

## MOTIF: WRITING

*"Hamilton literally wrote a verse to get him off an island — that's the most hip-hop shit ever. He transcends the struggle, and if you look at your favorite rapper, that's most likely what they did."* —**Lin-Manuel Miranda**

Writing punctuates and illustrates the major beats of Hamilton's life story:

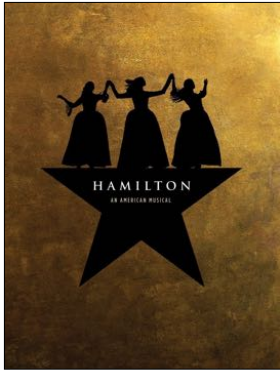
- His writing got him to New York and involved him in the American Revolution— "I wrote my way to revolution,"
- Scored him a wife— "I wrote Eliza love letters until she fell,"
- Secured him a role in the founding of the United States— "I wrote about The Constitution and defended it well" (**The Federalist Papers**),
- Cost him his career and wife— "Alexander Hamilton had a torrid affair / And he wrote it down right there" (**The Reynolds Pamphlet**)
- Led to the duel which would cost him his own life—(**Your Obedient Servant**)



## MOTIF: DUELS

- Miranda makes use of the dramatic **"Rule of Three"** by showing through variations of duels that Hamilton's beliefs about death and honor have a beginning, middle, and an end. You might say that the musical has a subplot of duels.
- **Laurens versus Lee**—Hamilton believes nobody should throw away their shot in a duel.
  - **Philip versus Eacker**—Hamilton believes that honorable people wouldn't kill (or be killed) in a duel. . . . He's wrong.
  - **Hamilton versus Burr**—Hamilton embraces what he sees as an honorable death.





## MOTIF: SATISFIED / ENOUGH

- The women in Hamilton portray different variations on the motif of satisfaction.
- When Hamilton meets Angelica, he's attracted to her because **neither is ever satisfied**, which drives them to succeed ("Nonstop") and to engage with "minds at work" ("The Schuyler Sisters").
- Eliza encourages him to be satisfied, with her repetition of what would be **"enough."**
- Maria Reynolds is the femme fatale who forces Hamilton to choose between being satisfied with his wife and falling to temptation.
- In **"It's Quiet Uptown,"** Hamilton repeats the word "enough" three times while asking Eliza for forgiveness.

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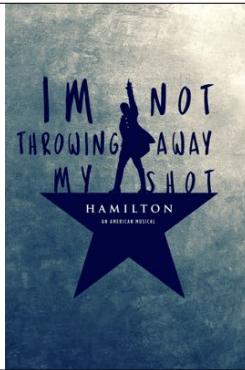
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## MOTIF: FATAL FLAWS & FORESHADOWING

In no particular order, here's repetition of Hamilton's fatal flaws, which usually come in the form of warnings and which foreshadow his impending doom. (**Hamilton is a classical tragedy**)

- Talk less, smile more
- Fools who run their mouths off end up dead
- Keep out of trouble and you double your choices
- If you talk you're gonna get shot
- Burr, I'd rather be divisive than indecisive, drop the niceties
- I will not equivocate on my opinion, I have always worn it on my sleeve
- Dying is easy, young man. Living is harder.
- Don't do a thing. History will prove him wrong.
- Be true (Eliza's father to Hamilton)
- Wait for it
- Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room? Soon that attitude may be your doom!
- Ev'ry proclamation guarantees free ammunition for your enemies!
- Young man, watch your mouth.

In what ways is HAMILTON a tragic hero? Burr?



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## CHARACTER ARCS: ELIZA

### ELIZA: CONTROLLING THE NARRATIVE

- Eliza has no **agency** when she falls in love with Alexander, **"Helpless."** Later, she asks Hamilton to let her "be a part of the narrative." But in **"Burn,"** she takes control by "removing herself from the narrative"—a reversal from where she started.
- In the epilogue, she takes over Hamilton's narrative by **telling his story.**
- Eliza's theme: You can control your own narrative, but history decides whether you've created a legacy. *And when my time is up / Have I done enough?* **Will they tell my story?**



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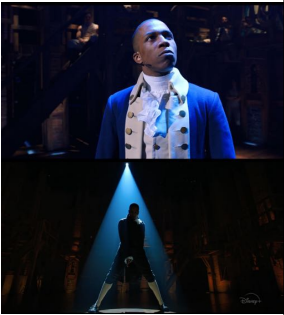
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CHARACTER ARCS: BURR

- AARON BURR: WAIT FOR IT
- At the beginning of Burr's arc, his motto is "Don't let them know what you're against or what you're for." This motto carries through the song "Wait for it," but shifts when he decides he's gotta be "In the Room Where It Happens."
  - The impulses that drive him are his conflicts with Hamilton ("How does [Hamilton] do it? is a constant question of Burr's) and his desire to be there for both Theodosias (Sr. and Jr.).
  - When Burr has fully changed, he has rejected his philosophies of patience and silence and has adopted Hamilton's advice to go after what he wants:  
Burr: I'm chasing what I want / And you know what?  
Hamilton: What?  
Burr: I learned that from you.
  - Burr's motif is highlighted with the word "wait." He's been "lying in wait" all his life to survive. Then finally he jumps on an impulse and challenges Hamilton to a duel (his reversal). But immediately after he shoots, he shouts "Wait!" in regret. His arc, his journey from waiting and having no impact to impulsively ending someone's life and changing history forever, ends in regret of his fatal mistake.
  - Burr's motive also reverses. At the beginning, his motto is "don't let them know what you're against or what you're for." Hamilton criticizes him as having no motive: "If you stand for nothing, Burr, what will you fall for?" But when his daughter is born, he has a purpose: "I'm dedicating every day to you." And he credits his concern for her as the ultimate reason for pulling the trigger on Hamilton: "This man will not make an orphan of my daughter!"
  - Burr's theme: You control your actions, and even one mistake can affect who dies, who lives. I am the one thing in life I can control.



CHARACTER ARCS: HAMILTON

- HAMILTON: MY SHOT
- Hamilton's motto at the beginning of his arc is "I am not throwing away my shot." He "will do what it takes to survive." Though he won't duel with Lee—because doing so would be going against direct orders—he tells Laurens, "Do not throw away your shot." But then Hamilton's ambition, "hunger," and writing abilities become his fatal flaws: he destroys his political ambitions when he can't "Say No" Maria Reynolds and writes "The Reynolds Pamphlet." By the end of his arc, he doesn't want to fight anymore ("Your Obedient Servant"), disobeys the direct order to "Stay Alive," and throws away his shot—aiming for the sky—during his duel with Burr, resulting in a martyr-like death.
  - Hamilton's theme: I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song someone will sing for me
  - The play's theme: You have no control: Who lives, who dies, who tells your story

