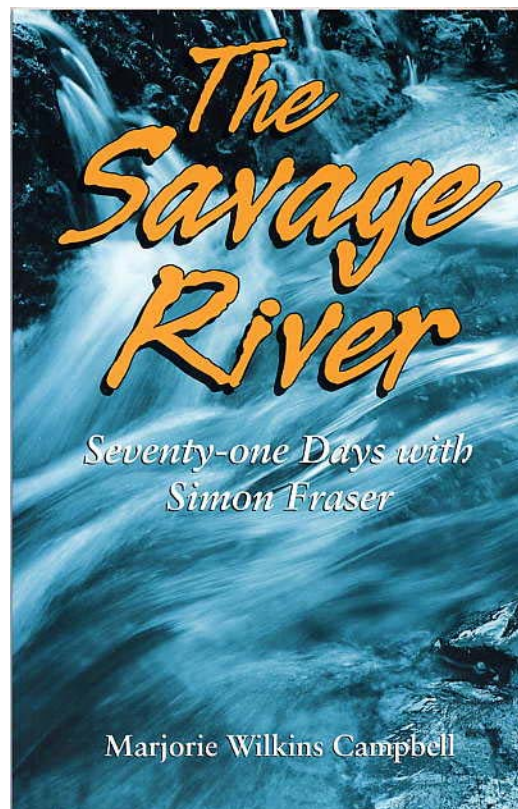


# THE SAVAGE RIVER

**Seventy-one Days with Simon Fraser**



## TEACHER'S GUIDE

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### ABOUT THIS BOOK

"*Allez!*" cried Simon Fraser, and twenty-four waiting paddles splashed into the river. It was a Saturday morning, May 8, 1808, when Simon Fraser and his group of voyageurs set out on the river they hoped would prove a navigable passage to the Pacific Ocean. Their mission was one in which many other explorers in Canada's history had shared-and failed. The men had little information about what lay down river, but they had physical strength, courage, and a strong leader in their *bourgeois*, Simon Fraser. Their trip to the Pacific and back was to become one of Canada's classic stories of adventure and exploration.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marjorie Wilkins Campbell (1902-1986) was born in London, England, and immigrated with her family to the Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan, in 1904. After seven years pioneering on the farm, the Campbell family moved to Swift Current.

A distinguished journalist, Marjorie Wilkins Campbell contributed to numerous magazines, including *Maclean's*, *Saturday Night*, *National Geographic*, and *Magazine Digest*. She was also an award-winning author, penning a total of twelve books, many of which focussed on the early exploration of the West and the Canadian fur trade. Two of her books were honoured with the prestigious Governor General's Award: *The Saskatchewan* won the prize for creative non-fiction in 1950 and *The Nor'Westers* won the prize for juvenile literature in 1954.

Marjorie Wilkins Campbell became a member of the Order of Canada in 1978 for her contribution to our knowledge of Canadian history.

### ABOUT THE TEACHER'S GUIDE

The activity suggestions in this guide are easily adaptable to your students' knowledge and skill levels. The activities integrate the language arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing) with other curriculum areas such as art, drama, and social studies. A suggested skills focus is offered at the beginning of each activity to be used as a general guideline for adapting the activity, if necessary, for your class.

### PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

#### 1. ACCESS TO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Help students recall what they know about Canada's explorers and the fur trade industry that drove exploration of this country (*pp. 9-10, 36-39 in the novel offer a partial summary*).

#### 2. MANAGE IDEAS AND INFORMATION

Distribute copies of the blackline master map included with this teacher's guide (*p. 7*). Depending on the activities you will be doing after students have finished the novel, ask students to annotate their map as they read with appropriate notes and page references for later use (*i.e., if you plan to discuss perseverance as in Activity 5, ask students to note examples of perseverance and where they occur along Fraser's journey*).

