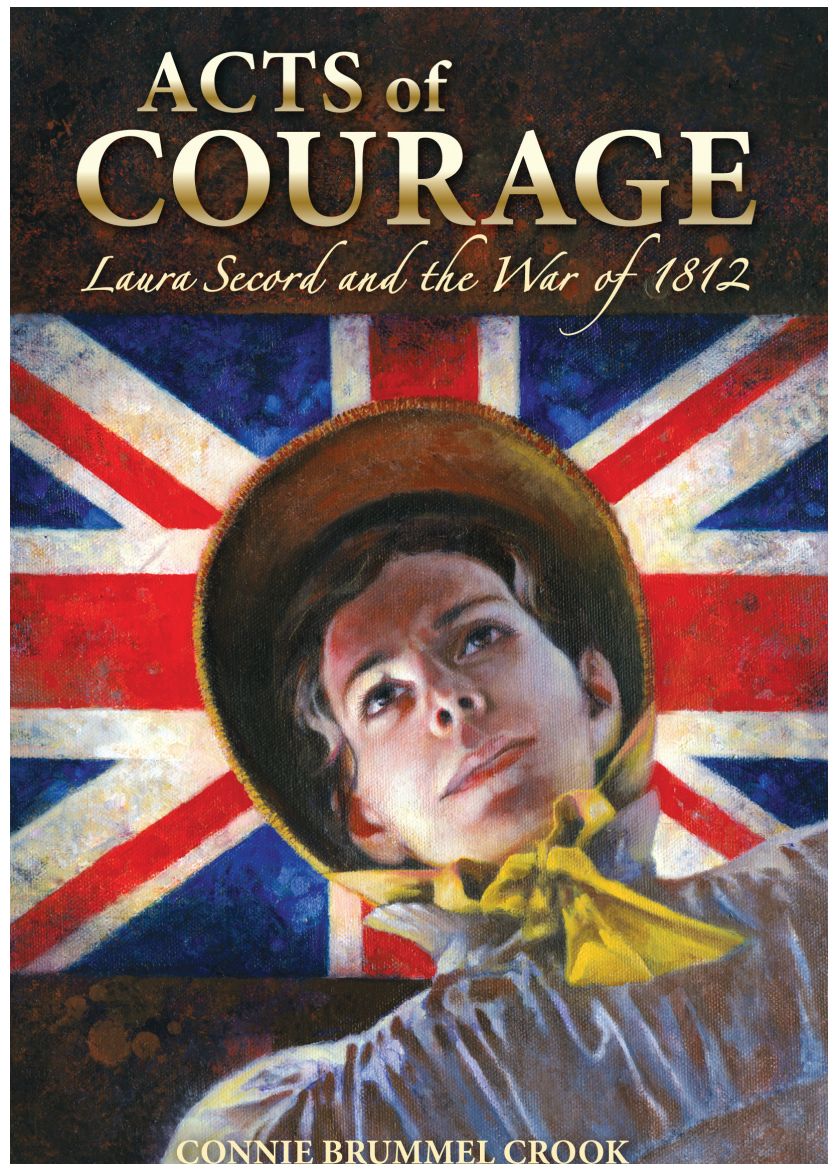


ACTS OF COURAGE

Connie Brummel Crook

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Created by Erin Woods



ACTS of COURAGE

Laura Secord and the War of 1812

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STORY SUMMARY

The true story of Laura Ingersoll Secord, from her early days in Massachusetts and her family's immigration to Upper Canada to her part in the War of 1812, when she rescued her injured husband on the field of battle and undertook a dangerous 20-mile trek to warn Lieutenant James Fitzgibbon of an impending American attack on the British outpost at Beaver Dams. [Pajama Press, 2011]

Connie Brummel Crook is a former teacher and the author of many historical books for children, which often focus on the history of Upper Canada.

PRE-READING LESSON

Learn about the relationship between the different warring nations at the beginning of the War of 1812. Divide students into groups to research how either Britain, Canada, the United States, or First Nations peoples felt about the causes of the war. Students can discuss what they find in their groups and then share briefly with the whole class. Find information about each perspective at:

http://galafilm.com/1812/e/background/gen_issues.html

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The story begins four years after the United States won its freedom from British rule. Why would Daniel Shay's men be rebelling against the new American government? What problems might a new country have that would lead to trouble for poor farmers? (3, 15-16)
2. Laura and Red disagree about the value of going to school (15-16). Which do you think was right? Why?
3. Red repeats the slogan of Shay's men, "Better to die

by the sword than the halter." What did he mean? (19)

4. At the beginning of Chapter 4, Laura dresses herself in several kinds of clothing that are unfamiliar to us today. What is a garter? A shift? A petticoat? What does it mean that her outer petticoat was quilted? Why did she need so many pieces of clothing?

5. Laura, Sally, and Elizabeth do not want to move to Upper Canada. What makes moving hard? What extra changes were these women going to face that made it especially hard for them?

