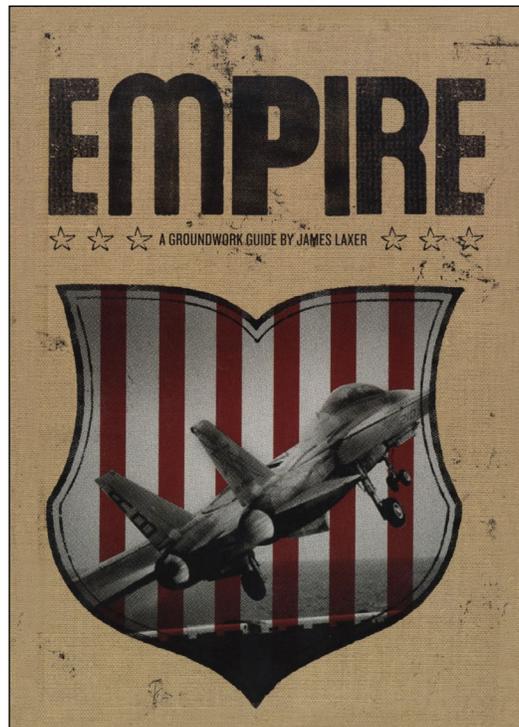




# GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

## Empire A Groundwork Guide

*Written by James Laxer*



A fascinating look at empires and imperialism, and the new kind of empire the United States has become.

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Ages 14 and up / Grades 9 and up

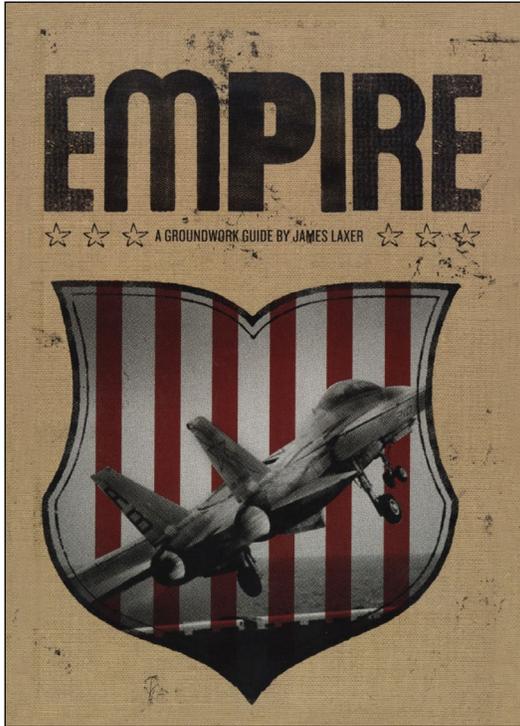
YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION / Social Studies / Business Studies / English Language Arts

5 x 7 / 144 pages

Trade paperback / \$11.00 CDN / \$9.95 U.S. / 978-0-88899-707-4 /

ebook 978-1-55498-015-4

[groundwoodbooks.com](http://groundwoodbooks.com)



## BOOK DESCRIPTION

This book is about empires and imperialism, and the new kind of empire that the United States has become.

The book explores the following:

- past empires, including the Egyptian, Roman, Han Chinese, Spanish, British and French
- the growth and workings of the American Empire
- the threats the American Empire now faces
- the resistance that empires meet and how they fall

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Social Studies (Civics, Geography, History, World Studies)
- Business Studies (Economics)
- English Language Arts
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Arts (Visual Arts, Theater Arts)
- Information and Communications Technology
- Health/Career and Life Management

## IDEAS FOR GETTING STARTED

Introduce the book and your goals for studying it, and briefly outline the issues the book explores. Tell students that issues-based study raises varied opinions, and that, as a class, you will set some ground rules for maintaining a respectful and safe classroom atmosphere for discussing personal views. Ask the class to collaborate to create a list of expectations, such as “We’ll respect one another’s privacy”; “We’ll listen to one another”; and “We won’t insult one another.” Post the list and revisit it periodically to allow students to make observations and air problems.

Have students work in pairs to complete the quiz called *Empire: Getting Started* (in this Teachers’ Guide). Have groups of students share and discuss their responses. You can monitor the responses and discussion as a way to assess students’ knowledge levels. After their study of the book, students can review their initial responses and reflect on their learning. Answers: 1–f; 2–i; 3–b; 4–a; 5–l; 6–h; 7–j; 8–d; 9–c; 10–k; 11–g; 12–e.

