

Heroes of the War of 1812

by Ernest Wasson

Suggested grade level: Junior/Intermediate

Suggested time: Two classes of 50 minutes

Brief Description of the Task

In this lesson students will explore the concept of "heroism." They will then determine which of four heroes of the War of 1812 are most deserving of a monument, based on the criteria for **historical significance**.

Historical Thinking Concepts

- Historical Significance

Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the key elements of heroism.
2. Evaluate the contribution of four historical figures to the War of 1812 and the development of Canada, in relation to **historical significance**.
3. Appreciate different perspectives and conclusions from their own.

Materials

Paper at least as large as 8.5 x 14 for placemat activity.

Photocopies of the Appendices.

Prior Knowledge

It would be an asset for students to:

- have familiarity with the criteria for **historical significance**

Assessment Opportunities

- placemat activity and group work
- comments during group discussion
- final summary comments

Detailed Lesson Plan

Part 1

1. Place students in groups of four with one piece of large paper and ask each group to draw a placemat diagram (**Appendix 1**) on the paper. Above the placemat they should write: What is a Hero?
2. Ask students to discuss the elements that make someone a hero. After the discussion, each student should write down their ideas on their portion of the placemat.
3. Students then share their ideas and record the common elements in the middle of the diagram.
4. Each group then posts their placemat and circulates around the room to look at all the other ideas.

For more info on using placemats see:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentssuccess/thinkliteracy/files/Oral.pdf

Part 2

1. Read the excerpt from *The Walrus* and show the image of the four heroes (**Appendix 2**).
2. Tell students that each group must decide which of the heroes is most deserving of a new national monument.
3. They will base their decision on the **historical significance** of each individual. Review the historical significance criteria with the students:
 - A person is historically significant if something they did

resulted in change (they had deep consequences, for many people, over a long period of time).

- A person is historically significant if something they did is *revealing* (their life or accomplishments sheds light on something important today).

Additional information about the concept of Historical Significance can be found on The Historical Thinking Project website at www.historicalthinking.ca

Teaching tip:

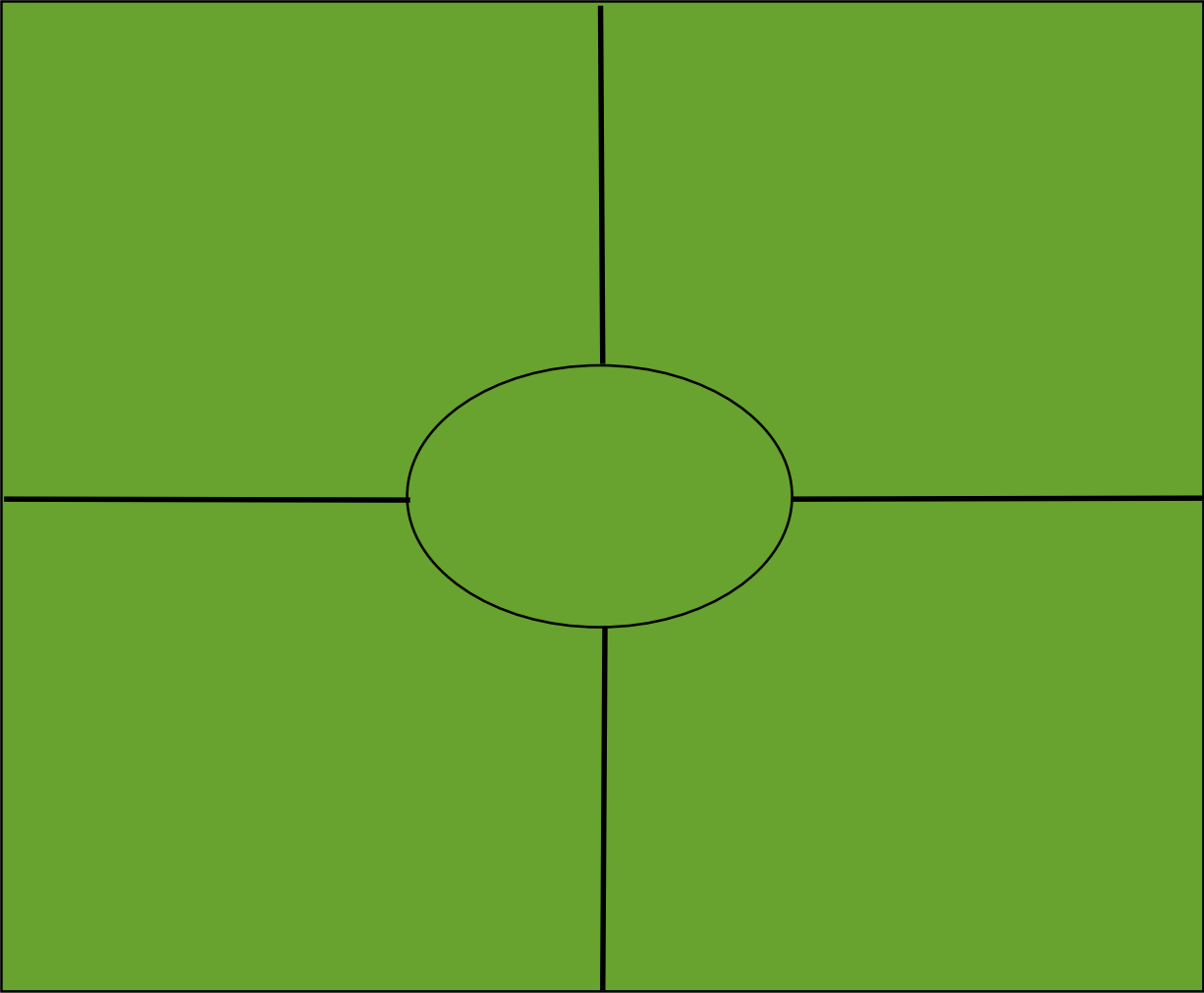
You may want to model how to apply the historical significance criteria to one of the four heroes, by walking them through the process either in a “think aloud” or with a visual on the board.

4. Each group will need one copy of **Appendix 2** (*Walrus* excerpt), and four copies – one per student – of **Appendix 3** (Info on Heroes).
5. Each student will read through the brief information provided on each historical figure. When completed they will complete "Justifying My Conclusion" (**Appendix 4**) individually.
6. Each group will then share their choices and discuss in their groups.
7. Teacher Wrap-up: Was your group able to come to a consensus? Why or why not?

Differentiation

For students requiring a more advanced challenge, the same activity can be done having the students research each character individually or as a group at www.biographi.ca/.

Appendix 1: Placemat Template



APPENDIX 2: CANADA EXISTS BECAUSE OF HEROES

The war was full of American halfwits, but our side had Tecumseh, who helped repulse the Americans at Detroit and later died in the battle of the Thames. Our side had Isaac Brock, who was killed while urging on his troops to a key victory at Queenston Heights. Our side had Laura Secord, a Loyalist originally from Massachusetts, who saved British troops from a surprise attack in 1813. (Incidentally, she did not do so while leading cow. Nor was she barefoot. Although we can all agree that it would have made for a better story if she had been barefoot and leading a cow.) Our side was peopled by heroes whom we do not know, or cannot remember.

([That Time We Beat the Americans](#) A misunderstood moment, now 200 years old, defines us as Canadians. A citizens' guide to the War of 1812 BY [STEPHEN MARCHE](#) ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAUCHIE REID [ESSAY](#) FROM THE [MARCH 2012](#) The Walrus)

Four Heroes of the War of 1812: Brock, Tecumseh, Salaberry, and Secord



www.forces.gc.ca/site/tml/_images/2012/02/orig/15a.jpg

Appendix 3

Laura Secord (1775-1868)

Heroine of Beaver Dams



Born: September 13th, 1775 in Massachusetts

Heroic Action: Rescued her husband, James Secord a militia sergeant, from the battlefield at Queenston Heights where he was wounded.

