

# REDCOATS

## JEFF MARTIN'S WAR OF 1812

### STUDY GUIDE

#### About This Book

Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812 is a visually compelling and well-researched graphic novel designed to present the War of 1812 in a fresh way. Drawn in a comic strip format, the book, and companion website (<http://www.renegadeartsentertainment.com/jeff-martins-war-of-1812>), tell the story of two Canadian militiamen trying to do their part to help the war effort. This first volume in the series covers the beginning of the war through the Canadian victory at Fort Detroit, and its impact on the participants.

#### About This Guide

This guide is designed to give teachers a starting point for incorporating Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812 in their classrooms. The book combines the history as narrative approach with literary narrative to create a multi-purpose tool for teachers of many topics to hook their students and deliver effective, fun lessons.

Included in this guide are classroom activities, questions upon which to build activities and discussions, and explanations on the language of comics.



#### Recommended Age

Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812 is suitable for students age 10 to 19. It's educational focus corresponds best with Social Studies 7 (Alberta), and American History 11 and Canadian History 12.

#### *Recommended Subject Areas*

- History
- Aboriginal Studies
- Media Literacy
- Geography
- Social Studies
- Visual Arts

#### *Key Themes and Concepts*

- Nationalism
- Racism
- Citizenship and Civic Values
- Conflict
- Decision Making
- Ethnocentrism
- Imperialism
- Power
- Revolution
- Militarism

#### Pre-Reading Activity

Prior to introducing the book, divide the class into small groups and ask them to research the following events, people and concepts from the War of 1812: the Declaration of War in 1812, the Battle of Maguaga, the Battle of Detroit, Sir Isaac Brock, Chief Tecumseh, and Indian Confederacy.

## **An Overview of Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812**

When war is declared, baker George Morton rushes to enlist in the militia, eager to help his country fend off the American incursion. Swept up in the momentum of George's patriotism, fur trader John Pink ends up alongside his friend in the militia. When they get lost on a typical patrol, they end up getting a much more bullet-filled wartime experience than they expected. They participate in a series of minor skirmishes before marching on Fort Detroit with Isaac Brock and Tecumseh. The other perspective in the book, First Nations warrior Joseph, contrasts the ineffectual patriotism of the militiamen with the gravity of the situation faced by the First Nations.

### **The Major Players**

#### **Major-General Sir Isaac Brock**

Sir Isaac Brock was an ambitious young British general with a reputation for recklessness. He once stated that “nothing should be impossible to a soldier” and, by most accounts, he lived by that motto. Chafing under the cautious directive of his superior, Sir George Prevost, that no “offensive operations” be undertaken against the Americans, Brock threw himself into the task of strengthening defences at British outposts along the border while waiting for the Americans to make the first move. On July 12, 1812, American General William Hull invaded the Canadian town of Sandwich. Brock formed an alliance with Tecumseh and successfully captured



Fort Detroit. This “bloodless victory” left Britain in control of the Upper Canadian frontier. Brock subsequently led Canadian soldiers and militia to several important early victories, but was killed at the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812.

#### **Tecumseh, Shawnee War Chief**

More than a great warrior, Shawnee Chief Tecumseh was also a skilled negotiator and a respected source of wisdom and kindness. Prior to the War of 1812, and even as the War broke out, Tecumseh championed the Federation of Native Peoples in an effort to prevent the selling of Indian land to America without the consent of all the Indian elders across the concerned tribes. Support for the movement was lukewarm at best and, despite numerous discussions with American Governor William Henry Harrison, Tecumseh accomplished little. In July 1811, he left discussions with Harrison and travelled south to bring the possibility of a federation to the Indians there. While he was gone, his home settlement at Tippecanoe was left without its leader. Governor Harrison took advantage of this opportunity to launch an attack and, he hoped, provoke the Shawnee into some rash action that would “justify” their extermination. When Tecumseh returned from the south, he found Tippecanoe destroyed. It was this act of war that finally unified many of the Indian tribes under Tecumseh. He went on to gain the respect of Britain’s Major-General Isaac Brock in the Battle of Fort Malden. About Tecumseh, Brock wrote: “A more sagacious or a more gallant Warrior does not, I believe, exist.” Later, fighting alongside Major-General Henry Procter in the Battle of Fort Meigs, Tecumseh and his warriors overtook the American reinforcements that would otherwise have tipped the balance of the conflict. Finally, on October 5, 1813, Tecumseh was killed when he and a small group of Indian warriors chose to defend British lines when most other soldiers, including the British themselves, had fled.



