

Magdalen Crist - War of Two by John Sedgwick

John Sedgwick writes *War of Two: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and the Duel That Stunned the Nation* to shed a new light on an old story. Sedgwick writes an overly detailed and intimate parallel biography of two founding fathers to dive more in-depth into the connections between them. He evaluated not only their actions but their minds and family history in an attempt to explain their rivalry. His details come through in his repetition of sentence structure and complex descriptions of personal conflicts.



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Sedgwick's introduction tells the simple story of Hamilton calling Burr "dangerous" at a dinner party, acknowledging the classic American view of the duel story. In a way, the structure of his book starts with the end to further his purpose of finding the reason for the outcome throughout the book. The image above shows the American perspective before this book, along with other books and a Broadway hit musical seeking to find a more extensive backstory. Sedgwick's repeated sentence structure "If Hamilton was ___ then Burr was ___" clearly contrasts the lives and political views of the two men throughout their whole lives. Perhaps the general differences in early lives and family background caused the rivalry.

Sedgwick goes into a dramatic amount of detail regarding the personal lives of Hamilton and Burr. He starts the book with not them as babies or children, but further back their family history to their grandparents. He inserts parts of personal letters as evidence throughout the book. These accounts, such as the letters between Hamilton and John Laurens, make the historical biographies more entertaining, as many of the founding fathers' lives seem distant and glorified. Sedgwick definitely offers a fresh, personal, and irreverent version of the story as he does not shy away from including excessive details of the men's sexual lives, which may have even been unnecessary. Sedgwick's style of alternating structure and intimate detail keeps the reader interested.



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Works Cited

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