Heroic Action: After overhearing the American plans to

surprise the British outpost at Beaver Dams commanded by Lieutenant James Fitzgibbon, she walked more than 12 miles cross-country to avoid American detection in order to warn the British. Two days later the American force was surprised at Beaver Dams and forced to surrender. If the Americans had won it would have given them control of the Niagara Peninsula and jeopardizing Upper Canada.

Historiography: Some 20th century historians have questioned whether Secord's message was too late and that Indian scouts had forewarned Fitzgibbon earlier as to the surprise attack. However, two testimonials written by Fitzgibbon indicate that it was indeed Secord's message who which had arrived first and that "in consequence of this information" he had been able to ambush the Americans. (Ruth McKenzie, www.biographi.ca/.)

Abridged from www.1812.gc.ca/eng/1317828221939/1317828660198#a8

Major-General Sir Isaac Brock (1769-1812)
The Hero of Upper Canada



Born: 1769, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, England

Background: British Army officer stationed in Canada in the early 1800s.

Heroic Action: Prepared Upper Canada for American invasion, especially by strengthening the fortifications of Quebec and advocating the importance of the cooperation of the Indian allies.

Heroic Action: Led a force of regulars and First Nations warriors in the capture of Detroit (August 16, 1812). He created the illusion of a much larger force with the help of Tecumseh, a leader of the Shawnee. Despite being outnumbered (1300 men) Brock attacked Fort Detroit (2000 men not including a detachment of 500 that was protecting a supply column) and

captured her. This victory came at a key moment when "[M]ost of the people had lost all confidence". Brock later wrote his brothers that, "The militia have been inspired by the recent success with confidence- the disaffected are silenced." (www.biographi.ca/)

Heroic Action: Battle of Queenston Heights (October 13, 1812). After the Redan Battery cannon was captured he personally led the charge to re-capture the position. He was shot and killed by an American sniper. British forces, Canadian Militia, and First Nations warriors drove the Americans back and forced 1000 to surrender.

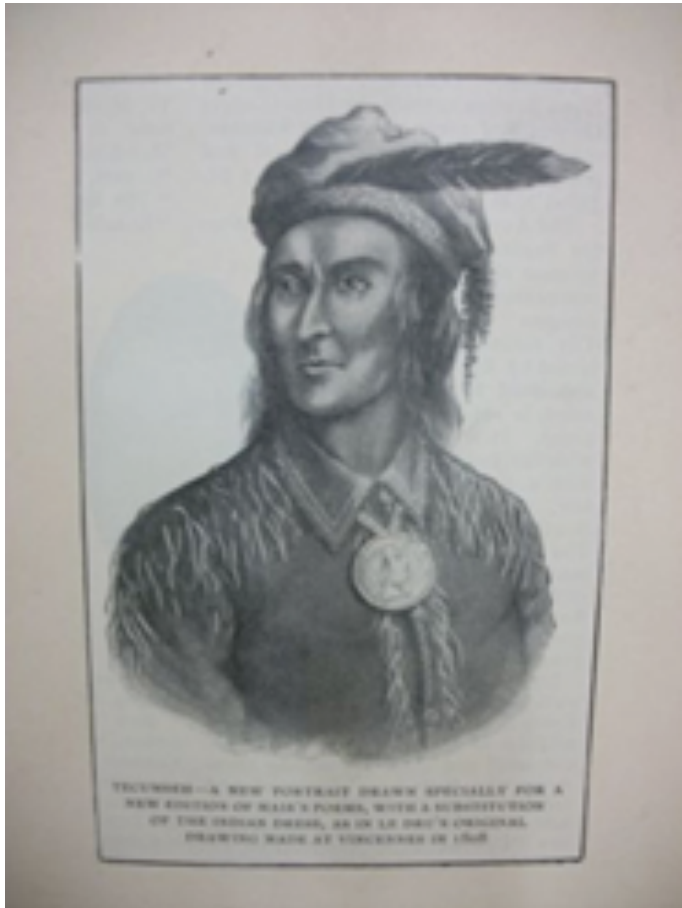
Historiography: Although Brock's bravery cannot be questioned he has been accused of being rash, *[H]is action at Detroit, we have seen, was criticized as being unduly rash; and the same has been said of his last charge at Queenston Heights.* And although his "spirit continued to animate the people of the province for the rest of the war" Brock's war lasted only four months. (C.P. Stacey, www.biographi.ca/)