## Brigadier General William Hull

Born in the Thirteen Colonies, William Hull joined a Connecticut militia in 1776 during the American Revolution to fight against British rule. Working his way up to the rank of lieutenant colonel over the course of eight major battles, Hull was recognized by George Washington and the Continental Congress for his service. In 1805, he would be appointed Governor of the Michigan Territory by President Thomas Jefferson. In addition to his role as Governor, Hull served as Michigan Territory's Indian Agent, an important role in a territory which was controlled almost entirely by Indians when Hull was put in charge. Hull negotiated the Treaty of Detroit in 1807, which purchased present-day Southeast Michigan for American settlers. These settlement efforts ran afoul of Tecumseh, which would later influence Tecumseh's alliance with Sir Isaac Brock against Hull in the War of 1812. When the war broke out, Hull was appointed a Brigadier General in charge of the Army of the Northwest, tasked with invading Canada from his staging point at Fort Detroit. Much of Hull's strategy was dictated by his fear of Indians, rendering him particularly vulnerable to Tecumseh and Brock's strategy during the brief Battle of Detroit.

## The Historical Events

### AMERICAN DECLARATION OF WAR (JUNE 18, 1812)

One of the most memorable statements—at least among Canadians—on the subject of America's declaration of war against the British Empire came from Thomas Jefferson: "The conquest of the Canadas will be a mere matter of marching." With most of Britain's trained soldiers already fighting Napoleon in France, much of the American invading force believed Canada to be largely undefended and

thus easily overtaken. So, fuelled by the near-religious conviction of America's "Manifest Destiny" and Senator Henry Clay's public outrage over the British impressment of American citizens, America went to war in Canada. Conquest proved less straightforward than those in power had anticipated, however. The sheer size of Canada made the question of where to begin marching (and how to distribute forces) difficult to answer. The Americans also did not anticipate such a large and willing contingent of Indian fighters and Canadian militiamen.

### GENERAL WILLIAM HULL INVADES SANDWICH (JULY 12, 1812)

By 1812, most of the American public agreed with former President Thomas Jefferson that invading the Canadas would be "a mere matter of marching." It had been decided that a primary contingent would advance on Montreal, a second would push up the Niagara River and a third would sweep out of Fort Detroit into the heart of Upper Canada. Michigan Territory Governor William Hull, who was stationed at Fort Detroit, was in charge of the Upper Canada campaign. Hull had little enthusiasm for his command and botched several aspects of his campaign. The British uncovered his entire invasion plan and captured many of his army's supplies when they took command of the American schooner Cayuga, depriving Hull of the element of surprise. He did manage to cross the Detroit River and temporarily occupy the French Canadian village of Sandwich. Fearing the natives would attack, Hull sent fiery missives to the white settlers around Sandwich, threatening to kill any who sided with the Indians. Hull's worst fears were realized when Tecumseh and a raiding party ambushed a supply column on its way to Fort Detroit on August 5, 1812. Three



days later, Hull ordered Sandwich abandoned and withdrew his army behind the walls of Fort Detroit.

