

Controversial History: An Inquiry Unit

The Death of Alexander Hamilton

Teacher's Guide

Controversial History:

The purpose of this unit is to use a deep investigation of a particular historical event in order to illustrate a broader concept within history. By doing such a deep investigation, students will have the opportunity to learn more about historical events, but to also examine and ultimately use primary and secondary sources as a historian, to construct their own historical narrative of an event and its significance.

Objectives (Historical Skills):

1. The student will be able to understand the influence that bias has in constructing a historical narrative.
2. The student will learn to utilize primary and secondary sources in historical research.
3. The student will practice supporting a particular historical thesis with primary and secondary research.
4. The student will practice presenting content in a webpage (21st century) format that incorporates flexible and creative thinking to present content rather than just writing.
5. The student will practice incorporating primary sources in an authentic way (doing DBQ's without DBQ style)
6. The student will learn to evaluate, critique, and adjust historical arguments based on their historical merits and use of sources.

Objectives (Historical Content)

1. The student will learn about the primary conflict between Federalists and Anti-federalists.
2. The student will learn about the Election of 1800.
3. The student will learn about the duel and death of Alexander Hamilton.
4. (Optional)—If you choose for the longer History Channel Documentary, the student will learn about the role Hamilton played in the economic development of the early republic.

Time Frame:

This inquiry will take approximately 10-15 days (45 minutes per class) to complete.

Targeted Audience:

This inquiry is targeted to high school students, but with more teacher interaction and discussion, this product can be used with 7th or 8th grade students. It was originally presented to 8th grade students asynchronously when created.

Setting Up Your Inquiry:

1. Create a [copy of the inquiry](#) for your own google drive.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ph6-l4px7LLuPU5GizMTSUBKoj75fro0kmZ106brjog/copy>

2. Go to slide 20 of the assignment.
 - a. Make a copy of just this slide. (Select Slide, File→Make a Copy→Selected Slides)
 - b. Delete the Set-Up Instructions box from the copy you just made
 - c. Decide if you want to make 1 copy for all of your courses, or a separate slide for each section.
 - i. Change the share settings so that all people in your domain can EDIT the document. This will allow students to paste their icons on the document, which is critical when they get to the day for this assignment.
 - d. Make the boxes on slides 17-18 a link to the slides you created for that class/section (and rename the box if you need to)
 - e. Delete slide 23.
 - f. If you want to do a feedback assignment separately (Day 12—see below) then create a second copy of each class slide that you can use. You can also just “recycle” the same one at the end by having students change the icon link. This is up to you as a teacher.
3. Look at the rubric (slide 23, 25, 27, 29) and make sure that it matches what you want to use. You can always create a copy of the rubric (File→make a copy), modify it, and share it with your students. You can then make that file the link destination of those slides.
4. Look over the rest of the activity and modify anything that you’d like to. You will want to choose if you want to use the History Channel (2 day) documentary (Slide 2-3) or the Legends and Lies (1 day) documentary (slide 4). The History Channel documentary does a much better job demonstrating Hamilton’s role in the economic development of the early Republic, but the Legends and Lies documentary gives far better treatment to the actual duel, and the Federalist/Anti-Federalist Debate. If you really wanted to, you could move the Legends and Lies documentary to Day 6 (before students choose an interpretation.) There is a killer discussion you could have just in comparing the documentaries, and the ways they portrayed the duel differently.

Assigning Your Inquiry:

1. This inquiry can be conducted 100% asynchronously if you’d like to. This is less than ideal as far as discussion is concerned, and there is a lot of opportunity to discuss in person the material, but it works asynchronously very well.
2. I suggest assigning the slide show to students by making a copy of the whole slides for each student, since it allows them to put their answers on the slide show, and refer to it for their project, but that’s up to you.

- I'd also make a copy of the rubric and assign that as a separate assignment in google classroom, since this is the easiest way to collect and grade the website project at the end of the activity.