Provide groups of students with a map of the world and a way to mark areas on the map, such as sticky-notes or paper dots. Tell students the name of an empire and have them mark on the map the area they think the empire covered and make a guess at the time period. They compare their ideas with another group, then remove the markers and repeat the process for another empire. Tell students that they can check their ideas against the information they learn during their reading of *Empire*.

## TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES

Read the book as a class with group or class discussions at the end of each chapter and a culminating activity at the end. You could use a combination of teacher read aloud, guided reading and independent reading.

Have students read the book independently and create their own study project.

Assign groups of students one chapter each and have them read it and present it to the rest of the class.

Have students read the book in groups and then either collaborate on a culminating activity or complete one independently.

Ask students to keep an Issues Journal (in writing or on audio or video) in which they comment on what they have read and/or discussed. Encourage frequent updates throughout the study of *Empire*. Let students know from the outset whether the journal is for personal use only or if it's meant to be part of their assessment.

## IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

What are empires? What are some different types of empires?

Why do empires end?

Are there positive aspects of empires, both in the past and now?

How different is today's imperialism from colonialism of the past?

If your country were an empire, would you be willing to pay more taxes to maintain its position?

What is your position in this debate: is there an American Empire or is the U.S. simply a global power?

What are examples of American isolationist policy and American containment policy?

What is your attitude toward the United States' position in the world? Do you think that they have a special mission? What do you think is the author's belief?

How are environmental dangers a threat to American power (p. 114)?

The author writes of “blood and treasure”— the loss of life and the financial cost of war. What are you willing to have your country expend its blood and treasure on in the world today? What do you want your country's purpose to be?

Do you think that the world needs a single dominant power? What are arguments for and against this (p. 115)?

## IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

Students do online research for a list of films that relate to empires. They could first decide on a particular empire or time period or gather a range of titles and then choose. From their list, they choose one or two films to watch and critique, noting how the films relate to issues that students have raised in their reading of *Empire*. Students could explore issues related to perspective or point of view, values, accuracy and inclusion. Students could present their learning in a film review, an essay, a role-played interview between the directors or the director and a film critic, or a written or audiotaped commentary about the film that they present during a screening of the film, similar to the style of pop-up videos.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Arts (Theater Arts), World Studies, History, Geography, Civics, Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Students make an interactive map based on their learning about empires. They could focus on one empire or cover a number of empires through the ages. They should first plan the theme, purpose and scope of their map and also decide on the audience for their information.

**Subjects: Information and Communications Technology, World Studies, History, Geography, Economics, English Language Arts**

Students choose one past empire to study in more detail. They could present their findings in a slideshow, oral report with visuals, model, annotated map, illustrated timeline, photo essay, web page, children's book or essay.

**Subjects: History, Geography, World Studies, Civics, Economics, English Language Arts, Information and Communications Technology**

Students locate two or three newspaper or magazine articles (or television news shows or segments) that support the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its continued presence there, and two or three articles that support the belief that the U.S. invaded Iraq for the purposes of controlling its oil reserves and establishing a strategic base there. Students analyze and comment on the points of view, as well as on the media portrayals of the situation.

**Subjects: Humanities and Social Sciences, World Studies, History, English Language Arts**

Students choose two empires described in the book to compare in more detail: their rise and fall (or the threats facing current empires), their influence, their methods and other notable characteristics. They could present their research in an essay, chart or other graphic form, text and visual display, an oral report or a role-played scene of a meeting of citizens of the empires.

**Subjects: History, Geography, World Studies, Civics, Economics, English Language Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Direct students to Chapter 5, which focuses on resistance to empire. They choose one resistance movement and research it in more depth or choose two to compare. They could present their research in an essay or an oral report. Afterward, have a class discussion about *Empire's* final paragraph on page 122.

**Subjects: History, Geography, World Studies, Civics, English Language Arts**

Students work with a librarian and use online sources to develop a list of novels related to empires. They choose one of the novels to read with the purpose of exploring issues raised in their reading of *Empire*. Students could present their discoveries in a book report or review, a monologue by one of the characters, an enacted scene from the book that they direct and film or in an essay.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Arts (Theater Arts), World Studies, History, Geography, Civics, Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences, Information and Communications Technology**

Students research the history and purposes of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Students could be divided into three research groups for the three organizations. They could share their information in a slideshow presentation or a written or oral report.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business (Economics), History, World Studies**

Students simulate and role-play a meeting of various South and Central American countries' current leaders to discuss American interventionist policies. It is an imagined meeting at which leaders from various time periods are also in attendance, such as Salvador Allende, Augusto Pinochet and Sandinistan leaders. Have students review *Empire* for information, as well as conduct further research before choosing whom to represent, deciding on an agenda and preparing positions.

