Alexander (Alec) Hamilton’s childhood shaped him into the founding father he became. Use these discussion questions and activities to talk with your child about Alec’s character and experiences, based on the book Alexander Hamilton: Young Statesman by Helen Boyd Higgins.

Who was Alec? Alexander (Alec) Hamilton grew up on the island of Nevis in the Caribbean where he lived with his mother and uncles until 1772 when he turned 17 and went to America for college. As a child, Alec went to school, helped on his uncle’s sugar plantation, and worked for Beekman and Cruger, an import/export business. Throughout his childhood, he learned about history, economics, and business, which helped him later in life. Talk with your child about the kinds of jobs they have done or want to do, and what types of subjects in school might help them in those jobs.

Alec was known for having a “quick temper.” This meant he would easily become frustrated and angry. As Alec got older, he found ways to channel his temper into projects that he was passionate about. Talk with your children about situations where they become frustrated and angry and how to work through those emotions. What ways can they turn these feelings of frustration into positive actions?

Commerce and trade were a constant in Alec’s childhood. Alec helped at his uncle’s sugar plantation, went to the port where ships carried goods to and from the island, and worked at an import/export business. To think about the real impact of trade, have your child look at the labels on the clothing they wear. See how many different countries of origin you can find on the labels. Talk about how those countries are selling clothing to our country. Why might they do that? What kinds of goods might our country sell to other countries?

Alec wrote an article about a hurricane that swept through the island of Nevis in 1772 that was published in the Royal Danish American Gazette. The article moved the people of the island so much that they pooled enough money to buy Alec a ticket to the American colonies. Have your child write their own short article about a current event. Encourage them to choose words that will move people to action; draw original illustrations as well.

A fully digitized copy of the article by Hamilton is available from the Library of Congress at: https://blogs.loc.gov/catbird/2017/10/see-the-hurricane-letter-that-changed-alexander-hamiltons-life/

Alec had big goals as a child. He desperately wanted to go to America to attend college and worked toward that goal by finding a job and saving money. Ask your child what goals they have for the future and how they can save money to achieve them. Look in magazines, newspapers, and online to find pictures of things they might like to achieve or purchase in the future and create their own vision board. Talk about ways they can save money to achieve those goals.