



The world's gonna know your name... What's your name man,

Alexander Hamilton

Read through this factsheet on Alexander Hamilton and then use what you know to write a verse or two of a song about him – you can use a tune from your favourite song – or write it as a rap or as a poem!

Born 1755/57 (the date is uncertain) on the island of Nevis in the Caribbean

His mother is **Rachel**, who has English and French ancestry, and his father is **James**, who comes from Scotland

His brother is also called **James**. He's two years older than Alexander

Nevis is largely populated by **enslaved people** who are made to work on the sugar cane plantations in cruel conditions

When Alexander is about **10**, his father **abandons** the family – Alexander will never see him again

Now living on another small island called **St Croix**, Rachel opens a small shop, living above it with her sons

In **1767**, Alexander and his mother both fall ill with a **fever**. Alexander recovers, but Rachel doesn't and **dies**. Alexander and James are **orphans** – so poor they have to be given money to buy shoes for their mother's funeral

A cousin takes the boys in but **dies** two years later – another cousin agrees to look after them only to **die** within two months!

14-year-old Alexander takes a job as a **clerk** with a shipping company; he learns to write, handle money and chart courses for ships sailing from the **Caribbean to New York**

And he starts to write **poetry** – some of his poems are published in the local newspaper

In **1772**, a huge **hurricane** slams into the island and is followed by a vast **tidal wave**. The island is devastated. Alexander writes a description of it for the newspaper...

“the roaring of the sea and wind, the crash of the falling house and the ear piercing shrieks of the distressed.”

The governor is so impressed with his writing a fund is opened to pay for Alexander to be **educated** in New York

He sets sail in **1773**, leaving the Caribbean behind forever. But on route his ship catches **fire** and he helps sailors put it out with buckets of sea water

In **New York** he starts at college, studying law – this is the first time he has been to a school or college

America in **1773** is made up of a series of colonies like **New York, Massachusetts and Virginia** – the states we know today – that are part of the British Empire. They answer to London but they've had enough of British rule

In **1775**, the **American Revolution** begins and Hamilton joins the revolutionary army – but not before he's read every book he can about war, including how the Ancient Greeks fought (you can learn anything from a book!)

He is made a **Captain** and put in charge of a battery of cannons. He proves a **brave and clever soldier** and attracts the attention of **George Washington**, the general in charge of the American army (and the future first president of the USA)

He becomes Washington's **right-hand man** through the war, ending with the **Battle of Yorktown in 1781** when Hamilton leads his men, sword in hand, through a hail of fire to capture the British defences

After the war, Hamilton became a successful lawyer and writer and helped write the **Constitution** – which set out the basic laws of America that remain today. America is still governed today according to the principles of the Constitution written in **1787** by Hamilton and the other founding fathers of America – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay and James Madison

Unlike several of the other founding fathers, Hamilton was **opposed to slavery**, campaigned against it and spoke out about it. The islands in the Caribbean

where he'd grown up had many enslaved peoples and he'd seen the **horror and cruelty** of slavery first hand

He became **Treasury Secretary** – the man who looks after the government's **money** – helped found the bank of New York, founded a newspaper and the US **Coast Guard**

He married **Elizabeth** and they had **8 children**

But Alexander Hamilton did not live happily ever after – on **11 July 1804** he fought a **duel** with **Aaron Burr**, the vice president, to settle an argument. Hamilton was **shot and mortally wounded**. He **died** the following day