Abridged from www.1812.gc.ca/eng/1317828221939/1317828660198#a8

Lesson 21, Appendices

Tecumseh (1768-1813)

Shawnee War Chief



Born: 1768, Ohio Valley

Background: Shawnee chief that opposed the US during the War of 1812. He attempted to halt the advance of white settlement into the Old Northwest.

Heroic Action: During the capture of Detroit Tecumseh's warriors tricked the Americans into believing that their numbers were massive by having them double back so their line appeared never-ending. " A more sagacious or a more gallant Warrior does not, I believe, exist," wrote Brock about Tecumseh. (www.biographi.ca/.)

Heroic Action: Led over 2000 warriors at the sieges of Fort Megin and Fort Stephenson.

Heroic Action: At the Battle of the Thames, wearing traditional deerskin garments, he was killed leading his

warriors in a final stand against the Americans.

Historiography: Tecumseh has been called a "noble savage", a "great aboriginal hero" and has been mythologized as a hero of the War of 1812. But what were his motives?

It was and is impossible to cast Tecumseh as a Canadian patriot first and an Indian second. His loyalty was never to Canada or even to the British in Canada. It was to a dream of a pan-Indian movement that would secure for his people the land necessary for them to continue their way of life. The few months he spent fighting with the British forces were in service of that vision. In his failure and death the cynical British and Canadians were only slightly less his enemies than the Americans. (Herbert C.W. Goltz, www.biographi.ca)

Abridged from www.1812.gc.ca/eng/1317828221939/1317828660198#a8

Charles de Salaberry (1778-1829)
Hero of Châteauguay

Born: November 1778 in Beauport Quebec



Background: A French-Canadian who served as an officer in the British army in Lower Canada (Quebec). Raised and commanded a unit of light infantry known as the Canadian Voltigeurs.

Heroic Action: With French Canadian militia and Mohawk warriors Salaberry was called to the Châteauguay River where an American force was attempting to attack Montreal in order to cut off the British army in Upper Canada.

Salaberry formed a blockade with his troops while sending a small group across the river, and keeping the majority of his troops in reserve about a mile away.

The Americans attacked and were successfully repulsed after several hours of fighting. Salaberry had used trickery and illusion to convince the Americans that his numbers were much larger than they actually were, saving the town from attack.

Historiography:

Salaberry's role at Châteauguay has been viewed differently and even disputed at times *"In the mid 19th century he was perceived as an experienced, courageous, intrepid soldier who enjoyed the confidence of his men. At the turn of the century English-speaking historians put greater emphasis on the roles played by Macdonell or Wattenwyl, but French-speaking ones defended Salaberry... In the early 1950s Salaberry was looked upon as the French Canadian who had given an outstanding demonstration of the courage of the race... Finally, more recently Salaberry's victory has been attributed to a fruitful collaboration by various elements against a common enemy."* (Michel Guitard, www.biographi.ca)

Abridged from www.1812.gc.ca/eng/1317828221939/1317828660198#a8

Lesson 21, Appendices

Appendix 4

I think that _____ is the most deserving candidate for a new national monument.

Justifying My Conclusion
The main reasons in support of my conclusion are
The best reasons why others might disagree with my conclusions are
I think my conclusion is more reasonable because