6. Many of the people living near Queenston when Laura's family arrived were loyalists from America who had been driven off their lands during the American Revolution. Why do you think they would be unwilling to welcome American settlers who came later, like Laura's family? (75)

7. Why didn't Laura's father believe there would really be war between Canada and the United States? Do you think many people shared his views? How might they have felt when war was declared? (139)

8. Why was the doctor holding a pillow over Sam's face when Laura walked in? How would you feel if you were in Laura's position? What would you do or say?(148)

9. Why didn't James and the other Upper Canada soldiers want the Americans to know that Isaac Brock was dead? (158)

10. Page 184 says of James, "Unlike many settlers, he had not been indifferent to the American attack." Why would some of the settlers not care about the war?

11. Were you surprised when Laura realized the old woman was a man in disguise? Who did you think he might be? (203)

12. When Laura tells James she wants to go warn Fitzgibbon about the attack, he says, “I doubt a man could get through, let alone a woman.” In what ways would a man have had an easier time making it to De Cew’s farm? In what ways would he have found it more difficult? (215)

13. In real life, James Fitzgibbon and Laura Secord did not meet until the day she delivered her message. Because this book is historical fiction, rather than non-fiction, the author was able to introduce the idea of a childhood friendship. What do the fictional aspects add to the experience of reading this book? Would you prefer a non-fiction account? Why or why not?

WRITING HISTORICAL FICTION (WRITING, HISTORY, RESEARCH)

Materials: Pencils, writing paper, books or Internet resources for researching time periods

Preparation: None

Directions:

1. Remind students that historical fiction is a genre that gives an accurate portrayal of a historic setting, event, or person, but in which the author uses his or her own imagination to make the story more complete.

2. Point out the Notes section on page 259, which shows where author Connie Brummel Crook has used real words attributed to Laura, James, Lieutenant Fitzgibbon, and others in her characters’ dialogue. This is one example of the combination of research and invention that is used in writing historical fiction.

3. Have students choose a historical figure about whom they will write a short work of historical fiction. You might have them work with a time period you have already studied in class so that they have less research to do in step 5.

4. To begin their research, students must know when and where their subject lived. They should also have some information about their subject’s lifestyle, such as their social class or their employment.

5. Give students time to research the following aspects of life in their subject’s time, place, and

social position: clothing, language, food, transportation, buildings, work, and social activities. Encourage them to write down what their subject might have seen, smelled, tasted, touched, felt, and heard on an ordinary day. Remind them to keep notes of the information they find and the sources in which they find it.

6. Have students write a short story about an experience their subject might have had. Remind them to use facts they know about their subject and sensory details from their research in step 5.

7. Tell students that even though some things in historical fiction are made up, it is important to be accurate in describing times, places, and major historic events. Have them exchange their story and research notes with a partner so that they can check each other’s facts. If time permits, you may also have them revisit the books and websites their partner noted down in Step 5 to make sure the facts were transcribed correctly.

8. Have students make any necessary revisions and write a final draft.

1812 NEWSCAST (DRAMA, CHARACTER STUDY)

Materials: Pencils, writing paper, props and costumes (optional)

Preparation: You will divide the class into small groups to prepare newscasts about different events from *Acts of Courage*. In each group, one student will act as a reporter and interview the others, who will play figures from the book. Be sure to pick scenes with plenty of characters. Some good choices are:

The capture of Mr. Gleazen by Shay’s rebels (12)

- Mr. Gleazen
- A rebel
- Red
- Laura
- A soldier

Red’s rescue of Mira (47)

- Red
- Mira
- Laura
- Laura’s father
- One of the men in the woods

Laura’s rescue of James at Queenston Heights (170)

- Laura
- James
- Captain Wool
- One American soldier who attacks Laura
- One American soldier who helps carry James home
- The Canadian guard who accompanies them

The visit of the three young soldiers (193)

- Laura
- James
- One polite soldier
- The rude soldier
- Charlotte

The visit of Dr. Chapin and his men (209)

- Laura
- Chapin
- One of Chapin’s men
- James
- Bob or Fan

The battle of Beaver Dams (232)

- James Fitzgibbon
- Captain Roderick McDowell
- Captain Hall
- Captain Boerstler
- Major De Haren
- A Mohawk or Caughnawauga warrior
- An American soldier

Directions:

1. Have students pick their roles within their groups. The reporter is responsible for being able to describe the “big picture” of the event to the audience. He or she must also prepare questions to ask the characters that will draw out their experience. The other students should study their character’s role in the scene and, if necessary, do further research to learn more about the historic event.

2. Group members may work together to brainstorm sensory details of the event: what might each character have seen, heard, tasted, smelled or felt? Were they hungry, tired, or in pain? Would they be calm, emotional, or in shock? Were their actions that day their own choice, and were they happy or unhappy with the results? How did they feel about the people they were

with? Encourage students to think hard about every aspect of their characters’ experience, and how it might affect their behavior, posture, and tone of voice in the interview.

