

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO TECUMSEH

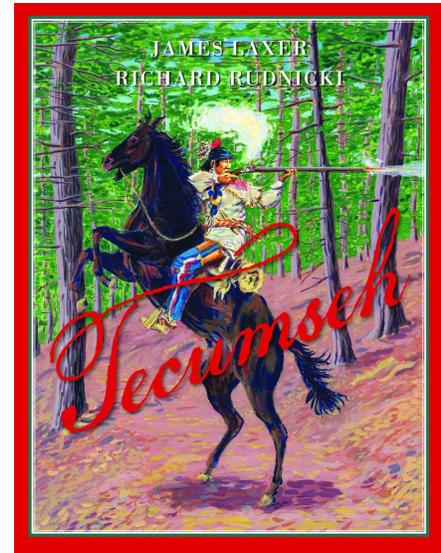
Written by James Laxer and illustrated by Richard Rudnicki

ABOUT THE BOOK

Two hundred years after his death, the Shawnee chief Tecumseh is still considered one of the greatest leaders of North America's First Peoples. This richly illustrated biography tells the story of his remarkable life, culminating in the War of 1812.

Tecumseh, born in 1768, lived during turbulent times: the thirteen colonies revolted against British rule, becoming the United States in 1776, and settlers had begun to push westward, rapidly encroaching on traditional First Nations lands. Tecumseh realized that unless the tribes came together to form a great confederacy, they would never be able to hold on to their land. And so he began to travel great distances, encouraging many tribes to join forces with him against the Americans.

On June 18, 1812, the U.S. declared war on Great Britain. Tecumseh sided with the British, hoping to create an independent state north of the Ohio River. He developed a magnetic friendship with Major-General Isaac Brock, commander of the British troops in Upper Canada, and together they took Fort Detroit. Tecumseh and Brock agreed that one of the goals of their alliance should be to restore lands that had been taken from Indigenous peoples. But shortly afterward Brock was killed in the Battle of Queenston Heights. Tecumseh rallied those loyal to him and fought on relentlessly, but he was killed in the Battle of Moraviantown in 1813. Tecumseh's dreams were never fulfilled, but he remains a symbol of justice for Indigenous Peoples in North America.



Tecumseh

Written by James Laxer

Illustrated by Richard Rudnicki

JUVENILE FICTION

Reading ages 9 to 12

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Laxer (1941–2018) is the award-winning author of more than 25 books, including *Staking Claims to a Continent*, the number-one national bestseller *Tecumseh and Brock: The War of 1812*, *Stalking the Elephant: My Discovery of America* and *The Border: Canada, the U.S., and Dispatches from the 49th Parallel*. He taught political science in the Department of Equity Studies at York University.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Richard Rudnicki is an artist known for his paintings of Nova Scotia as well as for his award-winning children's books. His picture books include *Tecumseh* by James Laxer, which was nominated for the Children's Literature Roundtables of Canada's Information Book Award; *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged* by Jody Nyasha Warner, which was shortlisted for the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction; and *Gracie, the Public Gardens Duck* by Judith Meyrick, winner of the Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Excellence in Illustration.

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BEFORE READING

Students should be introduced to the maps on the front endpaper to explore the thirteen colonies that would become the United States, as well as the 1800–1809 map of North America.

As a class, examine the illustrations on the first spread and discuss what life would be like living as a Shawnee.

Have a map displayed so students can identify where places are throughout the reading of Tecumseh. Examples include Pekowi (present-day Springfield, Ohio), the Mississippi River, the Missouri River, etc. There is a detailed map at the end of the book that you may wish to have students access in order for them to gain a foundation of where places are located in relation to where they live.

In the early 19th century, tension mounted between the United States and Britain. Britain waged war against Napoleonic France and blockaded European ports, preventing neutral American merchants from reaching their European markets. As well, the Americans were pushing westward into Native lands of the Ohio valley, and coming into conflict with British garrisons in those territories where sovereignty was not defined. American sentiment was growing in support of a Canadian invasion that would remove the British from North America and defeat their Native allies. The commander of the British forces in Canada was Isaac Brock. He allied with Shawnee chief Tecumseh, who wanted to hinder American expansion and organize an Indian confederacy.

Lesson 14: Sir Isaac Brock and Tecumseh, from CBC's Canada: A People's History website:

**[https://www.cbc.ca/history/
LESSONSSE4EP5CH1PA14LE.html](https://www.cbc.ca/history/LESSONSSE4EP5CH1PA14LE.html)**

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO TECUMSEH

BEFORE READING

Have students engage in a discussion around the quote “No tribe has the right to sell land, even to each other, much less to strangers. Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth? Didn't the Great Spirit make them all for the use of his

children?” Ask them: How does this contrast with present-day practices of selling natural resources? What do you know about Tecumseh from this quote?

In many Indigenous nations, culture, way of life and identity are very difficult to separate from the land. One cannot exist without the other, and environmental stewardship is essential to ensuring that the land and water are protected to sustain life.



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DURING READING

Vocabulary

As a class, create a word wall based on new words encountered while reading Tecumseh, or have the students independently create their own vocabulary graphic organizer. Here is a sample of some terms that they may wish to include.

clan
wigwam
abhorrence
Wampum
confederacy
garrison
militiamen
skirmishes
colonist
Kispoko — the warrior division within the Shawnee tribe
Pekowi — the division within the Shawnee tribe that maintained traditions; also the name of a settlement where Tecumseh lived
blackhouse
haversack
prophet

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO TECUMSEH

DURING READING

Clan Systems

Ask students: What clan systems and divisions were mentioned on pages 10–11? Why was it important that everyone had a specific role to play in the tribe? As a class, revisit the illustration on the first spread and make connections to the text.

