

My Shot

In the musical *Hamilton*, the character Alexander Hamilton sings, “I am not throwing away my shot.” The actor who first sang those words was Lin-Manuel Miranda. Not only did he sing them, he wrote them too. Although they were about Hamilton, they were also about him.

Lin-Manuel was born in 1980 in New York City. His family was from Puerto Rico. He often spent summers on the island with his relatives. As a kid, he spoke English at school and Spanish at home. He enjoyed acting from an early age and performed in many of his school’s plays and musicals.

During his second year in college, Lin-Manuel started writing a musical of his own. It was called *In the Heights*. It was set in Washington Heights, the Latino neighborhood where he grew up.

Lin-Manuel graduated college in 2002. He continued to write his musical while working part-time. In 2008, *In the Heights* came to Broadway. Lin-Manuel was the star. The musical was a hit and won four Tony awards.

Around this time, Lin-Manuel read a biography of Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of the United States. Lin-Manuel said, “I had to learn a lot about American history that I didn’t know. You have to put yourself not only in their shoes, but in their skin, and in their heart, to understand how they saw the world.”

Lin-Manuel did put himself in Hamilton’s shoes, skin, and heart, as he began creating a musical to tell his story. While writing the play he focused on diversity. He chose nonwhite actors to play the white historical figures. And he composed the music as a mix of rap, hip-hop, pop, and show tunes.

Hamilton came to Broadway in 2015. It was a big success. It won the Pulitzer Prize for drama and eleven Tony Awards. Lin-Manuel shot to fame as an actor, singer, rapper, composer, and writer.

Since the success of *Hamilton*, Lin-Manuel has continued to produce amazing work. He wrote the songs for the Disney movies *Moana* and *Encanto*. He also starred in the film *Mary Poppins Returns*.

Perhaps most importantly, Lin-Manuel has given back to his community. In 2016 he raffled tickets to his last performance in *Hamilton*. The raffle raised two million dollars to help Latino children and families around the country. He also helped the people of Puerto Rico when the island was hit by a hurricane in 2017. Lin-Manuel has achieved success in work and in life. He is still working, creating, and giving back. Like his character Alexander Hamilton, he is not throwing away his shot.



This page has been intentionally left blank.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Which musical did Lin-Manuel write first?
 - a. Hamilton
 - b. In the Heights
 - c. Encanto
 - d. Mary Poppins Returns

2. How did Lin-Manuel raise money for Latino children and families?
 - a. He raffled tickets to Hamilton
 - b. He sold sheet music to Moana
 - c. He saved his own salary
 - d. He traveled during a hurricane

3. Which of the following is probably NOT a reason that Lin-Manuel focused on diversity when writing *Hamilton*?
 - a. His family is from Puerto Rico and he grew up speaking Spanish
 - b. He wanted people of all races to put themselves in the shoes, skin, and heart of the founding fathers
 - c. He wanted to erase history
 - d. He wanted to create opportunities for diverse actors to be on Broadway

4. Which awards are given to Broadway plays?
 - a. Emmy Awards
 - b. Tony Awards
 - c. Academy Awards
 - d. Oscar Awards

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

1. Which musical did Lin-Manuel write first?
 - a. Hamilton
 - b. In the Heights**
 - c. Encanto
 - d. Mary Poppins Returns
2. How did Lin-Manuel raise money for Latino children and families?
 - a. He raffled tickets to Hamilton**
 - b. He sold sheet music to Moana
 - c. He saved his own salary
 - d. He traveled during a hurricane
3. Which of the following is probably NOT a reason that Lin-Manuel focused on diversity when writing *Hamilton*?
 - a. His family is from Puerto Rico and he grew up speaking Spanish
 - b. He wanted people of all races to put themselves in the shoes, skin, and heart of the founding fathers
 - c. He wanted to erase history**
 - d. He wanted to create opportunities for diverse actors to be on Broadway
4. Which awards are given to Broadway plays?
 - a. Emmy Awards
 - b. Tony Awards**
 - c. Academy Awards
 - d. Oscar Awards