**Subjects: World Studies, History, English Language Arts, Arts (Theater Arts), Geography, Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Talk with students about cultural imperialism and have them consider it in terms of current global popular culture. Is there any sense of “empire” in the music, clothes, television and films and other artifacts of popular culture that are available to them? Students might try to interact with students in other countries to elicit a range of responses to this question.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health/Career and Life Management**

Ask students to imagine a scenario in which another planet is discovered and humans have the capacity to travel there. Have them consider questions such as: Who would go — would it be one country or would it be a global enterprise? What would Earth’s superpowers want to know about the planet? What if the planet were rich in energy and other resources — would there be a chance that humans would try to take control of it? Students discuss the scenario and then explore their ideas through a piece of opinion writing, short story, play or monologue, role-played meeting of heads of states, simulated television news report or graphic novel.

**Subjects: World Studies, English Language Arts, Arts (Theater Arts), History, Geography, Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences**

## CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER GROUNDWORK GUIDES

See *The Betrayal of Africa* and *Democracy* for issues of colonialism, imperialism, racism, poverty and freedom.

See *Oil* for issues of imperialism, global economics and American intervention.

See *Oil* and *Democracy* for two other books by the same author.

Have students select other books in the series for independent study.

## EMPIRE: GETTING STARTED

Work with a partner to match the items in Column A with the related information in Column B. Compare answers with another pair of students. You'll be learning about the background behind these facts as you read *Empire*.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
1. Inca Empire	a. Leader of the slaves' resistance during the Roman Empire
2. Genghis Khan	b. Number of Jewish resisters in the Warsaw Ghetto who stood up to Nazi soldiers and police and held out for more than a month
3. 750	c. Empire that had a powerful landowning class
4. Spartacus	d. A capitalist empire
5. 19	e. Number of Irish republicans who were court martialled by British government and shot to death after their armed revolt in Dublin
6. Han Chinese Empire	f. Empire destroyed by invading Spaniards in sixteenth century
7. 725	g. Year India and Pakistan became independent of British rule
8. Second British Empire	h. Empire that had a struggle for power with its aristocratic landowners and derived its wealth from the peasants
9. Roman Empire	i. Founder of the Mongol Empire
10. 1989	j. Number of official American military bases around the world
11. 1947	k. Year the Soviet Empire ended
12. 15	l. Millions of dollars President Ronald Reagan gave the CIA to support the Contras in Nicaragua in overthrowing the Sandinista government

## STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT: ISSUES-BASED LEARNING

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

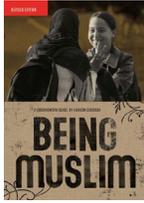
	NO	SOME- WHAT	YES	COMMENTS
1. Do I understand the issues the book presents?				
2. Do I connect my own knowledge and experiences to what I'm learning about?				
3. Do I ask good questions?				
4. Do I show interest in the issues and think about how they affect me and my future?				
5. Do I think critically about the issues? Do I consider various points of view and perspectives?				
6. Do I listen to and consider the opinions of other students?				

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**James Laxer** (1941–2018) was the award-winning author of more than twenty-five books, including *Staking Claims to a Continent*; the #1 national bestseller *Tecumseh & Brock: The War of 1812*; and *Stalking an Elephant: My Discovery of America*. He was a professor of political science in the Department of Equity Studies at York University

## GROUNDWORK GUIDES



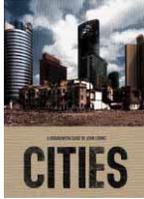
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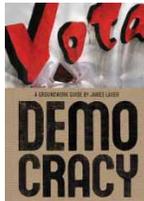
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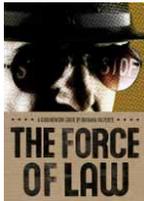
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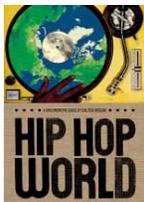
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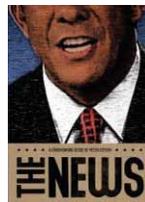
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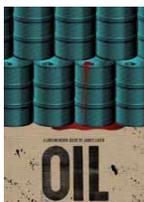
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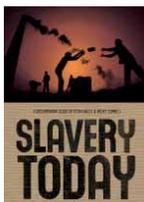
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