3. For older, more confident students, the interviews can be conducted unrehearsed in front of the class. With their research and brainstorming as a guide, each character should be able to answer questions about what he or she is seeing, feeling, etc.. Alternatively, you may allow groups to rehearse specific questions. In either case, the presentation will gain interest and immediacy if the students pretend the event is still in progress, or only just finished, when the interviews take place.

**GROWING A DISEASE
(HEALTH AND SCIENCE)**

Materials: Sterilized cotton swabs, Petri dishes with agar, an incubator or warm location, labels, hot and cold water, hand soap, antibacterial soap

Preparation: Prepare six sterilized Petri dishes with agar.

Directions:

1. Tell the class, Laura has enough experience treating sick people to know that using lots of lye soap helps her to not spread the disease (145), but in those days people did not really understand about germs. Remember, for example, that the doctor only washed his filthy hands before treating James’ wound because he did not have the energy to argue with Laura (174). It was not until many decades later that cleanliness became a standard part of health care. We are going to do an experiment to explore the effects of hand-washing on the spread of germs.

2. Using volunteers from the class, wipe each of the following with a sterile cotton swab:

An unwashed hand

A hand washed with cold water

A hand washed with cold water and hand soap

A hand washed with hot water

A hand washed with hot water and hand soap

A hand washed with hot water and antibacterial soap (in place of Laura’s lye soap)

3. After you swab each hand, lightly rub the cotton swab over the agar in one Petri dish and label it accordingly. Replace the cover on the Petri dish immediately to avoid contamination.
4. Place the Petri dishes in a warm location for several days.
5. Return the Petri dishes to the classroom and compare the cultures that have grown.

WALKING TO BEAVER DAMS (MATHEMATICS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION)

Materials: Paper, pencils, measuring wheel

Preparation: None

Directions: 1. Laura walked 19 miles (32 km) to warn Lieutenant Fitzgibbon. Have the class work together to calculate how far each of them would have to walk to reach a cumulative total of the same amount.

2. As a class, use a measuring wheel to calculate the distance around your schoolyard.

3. Calculate how many times each student would have to walk around the schoolyard to achieve their portion of the trek.

4. Have the class walk or run laps of the school yard, keeping track of their progress until they have walked a cumulative total of 19 miles (32 km).

5. Discuss:

Did you get hot? Tired? Bored?

How long did this activity take? How much longer would it have taken to do the whole walk yourself?

How would you feel about walking the same distance over hills and through a swamp?

What do you think gave Laura the strength to finish her journey?

Alternate: Keep track of your laps over several weeks until each student has walked the whole distance.

JOSEPH BRANT'S STRUGGLE (SOCIAL STUDIES)

It has been said that no one won the war of 1812, but the losers were the Native Americans. Joseph Brant's people had sided with the

British in the American War of Independence; they, like the white loyalists who had refused to join the rebels, had to flee to Canada when the rebels won the revolution. But the British did not treat them the same as the white loyalists. One injustice mentioned in Acts of Courage is that the white loyalists were given not only land, but also seeds and tools for three years to help them turn it from wilderness into farmland. Joseph Brant's people received land, but no seeds or tools. In this activity students will begin to explore the more immediate consequences of this unequal treatment.

Materials: One print-out of “Grow, Grow, Grow” game sheet per small group; one game piece per student; one die per group; approx. 50 small tokens (bread tags, pennies, slips of paper, etc.) per group

Preparation: Read the description of Laura's visit to Joseph Brant's settlement (91-93).

Discuss:

Why did Joseph Brant and his people have to leave the United States and settle in Upper Canada?

Why did Brant feel they had to farm the land instead of depending on hunting for their food? Why was farming challenging for them?

Why would the gift of seeds and tools for three years be such a big advantage for the white loyalists? How hard would it be for Brant's settlement to catch up?

Set up the game board so that all of the game pieces are on START and all of the tokens are in the middle.

Directions:

1. Divide students into small groups to play “Grow, Grow, Grow.” In each group, give half of the students five tokens (“seeds”) each at the start of the game. Give the other half one token each.

2. To play, students roll the die in turn and move their pieces the appropriate number of spaces. If they land on a blank square, their turn is over. If the square has instructions, they must follow them.

3. Every time players pass START, any seeds in their hand automatically multiply by five. So, a player with two seeds at the end of a round should pick up more until he or she has ten seeds.

4. The game ends when all seeds are gone from the middle of the board.

					START YOUR SEEDS MULTIPLY BY 5
		GROW, GROW, GROW			YOU HAVE FURSTO TRADE. PICK UP 1 SEED.
	HAIL STORM. LOSE 2 SEEDS,				NO RAIN. LOSE 3 SEEDS.
			HARVEST TIME. PICK UP 3 SEEDS.		