Teaching Your Inquiry:

A note on the days, this is a rough framework. The days are suggestions based on a 45-minute class period structure, but you should feel free to edit as meets the needs of your project.

Day 1	<p>Show the documentary film that you have selected for your course. If wishing to shorten the length of the overall inquiry, it is recommended that you use the Legends and Lies documentary, as it will only take one day.</p> <p>Students will watch and answer questions.</p>
Day 1a (optional)	<p>If you choose to use the History Channel documentary, plan on using two days.</p> <p>Students will watch and answer questions</p> <p>Please note, there is a whole chapter on the sex scandal that resulted from Hamilton's extra-marital affair. This "chapter" of the documentary should be skipped if you believe it is inappropriate for your audience. The teacher-creator of this resource suggests previewing all videos to ensure its appropriateness for the audience you will be showing it to.</p>
Day 1b (optional)	<p>If you choose to use the History Channel documentary, plan on using two days.</p> <p>Students will watch and answer questions</p> <p>Please note, there is a whole chapter on the sex scandal that resulted from Hamilton's extra-marital affair. This "chapter" of the documentary should be skipped if you believe it is inappropriate for your audience. The teacher-creator of this resource suggests previewing all videos to ensure its appropriateness for the audience you will be showing it to.</p>
Day 2	<p>Secondary Research:</p> <p>Students will read an informational text and answer questions about the historical event. They will also watch a short video about Hamilton regarding the pistols which were used for the duel.</p> <p>Possible Discussion Points: I would use slide #8 to discuss the technical and legal differences between the three degrees of murder, since much of the interpretation rides on these technical definitions. It should be possible by this point to discuss the potential bias of the documentary</p>

	that you have watched in class and compare/contrast it to the bias expressed in the short film.
Day 3	<p>Primary Research: This is a link to a youtube dramatization of the actual letters sent back and forth between Hamilton and Burr. There is a lot of good material here, and the accompanying guide links to the actual documents as well, so they can be referred to later.</p> <p>Possible Discussion: This would be a great place to discuss the way that the documentary film you ended up watching interpreted the letters that actually went back and forth between the two men, and to compare the depiction of the events leading up to the duel with the actual primary sources.</p>
Day 4	<p>Primary Research: This is a link to the account given by Pendleton (Hamilton’s Second) of the duel. This account is key in our interpretations of Hamilton as having wasted his shot.</p> <p>Secondary Research: This article discusses <i>Hamilton</i> the play and discusses the ways that the Broadway musical interpreted the historical event.</p> <p>Possible Discussion: This is a great place to compare and contrast the play (which many students have familiarity with) with the actual event. It’s also a good place to discuss whether or not it is ok to take a historical event and change it in order to make a more compelling story for our modern times, and under what circumstances that it/is not ok.</p>
Day 5	<p>Secondary Research: This article explains dueling culture in the 18th and 19th centuries and helps us to understand why Hamilton and Burr did what they did.</p> <p>Possible Discussion: Students may need help understanding why Hamilton felt like he couldn’t back out. The concept of “honor” in the early 19th century is very foreign to our current culture, so dueling seems extreme. It is especially important to highlight the very realistic expectation that each man may have had that nobody would die in the duel.</p>
Day 6 (optional)	<p>Prior to Day 6, this would be a good place to show the second documentary if you had the time. It may not be worth it, or you could assign it as extra credit for homework. There is so much that could be done comparing the documentaries and their treatments of the duel (why they showed some things and not others). You could even assign only a clip of the documentary you didn’t show in class to illustrate this. If you did Legends and Lies in class, it’s only a 10-minute clip in the History Channel documentary (at the end), so if I was short on time, I</p>

