



# Eliza

THE STORY OF  
Elizabeth  
Schuyler  
Hamilton

WORDS BY  
Margaret McNamara

ARTWORK BY  
Esmé Shapiro

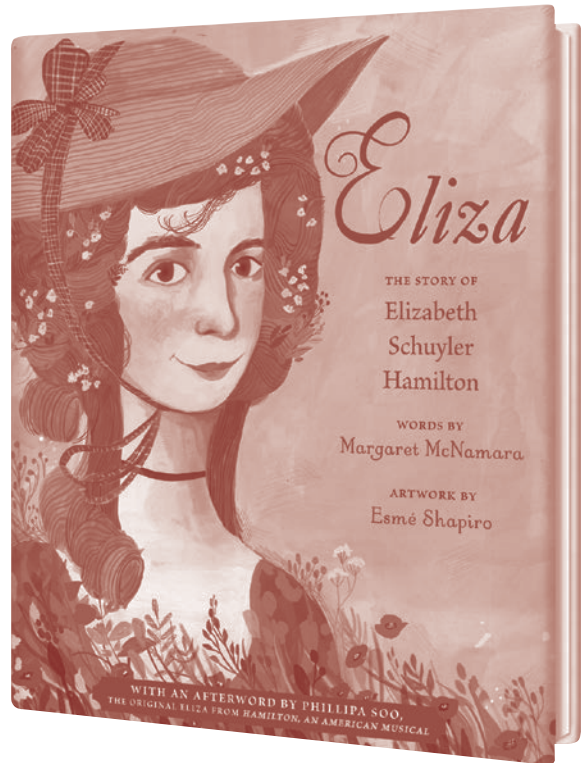
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# Eliza

## THE STORY OF ELIZABETH SCHUYLER HAMILTON CLASSROOM ACTIVITY GUIDE

### About the Book

We all know the story of scrappy Alexander Hamilton and his rise in American politics—but how much do we know about his workmate, inspiration, and stabilizing force, Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton? Margaret McNamara employs the letter-writing style of the period to tell the story of Eliza Hamilton, who was born into a family of considerable wealth, power, and influence in Albany, New York, in 1757. Eliza was expected to marry into a similarly powerful family . . . until she met and fell in love with the charismatic but orphaned and unestablished Hamilton. She stood by him throughout his tumultuous life, and after his death, she collected his papers and preserved them for historians (and musical-theater writers) of the future. Eliza outlived Hamilton by fifty years; during that time, she founded the first orphanage in New York State, raised funds for the Washington Monument, and kept the flame of her husband’s memory and achievements alive. Featuring Esmé Shapiro’s exquisite art, which mirrors paintings from eighteenth-century America, this is a beautiful, thoroughly researched, and informative biography of one of America’s founding mothers.



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### About the Author

MARGARET McNAMARA is the award-winning author of four picture books about Mr. Tiffin’s class: *How Many Seeds in a Pumpkin?*, *The Apple Orchard Riddle*, *A Poem in Your Pocket*, and most recently *The Dinosaur Expert*. She was married at St. Michael’s Church in New York, where Eliza Hamilton was once a parishioner. Ms. McNamara lives in New York City. Visit her on the Web at [margaretmcnamara.net](http://margaretmcnamara.net), or follow her on Twitter at @bbowen949.

### About the Illustrator

ESMÉ SHAPIRO is an award-winning illustrator of books for children. She wrote and illustrated her debut book, *Ooko*, and illustrated *Yak and Dove* by Kyo Maclear. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, she has exhibited at the Society of Illustrators, and her work has been featured in *Taproot* and *Plansponsor* magazines.

### Pre-Reading Activity

The idea of leaving a legacy is important in this book. Eliza Hamilton helped preserve her husband’s legacy and created her own when she founded an orphanage. As a class, discuss the concept of a legacy and have students consider some legacies they know. These could include political figures, athletes, artists, etc. Students should consider what kind of legacy they might leave behind at the end of their lives and write a short essay on it to share with the class.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Singing Her Life

*Hamilton: An American Musical* has brought the story of Alexander and Eliza to the attention of the whole country. Have students read the afterword by Phillipa Soo, who originated the part of Eliza on Broadway. Then, as a class, listen to the song “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story,” the finale about Alexander’s and Eliza’s legacies. Read the lyrics online as well. Have students discuss how the book helps them understand the song and how the song enriches reading the book. They should compare the strengths of each medium in conveying information and emotion.

Song: [youtube.com/watch?v=NrMkdZtqiVI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrMkdZtqiVI)

Lyrics: [atlanticrecords.com/HamiltonMusic/](https://atlanticrecords.com/HamiltonMusic/)

### Presidents One Through Fourteen

Eliza Hamilton explains in her letter that she met the first fourteen presidents of the United States, many of whom may be unfamiliar to your students. She also mentions Martha Washington, wife of the first president. Have pairs of students research one of these presidents or one of their wives, such as Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, or Dolley Madison. After recording their findings in the biographical organizer on this poster, students can share their research with the class through presentations in which one student acts as an interviewer and the other as the president or first lady.

### Wonderful Words

As an educated woman of her time, Eliza Hamilton uses a range of words and phrases, such as *odious*, *tribute*, *solace*, *foresight*, and *sounding board*. Some of her vocabulary will be new to your students. Have them read her letter the first time without stopping, trying to understand new words in context. Then have each student compile a list of at least five unfamiliar words or phrases to look up. For each one, they should write out the definition and illustrate it or add a border. Display their work so students can compare what they found.

### Every Picture Tells a Story

A heavily illustrated biography such as this one conveys a great deal of information through pictures as well as through words. Have students work in pairs to study a two-page spread to see what shows in terms of clothing of the time, hairstyles, food, pets, buildings, furnishings, the countryside, cities, and so on. The students should note which details in the illustrations are also in the text and which aren’t. Finally, have them consider the emotions that the pictures express. Have each pair report back to the class about what they found most interesting in their study of the illustrations.



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This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian, who gives workshops on new children’s and young adult books. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on the 1996 Caldecott Award Committee.

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## PLANNER FOR A PERSONAL LETTER

Fill out this graphic organizer to reflect on Eliza Hamilton's letter. Then use it to plan a letter of your own, modeled on the book's narrative. The letter could be written to someone you know now or to an imaginary grandchild when you are as old as Eliza.

Person who will receive the letter	
Reason for writing the letter	
Information in the letter	
Questions in the letter	



**Reproducible activity!**





# BIOGRAPHICAL ORGANIZER

Fill out this graphic organizer by drawing or writing in the boxes to help summarize and understand the key points in a biographical work like *Eliza*. Use this as a study aid for biographical research on historical figures such as the first fourteen presidents and their wives.

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Born: \_\_\_\_\_ Died: \_\_\_\_\_

Childhood:

Key Accomplishments:

Family Members:

Legacy:

Three Adjectives or Interesting Facts:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Reproducible activity!**

