

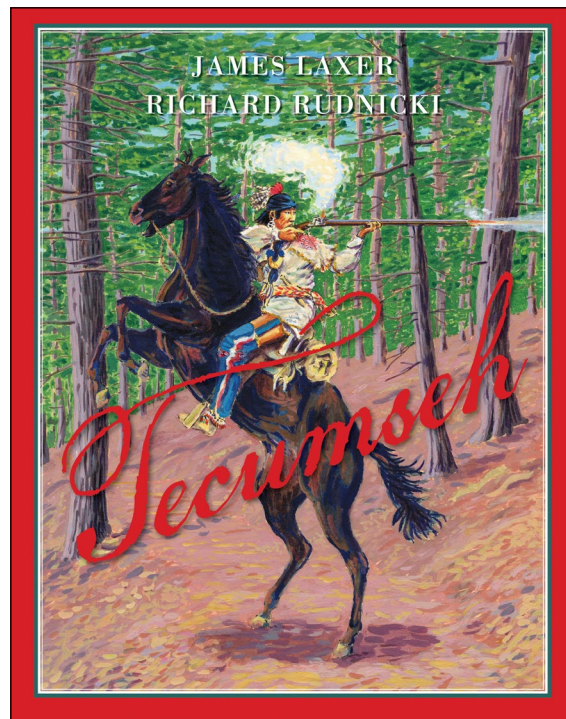


GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

Tecumseh

Written by James Laxer

Illustrated by Richard Rudnicki



A gorgeously illustrated biography of Tecumseh, the great Shawnee chief who fought in the War of 1812.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Ages 9 to 12 / Grade 4 to 7

JUVENILE NONFICTION / Biography & Autobiography / Historical / Indigenous

Full-color illustrations / 10.625 x 8.25 / 56 pages

Paperback / \$19.95 / 978-1-55498-123-6

groundwoodbooks.com

BOOK DESCRIPTION

Two hundred years after his death, the Shawnee chief Tecumseh is still considered one of the greatest First Nations leaders of North America. 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.

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>

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.



Tecumseh's father, Pukeshinwau, was an admired warrior who belonged to the Kispoko division of the Shawnees. The Kispokos were leaders in war. He was also a member of the panther clan. His name meant "something that falls."

Tecumseh's mother, Methoataaskee, belonged to the Pekowi division of the tribe, which was responsible for preserving traditions. She was a member of the turtle clan, and her name meant "a turtle laying her eggs in the sand."

In the settlement where Tecumseh was born, Methoataaskee and the other women were responsible for building the houses, or wigwams. They were made of

10

bark fastened around wooden posts and built in the shape of a rectangle. Some of them had chimneys and were quite large. Women also made clothes and the other belongings that people had in their homes. They worked in the fields to raise crops, such as corn, beans and pumpkins. In the spring they tapped maple syrup from the trees. They roasted meat and made stews and breadcakes.

Men hunted deer, rabbit, turkey and buffalo, and fished. They made weapons and trained to become warriors who could fight to defend Shawnee settlements from attack.

Children like Tecumseh played near the fields where the women worked. Tecumseh was a mischievous boy, who had to be scolded regularly by his mother.



11

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

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.

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.

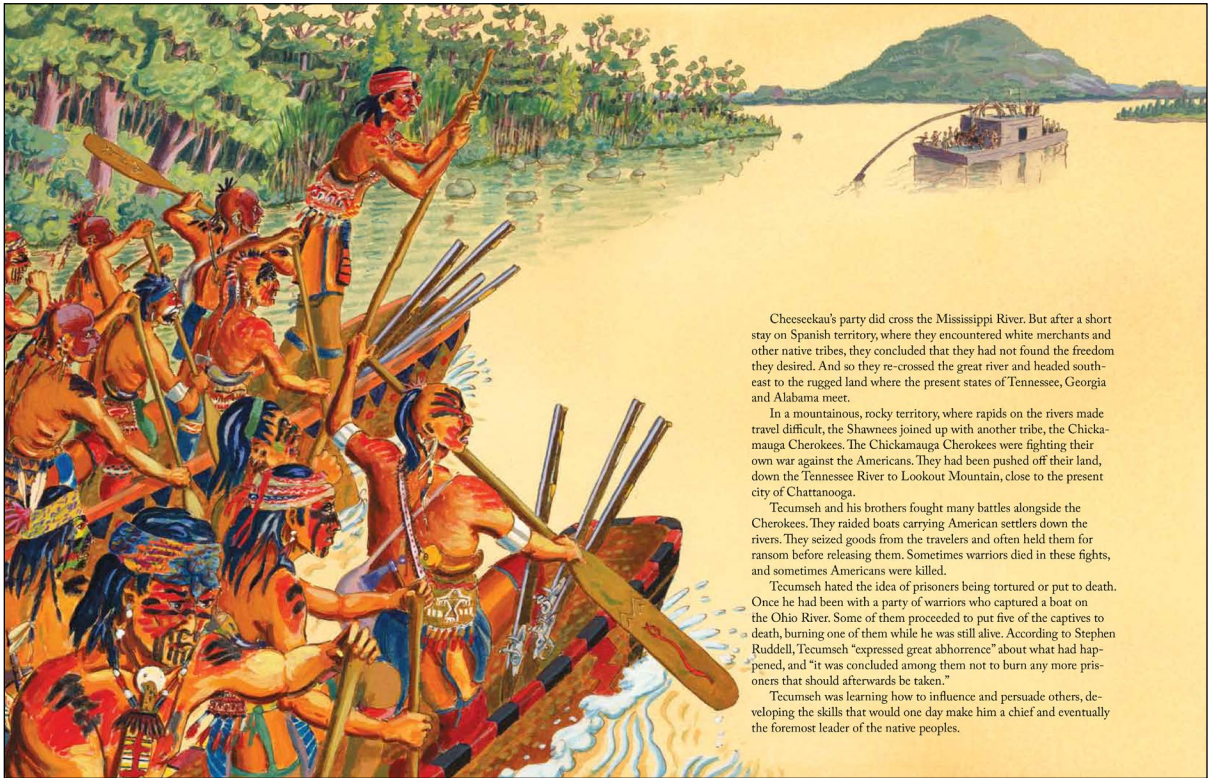
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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.