### **THE BATTLE OF MAGUAGA (AUGUST 9, 1812)**

When General William Hull withdrew to Detroit, his supply line became a target of British and First Nations attacks, resulting in the Battle of Brownstown. In response, Hull sent a larger detachment of men to retrieve the supplies. They were ambushed by British Major Adam Muir and a force of British regulars, Canadian militia, and First Nations warriors. The American detachment heavily outnumbered their opponents, but it was communication problems amongst the British side which allowed the Americans to claim victory and transfer the supplies to Detroit. During the battle, British troops confused the movements of their First Nations allies in the woods with an American attempt to outflank them. Muir attempted to sound a charge against the beleaguered Americans, but his troops misinterpreted the bugle call as a retreat, effectively ending the battle when the Americans chose not to press their advantage.

### **THE BATTLE OF DETROIT (AUGUST 16, 1812)**

Major-General Isaac Brock's attack on Fort Detroit is the stuff of legend. Outmanned and outgunned, the first British attempt to take the Fort had been essentially useless. Then, with the arrival of Shawnee Indian Chief Tecumseh and several hundred of his warriors, the scales began to tip and Brock had an idea: he ordered his trained soldiers to share their uniforms with the regular militiamen; marching them back and forth out of firing range, he made it seem that his forces were twice as large. Then, Tecumseh did the same with his warriors, making sure that American General William Hull got a good look at

the numbers. Finally, Brock gave Hull three hours to surrender the Fort. Hull fell for the trick and surrendered Fort Detroit with no loss of life on either side.

### **Discussion Questions (Age 12-19)**

1. What have you learned about the War of 1812?
2. Why do you think it's important to study the War of 1812 in Canada?
3. What were the main issues that led President Madison to declare war on Britain?
4. Who are the heroes in Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812? Why?
5. The War of 1812 typically is seen as a battle between the Americans and the British while the First Nations perspective is overlooked. What were the consequences of the War on the First Nations people of America and Canada? What unique First Nations perspectives are reflected in Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812?
6. Why did Tecumseh hope to form a confederacy with other indigenous tribes in North America? What would the Federation of Native Peoples have meant for the First Nations involved? Why did the Americans see this as a threat?
7. A section of the story of Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812, is devoted to the Battle of Maguaga. Historically, it is considered a minor event. Why do you think it was included in the book?
8. Who was Laura Secord? Discuss her

contributions to the War of 1812.

9. Why is it important to George and John to join the war? Do you think they should have gone to war? Why or why not?

10. How would you feel if your friends decided to fight for Canada in a war and there was a possibility of their never coming home?

11. Discuss the consequences of the War of 1812. What were the most tragic events/results?

12. Who won the War of 1812? What did they gain?

13. Who lost the War of 1812? What did they lose?

## Classroom Activities

### CREATE A COMIC STRIP

Have students work individually or in pairs to create a comic strip about a major topic related to the War of 1812 which isn't covered in Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812. Have the students write and draw 1-3 comic strips (determined by how much time you want to spend on it) based on the topic.

Begin by researching the event, the dates, the locations and the people who were involved. Suggest that students consider diverse aspects of the War by writing from the perspective of a First Nations family, or from another point-of-view that is usually overlooked in history textbooks. First, have students write a script for their strip(s), which should include all of the dialogue as well as important visual information, such as where characters will be placed in the panel and what the backgrounds will look like. Ensure that the strip has a clear beginning and end, and also determine how many panels will be in the

script and how much dialogue will be used.

Encourage students to continuously assess whether their script is accurately representing the event.

When the students have drawn their strips, conclude the activity by having the students organize their strips in chronological order, then present the War of 1812 in comic form!

When finished, send your compilation of comics to [contact@renegademail.com](mailto:contact@renegademail.com) for a chance to be featured on the Renegade Arts Entertainment website!