#### 3. USE STRATEGIES AND CUES

You may wish to comment upon some of the language used in the novel before students begin to read. For example:

- Voyageurs spoke a combination of French and Aboriginal languages, with the occasional word of English. The author writes in English, but uses many of the French words commonly used by voyageurs.
- Aboriginal peoples are called Indians throughout the book. Discuss the historical context of the word "Indian" as it relates to A early explorers' mistaken identification of North American Aboriginal peoples as people from India. You may wish to engage students in a discussion of how the term "Indian" differs from "Aboriginal" or "Native" and why many Aboriginal peoples today prefer the latter term of reference.

Assist your class in preparing a reading strategy to help them through difficult passages in the novel. You might ask students to read a few paragraphs at random to find any unfamiliar words. Discuss methods of handling unfamiliar words (*read the rest of the sentence to see if context makes meaning clear, look words up in dictionary, etc.*).

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. SURVIVAL GEAR

#### Skills Focus

- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*
- *manage ideas and information*

Have students prepare a list of the goods Fraser and his group took on the journey (pp. 7-8). Ask students to imagine that they are heading off on a canoe trip that will follow in Fraser's footsteps. What will they need to pack?

Have students work in groups of four or five to prepare a list of their own "essential" items. Lists should be reasonably realistic as to what will be needed for such a trip, what will fit in their canoes, and where they will be able to pick up supplies (i.e., fresh food) as they move along their journey. You might wish to have students find prices for any items they do not own themselves to see what such a trip would cost.

### 2. THE KNOWN WORLD

#### Skills Focus

- *explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences*
- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*

As a class, discuss the cumulative nature of knowledge acquisition with specific reference to mapping Canada. Show students maps of Canada as they developed through history as more people explored and added their discoveries to existing knowledge. You might include the following questions to guide the discussion:

- What prior knowledge of the region he was entering did Fraser have? (*Mackenzie's journals, Aboriginal people's knowledge of area, reports of explorers who had been to the Pacific coast*)
- By the time Fraser finished his journey, he had added more knowledge about the region for future exploration. What knowledge did he contribute? (*information that the Fraser River was not navigable to the ocean, knowledge of the Aboriginal peoples along the route*)

- How can the activities of people such as scientists, inventors, mountain climbers, and artists be related to Fraser's quest for knowledge? Ask students to reflect upon this question in their journals. You may wish to have students discuss their ideas in small groups or as a class to help them clarify and extend their own thoughts and ideas.

### 3. JUST THE FACTS

#### Skills Focus

- *explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences*
- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*
- *manage ideas and information*
- *enhance the clarity and artistry of communication*
- *celebrate and build community*

*The Savage River* is a novel based on historical events, so it is a combination of both the fictional and non-fictional. You may wish to guide a discussion about fact and fiction using some of the following questions:

- What evidence can students find that Marjorie Wilkins Campbell used factual information in writing her novel? (*author's note on p. vi*)
- What parts of Campbell's writing are likely taken directly from Dr. Lamb's work on Fraser's journal? (*quotes such as those on pp. 7, 16*)
- What elements of the book are more imaginative than factual? (*conversations such as those on pp. 3, 17; illustrations; figurative language that conveys excitement and danger such as on pp. 67, 72; etc.*)
- You might ask students to consider whether Fraser's journals are "factual." (*they detail just Fraser's perspective on events*)
- Students could read or view more about explorers from several information stations set up around the classroom or library (*i.e., encyclopedias, videos, pamphlets, other novels based on historical periods, autobiographies, non-fiction books*).
- Have students evaluate each genre, stating its benefits and drawbacks. If appropriate,

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discuss with your students the kinds of stories that are missing and why (*i.e.*, of *Aboriginal peoples, women, children*).

