of all time. It includes a lot of the interviews from various sources, television specials and more. But its 90 percent interviews, little author opinion and interpretation, which is what I've been expecting. If you've seen the PBS special, read the Hamiltome, read Chernow's biography, and seen the interviews with the actors, you will get little new from this. Parts of the book were a bit confusing, and it needed one more time with an editor. For example, in one paragraph the author is talking about how Angelica is berating Hamilton for his affair (late in Act II), the next paragraph is about how Eliza is comforting him (in Act I). I caught at least one error, and a couple other things that seemed suspect but I can't verify. I did like the last 20 pages or so, when the talk was about details on the hip-hop influences, much of that I did not know.

Ruth Stevens says

Being a huge Hamilton fan, I feel compelled to read anything about it. This little book is okay--I found out a handful of things I didn't know before. I appreciate the admiration that the author has for Hamilton and Lin-Manuel Miranda. Some of her analyses seemed a bit of a stretch, however, and the lack of editing/proofreading was a little hard to take ("Lorens" instead of "Laurens"?--really?). It's better to just read "Hamilton: The Revolution" by Miranda and McCarter.

amy nadine bower says

some interesting analysis

Roy says

A very good, readable, short take on the background and context of the musical Hamilton. For the reader who wants a quick preparation before seeing the musical, or a quick answer to questions like "How close is this to history?" and "How does this musical fit into the history of music and art in America?", Frankel provides an overview in 150 pages. I think she does best in providing a perspective on the work as theater, but she also addresses the key historical questions. The book provides one of the best bibliographies on the musical available. While most of the points she makes are covered in Hamilton: The Revolution, she does provide some unique insights that I found no where else.

Frankel mainly writes about popular culture from a feminist perspective (e.g. The Girl's Guide to the Heroine's Journey and Empowered: The Symbolism, Feminism, and Superheroism of Wonder Woman), with a focus on illuminating the literary and historical allusions, and the Jungian foundations, in popular media

works. Who Tells Your Story? fits in that pattern, but I think it may be the only time she's written about a stage production. This approach works well for Hamilton, which is full of allusions to the history of American music, the American musical theater, America itself, and the life of Lin-Manuel Miranda. Her writing is very readable, quick and rapid-fire like the musical itself. And the book will definitely improve your scores on the daily Hamilton Trivia quiz on the Hamilton App.

The scene-by-scene analysis (the first half of the book) is best at providing quick answers to "Did that really happen?" and "Why did the lights change between those scenes?" But I think the second half of the book, focused on the relationship of the musical to current events and trends is the stronger part, and the most original. In about a third of the book, she quickly addresses the creative team, the historical trends in American musicals, the history of Hip-hop (I really had no understanding of most of that), and the musical's attempt to re-write our way out of racism and sexism without twisting history too much. Again, much of that was in Hamilton: the Revolution, but Frankel has done it compactly, and in a more focussed manner.

If you want to dive into the history, this is probably not the book for you. I'd recommend Ellis' Founding Brothers. But if you care more about the work as art, this is a very good start, and has a good bibliography to start further research. And, of course, it would be hard to find a better quick read to put the play you spent so much to see into context.

Nancy Franklin says

For the Hamilton obsessed.

I heard the Hamilton cast album long before I was fortunate enough to see the play. Seeing the show clarified some of the scenes for me. This book further clarifies. The author looks at each scene and character in detail as it relates to the costuming, movements, lines and relation to popular culture. It has caused me to listen to the soundtrack again, looking for some of the references.

Charlotte Moore says

I thought this book was interesting in its concept. I liked how it explains things that you may not notice watching the show or listening to the soundtrack. However, I did feel like often it was just restating things that were already being said in interviews just in new words (often while quoting the original interview as well). I also found that the last section (which was about the musical as a whole, its effects on people and how it changed the world) was a little bit redundant as most of it is already known or can easily be found out by reading interviews with Lin-Manuel Maranda and the other key people in the show. Overall I felt that this book is good for people who just want a little bit of background knowledge on the musical but for committed fans, it is probably better to read the source material for the quotes (interviews and Hamilton: The Revolution) to get a more direct and unfiltered account of what is being told to you in this book. Having said all of this, I would read other books by this author, but only on topics, I know less about.

Kimberly says

My entire family are obsessed HamilFans, so we read this together. There were a few new and interesting

nuggets of information discussed, we especially liked the insights into set and costume design and the subtleties that were examined. Also, a favorite was the inclusion of cut songs and exploration of why they were removed from the finished piece. It was interesting to learn about musical influences and how the music evolved based on the individual characteristics of the performers. I don't know if all shows evolve in this way. I used to think that writers and composers would create a show and then their finished project would be cast and performed after the fact, but this show was created and reformed based on the individuals who were cast in their roles and brought their interpretations and musical finesse that culminated in pieces being edited or changed. We love the show and can't get enough of it, this book was a nice little peek behind the scenes for us.

Pat says

This had some interesting information. A great quote from Lin-Manuel. And much more. This is timely, but a bit rushed in my opinion. Nonetheless, I enjoyed reading it and sharing parts with another Hamilton fan.

Diane says

Thorough Discussion

Frankel has drawn together information about the historical Hamilton, Miranda's process of creating Hamilton, the cultural impact of the musical, and a discussion of the literary tropes of the production into a single book. It helps the person who sees the musical once a chance to realize the deeper significance of the language, the choreography, the costumes, and stage design. The book also provides many of the significant musical influences and allusions. By musical, I mean both music, such as references to rap music as well as references to Broadway musicals and how Hamilton fits into the history of each. There is an impressive bibliography and references are included throughout showing the research Frankel did.

Emily Ross says

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

This was a good book. It goes very in detail regarding the song details, who they were influenced by and the decisions behind the choices and the colour clothes the characters are wearing at certain points and who gives it to them.

There were some points that felt quite stretched though.

I did love the Bullet though.

Alda Nielsdottir says

I enjoyed this book so much. The amount of research that went into writing this book is astonishing, and I am so happy I read this book, it makes me like the show even more, and it makes me appreciate the effort that Lin-Manuel Miranda put into the show so much more because it was so much deeper than I originally thought.

This book presents an analysis of everything from the color of the characters' coats to the simplest of props. I am impressed.

If you are one of the many, many people who LOVED Hamilton: An American Musical you have to read this book, you cannot go without reading this book!

Kristin Strong says

Meh. If you're already a "Hamilton" fan, you've read many of the sources the author cites. It was nice to get some insight into the staging/costumes/etc., as I've not yet seen the production, but other than that it was redundant for me.

Still might have gone 4 stars (it's "Hamilton", after all) but for the lousy editing, proofing, whatever. I mean, if you're spelling character names wrong, we have a problem. That's just insulting.

Christine says

Not throwing away my shot

Another terrific look at the great American musical Hamilton. Some terrific insight into the songs and casting of the show as well as the impact it has had on theater goers. Keeping my Hamilton obsession fueled

Bryan says

A simple read, this is the book to pick-up if you've read the official Miranda book detailing the musical but still want more tidbits. For an unofficial work, it effectively fills-in where the heftier official one leaves things out. Quite enjoyable, with a handy bibliography of various multimedia sources that I will surely reference in the future.