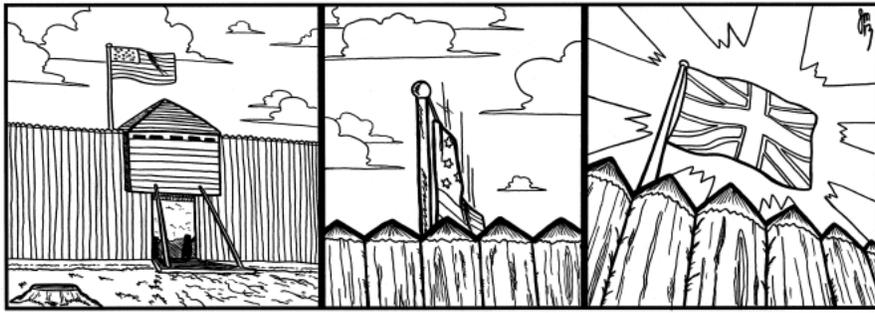
### REWRITING HISTORY

Have students choose a strip from Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812 and determine whose perspective that strip is showing (British, American, First Nations, etc.). Have them write an explanation of the perspective chosen and what evidence supports it, then, choosing a different perspective, rewrite (and/or redraw) that scene. What would be different? Why? Have students present their rewritten strip and explain (either verbally, in writing, or both) their reasoning for the decisions they made.

### CREATE A HERITAGE HISTORY MINUTE

The Heritage Minute program was developed by the Historica-Dominion Institute of Canada in 1991 to promote Canadian history and to educate Canadians about the stories that make our country unique. Heritage Minute videos are similar to TV commercials in length; these brief vignettes tend to include the setting, the date, the events, the people involved and finally the historical significance of the event or individuals portrayed. Ask students to create their own Heritage Minute using this structure as a template and stop-motion animation





## Media Literacy

technique.

1 Working in small groups, they should create a storyboard and a short script about a person or event from the War of 1812. A storyboard is a series of drawings used to lay out the camera angles and composition of each shot in a film.

2 Have groups create sets and props using cardboard and construction paper, and sculpt characters using modelling clay.

3 Download the NFB's free stop-motion app PixStop onto your iPad via iTunes.

4 NFB Education's StopMo site provides instruction on stop-motion animation. View it here: [nfb.ca/playlist/stopmostudio/](http://nfb.ca/playlist/stopmostudio/)

The following URL links to the Heritage Minute about Laura Secord: [historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/laura-secord?media\\_type=41&](http://historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/laura-secord?media_type=41&)

## CREATE A ZINE

A zine is a self-published mini-magazine or comic book, and may be the result of the work of one person or several collaborators. A standard zine format is 8.5" by 11" paper folded in half, but they can be smaller or larger. Instruct students to make their own zines about the War of 1812, either working individually or in groups. The finished products could include (for instance): diary entries by George or John; obituaries of key people involved in the War of 1812; propaganda advertising; a recipe from George Morton's bakery; a newspaper clipping about the Declaration of War; an interview with Chief Tecumseh; a comic strip about Laura Secord; a poem about the Battle of Tippecanoe; a review of Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812; etc.

When considering media representations based upon historical events, it is important to examine how the facts are interpreted and presented, and whether divergent interpretations or sources exist. Films, comic books and even classroom textbooks, for instance, may be based upon extensive primary-source research, which is then presented in new formats; these new mediums are thus secondary sources that are interpretations of the past. Students researching historical events and consulting secondary sources should consider whether a text might be exaggerated or biased and become familiar with referring to primary sources of information if they believe the situation requires it. Questions to be asked when evaluating an information source include: who/what is the source and whether the source represents first-hand knowledge of events or an interpretation after the fact. Proper care must be taken when researching the past to avoid creating a false or inaccurate account of events or completely omitting a part of our history.