Chesecau's party did cross the Mississippi River. But after a short stay on Spanish territory, where they encountered white merchants and other native tribes, they concluded that they had not found the freedom they desired. And so they re-crossed the great river and headed southeast to the rugged land where the present states of Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama meet.

In a mountainous, rocky territory, where rapids on the rivers made travel difficult, the Shawnees joined up with another tribe, the Chickamauga Cherokees. The Chickamauga Cherokees were fighting their own war against the Americans. They had been pushed off their land, down the Tennessee River to Lookout Mountain, close to the present city of Chattanooga.

Tecumseh and his brothers fought many battles alongside the Cherokees. They raided boats carrying American settlers down the rivers. They seized goods from the travelers and often held them for ransom before releasing them. Sometimes warriors died in these fights, and sometimes Americans were killed.

Tecumseh hated the idea of prisoners being tortured or put to death. Once he had been with a party of warriors who captured a boat on the Ohio River. Some of them proceeded to put five of the captives to death, burning one of them while he was still alive. According to Stephen Ruddell, Tecumseh "expressed great abhorrence" about what had happened, and "it was concluded among them not to burn any more prisoners that should afterwards be taken."

Tecumseh was learning how to influence and persuade others, developing the skills that would one day make him a chief and eventually the foremost leader of the native peoples.

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?

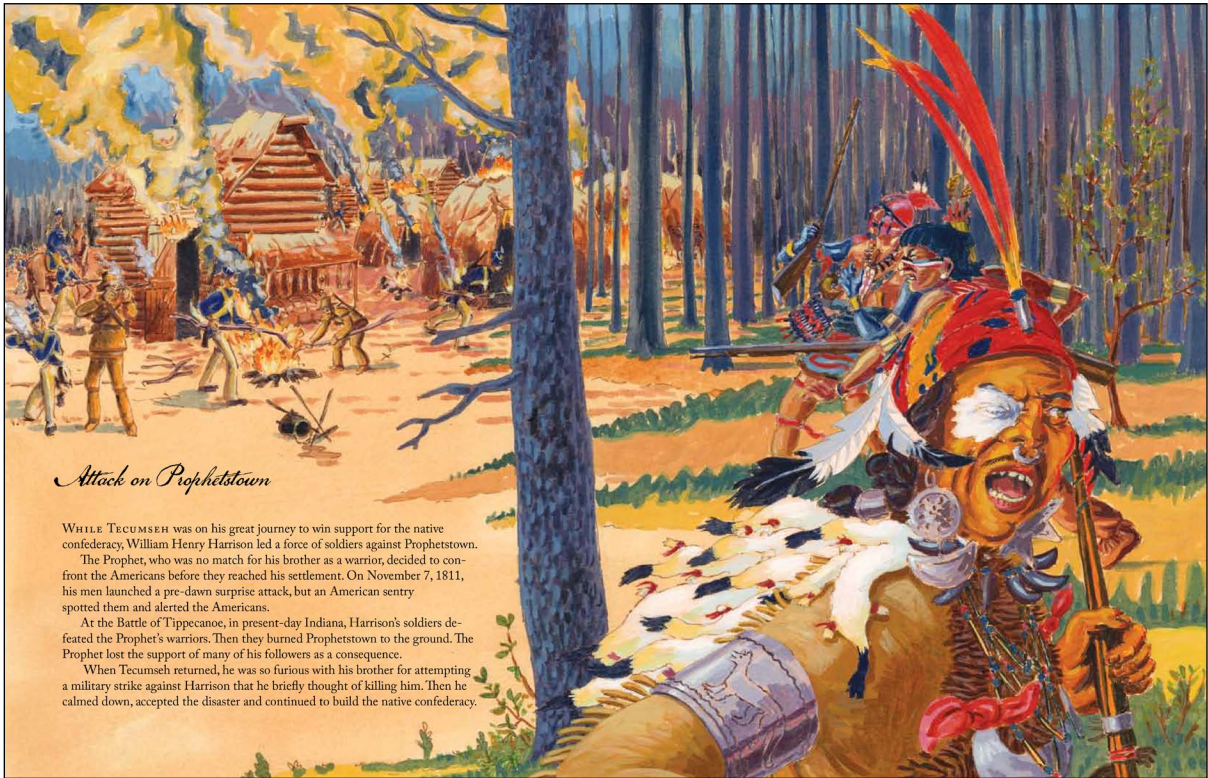
CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

ART — VISUAL TIMELINES

Have students depict events in different artistic media 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.



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>

AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



Award-winning author **James Laxer** (1941–2018) wrote many books and appeared regularly on television discussions of issues of the day. He was a professor of political science at York University in Toronto.



Richard Rudnicki (1951–2019) was known for his paintings of Nova Scotia as well as for his award-winning children’s books.