

Reading Primary Documents for Character and Story ***Write a Letter to Hamilton as Peggy***

Goal

To read and mine historical primary documents for “clues” to understand historical people and events on a human level.

Assignment

1. Have students read letters that Alexander Hamilton wrote to Peggy or Eliza (in the links below) to get a sense of Peggy Schuyler’s personality and Hamilton’s persona, their repartee, the kinds of language and literary references they might make, and what Revolutionary concerns they might raise.

From Hamilton to Peggy: February 1780 (sent within days of Hamilton meeting Eliza)

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0613>

From Hamilton to Peggy: Jan. 21, 1781 (right after Hamilton and Eliza marry)

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-1025>

From Hamilton to Eliza: March 17, 1780 (expresses his opinion on who is good enough for Peggy in terms of suitors)

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0622>

From Hamilton to Eliza: Sept. 3, 1780 (First and only mention of the Marquis de Fleury’s romance with Peggy)

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0839>

From Hamilton to Eliza: Sept. 25, 1780 (Hamilton describes Benedict Arnold’s treason and Mrs. Arnold’s distress)

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0869>

From Hamilton to Eliza: Oct. 2, 1780 (traveling with Peggy from Newport to Hartford)

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0884>

From Hamilton to Eliza: Oct. 5, 1780 (Hamilton suggests he’ll write a play for Peggy (two versions))

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-02-02-0888>

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-27-02-0001-0003>

2. Then encourage your students to pick and research a topic or issue that comes up in *Hamilton and Peggy!* that you think Peggy might like to raise with her brother-in-law, who has the ear of General Washington and Congressional leaders.

Potential topics can include but are not limited to: the treatment of our Iroquois allies, the Oneida, by the United States; women's "role" within the Revolution and how Peggy might feel about that; relations, both cooperative/social and tense between the French Army and American civilians that Peggy would have witnessed in Newport, R. I.; lack of medical supplies and help at Albany's hospital; the plight of the Continental soldiers at the Jockey Ridge encampment in Morristown, NJ during "the hard winter" of 1780; empathy for British P.O.W.s that might have developed after spending time with the Baroness von Riedesel; Peggy's dismay at Benedict Arnold's betrayal and concern for Richard Varick, who was then serving on Arnold's staff and who came under suspicion because of Arnold's treason.

3. Finally, students combine their own ideas with their research to create imagined correspondence between Peggy and Hamilton (one letter for each "character," with each letter being 2-3 pages long).

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