Primary sources are documents or objects that were written or created during the time in question, by those who experienced the event or conditions at that time. Examples of primary sources are:

- Diaries
- Poetry
- Speeches
- Music
- Manuscripts
- Art
- Letters
- Pottery
- Interviews
- Furniture

- Furniture
- News film footage
- Clothing
- Official records
- Buildings

Secondary sources are documents or objects that are interpretations of primary sources and are created by those who have second-hand experience with the event or time period. Examples of secondary sources are:

- Textbooks
- Magazine articles
- Histories
- Criticisms
- Commentaries
- Encyclopaedias
- Historical fiction
- Films based upon historical events
- Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812

For more information on primary and secondary sources, follow this link:  
[collectionsCanada.gc.ca/education/008-3010-e.html](http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/education/008-3010-e.html)

### Media Literacy Activity

Brainstorm ways in which presenting the War of 1812 as a comic strip influences its interpretation of history.



### Questions For Further Discussion

1. Why do you think it is important to study historical events such as the War of 1812?
2. Why do you think Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812 was created?
3. Whose perspective is the War of 1812 described from in the book? Why do you think the author choose to tell the story from that perspective?
4. How might this story be different if it were told solely from the perspective of the First Nations people?
5. Are there any ways to ensure a balanced representation of events when documenting history? What are the indications of a balanced representation?
6. What is the value of updating history books and retelling stories from the past in new forms?
7. Can you identify any visual stereotypes in this story? If so, what are they? What do you define as stereotypes?
8. How are Americans presented in the story? How does that differ from the way the British/Canadians are presented?
9. How does the artist depict scenes of war? How does the artist depict scenes of military life?

## Visual Techniques

Artists use diverse visual techniques to convey messages, evoke emotions, heighten tension or create a mood. As such, the use of visual techniques is a means of enhancing the experience of the viewer/reader but it can also be seen as a way of manipulating the viewer/reader into feeling a certain way about the story's events. Consider and discuss the various visual techniques used by the artist in *Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812*. Look at how the artist frames each character and the action in the panels throughout the story. Is the panel using an eighth of the strip or the whole strip? When does the artist use a close-up image of the character? How do these visual techniques impact your overall experience of the story?

## COMIC BOOK TERMINOLOGY

Learning the language of comic books allows readers to understand, analyze, evaluate and critique the information being presented to them; it also empowers them to create their own message using the medium. All art forms have a language, but the languages of the visual arts often cross-pollinate. For example, film might use framing techniques that you would find in the panels of a comic book. The following overview of basic comic book terminology (derived from Wikipedia) will help students understand visual techniques that are typically employed in comic books.

- Panels: Panels are images that are laid out within the page borders. The most traditional layout for a comic strip is 3 or 4 equal-sized panels in a row.
- Panel frames: The border or edges of a panel are called frames. Traditionally, these are rectangular in shape but can be altered by the artist.



- Splash page: A splash page is a full-page drawing in a comic book. A splash page is used when the artist wants to highlight an important event or element in the story.
- Speech balloon or speech bubble: Speech balloons are a graphic used to assign ownership of dialogue to a particular character. These may vary in shape depending on the type of dialogue that it contains: for example, whispers are often represented using broken lines, screaming tends to be conveyed through spiky lines or bolded text and cloud-like shapes denote interior thoughts.
- Captions: Captions are a narrative device used to communicate information that cannot be communicated by the speech balloon. They can be used in place of thought bubbles, and can be composed in the first, second or third person. They are distinguished from balloons by being rectangular in shape.
- Motion lines: Motion lines are used to indicate that a character or object is moving. Motion lines which originate from the edge of a panel may also be used to add energy to an image, in much the same manner as film uses camera zooms and shakes.
- Gutter: Gutter is the space between the borders. In *Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812*, the gutters are black, and blended with the panel frames.

## AESTHETICIZING VIOLENCE

Violence is often depicted as a striking or beautiful image or moving sequence in films, comic books and other forms of visual media. How a work chooses to portray violence is important in understanding the tone and intent of the work. Discuss with your class whether there are any scenes in *Redcoats-ish: Jeff Martin's War of 1812* that aestheticize violence and, if so, which scenes do so. Further questions: Can students refer to other current examples of the aestheticizing of violence in film, television, comic books, games or newspapers? What do students think are some issues surrounding aestheticizing of images of war?