

“WHAT’D I MISS?”

Featuring over 20,000 words squeezed into a little under two and a half hours, *Hamilton* clocks in at about 144 words per minute. Covering the complete life story of Alexander Hamilton through a variety of stylings at a rapid pace may have made it easy to miss some of the hip-hop, cultural and Broadway references peppered throughout the show. We’re taking a look at some of them; see if you can catch them the next time you’re rocking out!

ON BROADWAY

YOU’VE GOT TO BE CAREFULLY TAUGHT

Referenced in: “My Shot”

Sung by: Aaron Burr

When we meet the revolutionary heroes in the early stages of Act One, Burr pops in with the line, “You’ve got to be carefully taught.” This is a reference to Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *South Pacific*, a musical that explores racism during World War II. Burr imparts this bit of knowledge just as they finish singing about their dreams of freedom and equality.

A MODERN MAJOR GENERAL

Referenced in: “Right Hand Man”

Sung by: George Washington

Upon meeting George Washington, he announces himself as a “Model of a modern Major General.” This line gives a nod to the Gilbert & Sullivan classic *The Pirates of Penzance*. He also builds on the theme of alliteration continuing his self-description as “The venerated Virginian veteran.”

NOBODY NEEDS TO KNOW

Referenced in: “Say No to This”

Sung by: Alexander Hamilton

While it may sound like an obvious line to end a song in which the main character engages in a series of extramarital encounters, this line actually references a song in the off-Broadway Jason Robert Brown musical *The Last Five Years*, which also deals with infidelity.

I KNOW HIM

Referenced in: Multiple

Sung by: King George III

The arbitrary appearances of King George III is a subtle allusion to Lin Manuel Miranda’s other hit musical *In The Heights*. In a similar fashion, the Piraguero character pops in throughout the course of the show to provide some levity in an otherwise rapidly-paced production.

SIT DOWN, JOHN

Referenced in: “The Adams Administration”

Sung by: Alexander Hamilton

What may just seem like an off-the-cuff outburst of frustration in Act Two, Alexander Hamilton’s exclamation of “Sit down, John” is a reference to the musical *1776* which features a similarly-titled song. “The Adams Administration” was originally twice its current length and included other references to *1776*. However, it was eventually trimmed to its current state to keep the show moving.

RAPPER’S DELIGHT

WHAT’S YOUR NAME?

Referenced in: “My Shot”

Sung by: Company

Hamilton spelling out his name to introduce himself in “My Shot” uses the same cadence as Notorious B.I.G in “Going Back to Cali.” The concept of self-introduction is also a common theme used by many hip-hop artists.

TEN DUEL COMMANDMENTS

Referenced in: “Ten Duel Commandments”

Sung by: Company

The second Notorious B.I.G. reference, both the title and song style can be attributed to “Ten Crack Commandments” which also begins with a count from 1 to 9 and profiles street life in the 1990s. Aside from the duels later in the show, this melody also appears in “Take a Break” when Eliza is teaching nine-year-old Philip piano; a bit of foreshadowing to the young Hamilton’s fate.

MEET ME INSIDE

Referenced in: “Meet Me Inside”

Sung by: Company

The company repetitively whispering “Meet em’ inside” when Washington calls Hamilton into his office after the duel between Lee and Laurens is a throwback to the “Meet me outside” lyrics from DMX’s “Party Up.” In both cases it signifies something is about to go down. .

ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

Referenced in: “Cabinet Battle #1”

Sung by: George Washington

Washington’s introduction to the first cabinet battle “You could’ve been anywhere in the world tonight, but you’re here with us” is a paraphrased intro from Jay-Z’s “Izzo.”

BRING THE THUNDER

Referenced in: “Cabinet Battle #1”

Sung by: Thomas Jefferson

After Washington pulls Hamilton aside following the first cabinet battle, Jefferson comments, “Sometimes it makes me wonder why I even bring the thunder,” a shout-out to Grandmaster Flash’s “The Message” where he raps “Sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under.”



STYLE IS EVERYTHING

THE TEN DOLLAR FOUNDING FATHER

Referenced in: Multiple

Sung by: Multiple

Some characters in the show are tied to certain musical instruments. Aaron Burr and Angelica Schuyler are represented by the cello and George Washington is frequently accompanied by the Wurlitzer. However, no connection is more prevalent than Alexander Hamilton and the drums. Right from the opening notes, he is the force driving the beat of the musical.

WORK WORK

Referenced in: “The Schuyler Sisters”

Sung by: The Schuyler Sisters

Musical director Alex Lacamoire based the sound for “The Schuyler Sisters” on Destiny’s Child. This was a last-minute change between the show moving to Broadway from the Public Theater after many reviewers compared the sisters to the R&B trio. Lacamoire was also inspired by listening to the sisters singing Destiny’s Child songs backstage.

THIS ONE’S MINE

Referenced in: “Helpless”

Sung by: Elizabeth Schuyler

If the Schuyler Sisters are Destiny’s Child, then Eliza is Beyoncé as some of her lyrics were specifically designed in this same style. Her articulation of “Stressin” and “Blessin” in “Helpless” mimics the “Houston rock it” line from Beyoncé’s “Countdown.”

DA DA DA DA DA

Referenced in: “You’ll Be Back”

Sung by: King George III

King George III, appropriately enough, has his own distinct British invasion-y sound each time he makes an appearance. While the references aren’t pulled from lyrics, the musical styling pays tribute to Beatles songs such as “Penny Lane” and “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite.”

YOU SIMPLY MUST MEET THOMAS

Referenced in: “What’d I Miss?”

Sung by: Aaron Burr

When we first meet Thomas Jefferson at the top of act two, his song style has a jazzy, swing feel to it. While he’s still dropping future-presidential rhymes, there’s a distinct difference from the hip-hop beats coming from his revolutionary countrymen in act one. This was done intentionally to represent how out of touch Jefferson was with “modern” America after spending much of his time during the war in France.