The Ojibwe people were divided into a number of **doodem** (clans) named for animal totems. This served as a system of government as well as a means of dividing labor. The five main totems were Crane, Catfish, Loon, Bear and Marten. The Crane totem was the most vocal among the Ojibwe, and the Bear was the largest — so large, in fact, that it was sub-divided into body parts such as the head, the ribs and the feet.

<http://bit.ly/2vfk1P>

Compare and Contrast

Ask students to compare and contrast Tecumseh and his brother Cheeseekau. Use a Venn diagram to record student thinking. This activity can be done in small groups or individually.

Timeline

Have students, as a class or in groups, create a timeline of events as you progress through the book, noting significant events that take place in Tecumseh's life. On the last page of the book, there is an "Events in the Life of Tecumseh" section ranging from when he was born to all major events that took place up until his death.

A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO TECUMSEH

DURING READING

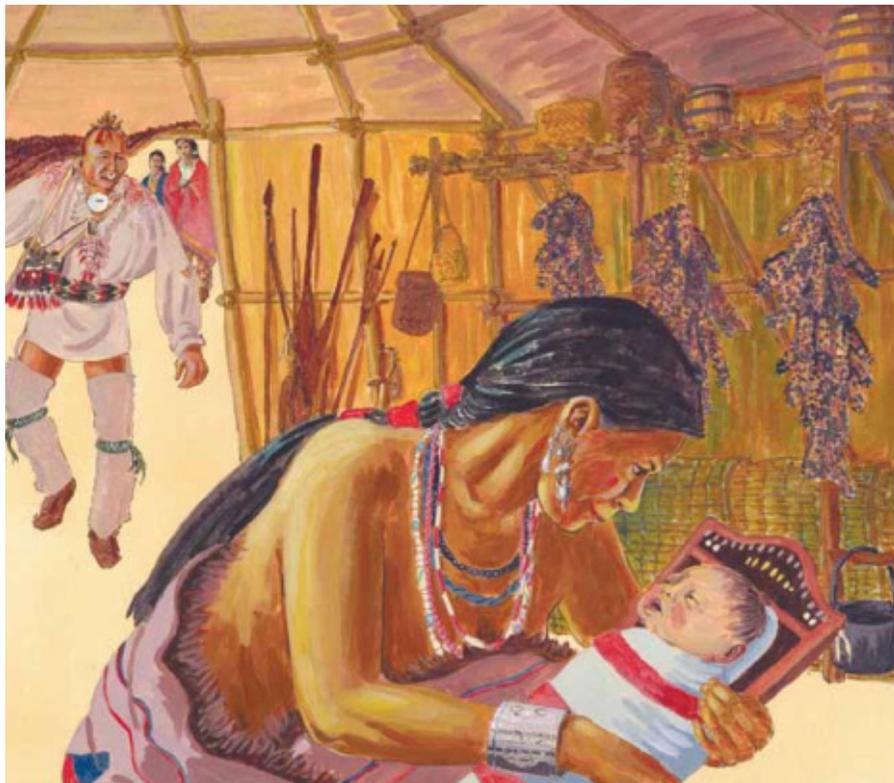
Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with students: Why did Tecumseh support the British in the War of 1812? What was the goal of this alliance?

What were the consequences of the War of 1812 for Tecumseh and the great confederacy? Why do you think that Tecumseh fought and eventually died during the Battle of Moraviantown instead of retreating with Procter's troops?

Illustrator's Message

Many of the illustrations are quite detailed. Have students choose one and write about what message the illustrator is trying to evoke.



A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO TECUMSEH

AFTER READING

Discuss with students: What is the purpose of this text? Did the author, James Laxer, achieve his goal?

Writing Activities

These questions can be used for students to write paragraphs, essays or other forms of reflections:

- What made Tecumseh an effective and inspirational leader and hero? How did he go from being the leader of a single village to forming the great confederacy?
- Did the War of 1812 play a significant role in shaping Canada into what it is today? Refer to specific historical events when writing your opinion. How do you think the War of 1812 is important to Canadians today?
- Write a diary entry set during the War of 1812. Write on the same topic from three perspectives: soldier, civilian, Indigenous person.
- Write a news report on one of the battles that took place in the book.
- Interview one of the key figures in Tecumseh. What would you ask them? How do you think they would respond? You can produce a video, perform a partner skit or publish a piece of writing.
- What do you think the outcome would have been if Brock and Tecumseh were not killed? Do you think Brock would have honored his promise to Tecumseh? How would this have impacted Canada?

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CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Art — Visual Timelines

Have students depict events in different artistic mediums to help support the timeline with visual references.

Clay Models

Using clay, students can create a commemorative statue of Tecumseh, depicting a significant event that took place in his life and the contributions he made to Canada.



A TEACHERS' GUIDE TO TECUMSEH

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Web Resources

The War of 1812:

Marsh, James H., and Pierre Berton. "War of 1812." The Canadian Encyclopedia, published March 6, 2012; updated March 20, 2015. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/war-of-1812>

Indigenous contributions to the war:

"Indigenous contributions to the War of 1812." Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, accessed October 30, 2018. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1338906261900/1338906300039>

Tecumseh:

"A Question of Loyalties — Tecumseh: Seeking a Nation Within a Nation." CBC's Canada: A People's History, accessed October 30, 2018. <http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPCONTENTSE1EP5CH12LE.html>