	would still show just the very end of the second documentary here just to have this conversation, but that's up to you.
Day 6	<p>Have students make their own copy of the doc on slide 17 and answer the reflection questions. (15-20 minutes).</p> <p>Have students make an icon for themselves (you can do this as a class with you showing them how to do it).</p> <p>Have students paste their icons on the class slide that you created and shared with them near the picture that best represents their interpretation. They should change the share settings of their interpretation doc so that everyone in their domain can edit, so they can leave feedback for each other.</p> <p>Students can easily see and leave written feedback for one another from the class slide, since each icon is a link to a different opinion. They should critique each other, and then respond to at least one person's critique.</p> <p>This is probably a day and a half, and depending on your time constraints, you will want to do the rest in the next class or assign as homework.</p> <p>**It is important here to highlight that it is fine to change one's opinion if better points are made. If in reading other's ideas, or in reading the critiques of peers one changes their mind, this is the entire point of historical debate. No student should feel like they have to make an argument that they have been convinced is incorrect.**</p>
Day 7 (alternative)	<p>Bias. This is a great activity to do with students to practice evaluating bias based on primary sources. We did this as a class as discussion for two of the men, then I let them finish it on their own and post it as the bonus content (Day 9). This didn't throw off the timeline (4 days of website) and still let students engage more with primary sources from the event directly.</p>
Day 8	<p>This is the first day of the Website Project. The primary goal of this day is to get students to outline different historical interpretations of the event. This is essentially for them, as a historian, to acknowledge that there are different historical positions, and that different groups of people have used the narrative or story in different ways.</p> <p>This assignment lends itself very well to a Top 5 list (Day 9), so if you have kids who struggle with time management, you can suggest or even require it.</p>

<p>Day 9</p>	<p>Historical Narrative. This is the day that students are encouraged to write their own historical narrative, using primary sources. Their narrative should incorporate the sources and activities that they have used in the past but should clearly demonstrate a distinct perspective of the past. This should not simply be a summary, it should be a short story about the past, based in facts.</p> <p>**It is important here to highlight that students may try to combine more than one interpretation into a single narrative, and that is ok. However, the narrative should be consistent, and should NOT say something like “some people say....but others say....” That is the point of Day 7’s assignment, and is not the point of Day 8.**</p>
<p>Day 10</p>	<p>**Skip this if you did it in class and you’re willing to count it as the bonus content for this project.**</p> <p>Bonus Content. Days 10-11 are the difference between a website project and an essay on a webpage project. The goal here is to create interactive or dynamic content that is placed on the website. Students need to learn to communicate ideas in 21st century ways, not just typing paragraphs, and that’s what this day is for. The green “instructions” button takes students to a google slide show that has layered curriculum.</p> <p>Layered Curriculum is basically the idea that some assignments are easier to complete than others, and therefore require more credit. In my 8th grade class, I required students to embed 2 “points” of work for general education students, and 4 for gifted and talented. This meant that G/T students were creating more content. I often encouraged students to combine the work from day 7 and day 9, that way they had time to create the assignments.</p> <p>Each assignment has its own directions page and rubric if you want to use it. They also have how-to videos and templates that can be created and used by students. There is a ton of flexibility here, and students always surprise me in what they come up with.</p>
<p>Day 11</p>	<p>Website Check. This is a catch-all catch up day for students, so they can finish one of the previous days if it wasn’t done. There is a checklist that ensures that all content is published and shared in a way that is able to be graded by you. I’d encourage you to use it or just have students attach their actual website from google sites as a file. If you choose to do it that way, it’s best to use preview mode to grade the assignment, since it’s easier to click on content that way.</p>

	<p>**The #1 issue I have here is that students embed a google slide show, but don't share it with me. When they are in preview mode, they see it (since it is automatically shared with themselves) but as the teacher I cannot. The checklist and videos anticipate this, but students don't always use that. Just be prepared for it.</p>
Day 12 (optional)	<p>It would be very easy to recycle the interpretation page activity, and have students share published links of their websites that match the interpretations, and then have them critique each other's webpages. I'd suggest having them evaluate each line of the rubric separately and give suggestions for improvement.</p> <p>This allows students to see one another's' work without copying it, and to practice critiquing historical narratives.</p>