- Ask students to choose a short section of the novel to rewrite in another format. (*i.e.*, *dramatic monologue, cartoon strip, play, journal entry, storyboard for a film or documentary*). Or, students might choose a section of the book to rewrite from another person's perspective (*a good one might be an Aboriginal person's perspective of Fraser "borrowing" the canoe on p. 85*).
- Ask students to base their work on the events as presented by Campbell, but to add their own imaginative elements (*dialogue, description, figurative language, discussion of the thoughts and motives of those involved*).
- Have students exchange a draft of their work with another student and then have students revise based on written feedback received from the other student.
- Before students begin, you might discuss your expectations for the project or even provide a rubric with the guidelines you will use for assessing their work. Such a rubric might include: use of events from the novel, addition of creative elements to story, care in presentation of material, feedback offered to another's work, revision to own work based on feedback.

### 4. FAILURE AS SUCCESS

#### Skills Focus

- *explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences*
- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*
- *enhance the clarity and artistry of communication*

Fraser is preoccupied at the end of his journey with the sense that his venture was a costly failure (*pp. 132, 139*). He may have failed in the task he set out to do, but in the long run, his journey was a great contribution to the exploration of Canada. Draw student attention to the concept of "negative knowledge" noted by Campbell on p. 139.

- Ask students to consider how looking at

Fraser's journey could help them think about the concept of "failure" in a more positive way. Do they have a personal story of failure that in the end was a triumph? What stories from the news might reflect this idea of failure? (*i.e.*, an athlete with a disappointing performance at the Olympics, a scientific experiment that fails its predicted result but that adds to scientific knowledge in general)

- Students could be asked to prepare a visual representation of the concept of failure—a collage, poster, illustration, concept map, cartoon, etc.

### 5. PERSEVERENCE

#### Skills Focus

- *explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences*
- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*
- *manage ideas and information*
- *enhance the clarity and artistry of communication*
- *celebrate and build consensus*

Fraser named his canoe *Perseverance*, which was also the North West Company's motto. Have students work in groups to list examples of perseverance from the novel (*pp. 36, 73, 85-86, etc.*) You might use the following questions/tasks to guide student groups in further work on this topic:

- Have students name examples of perseverance from their own knowledge and experience (*an athlete who makes a comeback after an injury, a writer who continues to submit his or her book to publishers for years before being published, etc.*).
- Is perseverance always a good quality? (*As a negative example, you might describe explorer Henry Hudson's determination to continue exploring the Arctic and the resulting mutiny on his ship. Another negative example might be of a person who perseveres in some form of self-destructive behaviour despite all advice against it.*)
- Ask each group to craft a thesis statement for an essay about perseverance. Each group should then outline at least 3 examples that could be used to back up this thesis.

- If you wish, you could ask students to write an essay based on their group's work or students could reflect upon what they have learned about perseverance in their journals.

## 6. LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

### Skills Focus

- *explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences*
- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*

Lead students in a discussion about the qualities of a good leader (*i.e., vision, ability to inspire others, eye on the "big picture," concern for others, reliability, honour, judgment, decisiveness*).

- Ask students to find examples of Fraser's leadership (*e.g., pp. 15, 27, 40, 41, 43, 45*)
- Based on these examples, would students consider Fraser a good leader?
- What various methods of communication did Fraser use in the novel? (*journal writing, gun waving and firing, threats, inspiring talks, listening, negotiating, commands, sign language, reason, persuasion, etc.*)
- How was his diverse use of communication methods related to his abilities as a leader?
- How did his methods of communication with his own men differ from those used with the Aboriginal peoples?
- How successful were his various choices of communication strategies?
- Ask students to apply their understanding of communication and leadership to a situation in current events (*i.e., federal/provincial politics, international politics, anti-globalism demonstrations*). After generating as many ideas as possible from a class discussion, have students write in their journals describing anyone they believe to be a good leader and why.

## 7. REMEMBERING FRASER'S JOURNEY

### Skills Focus

- *explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences*
- *comprehend and respond critically to texts*

- *manage ideas and information*
- *enhance the clarity and artistry of communication*
- *celebrate and build consensus*

Ask students to form small groups. Tell each group that the British Columbia government would like to erect a commemorative sign in honour of Simon Fraser. This sign needs to recognize Fraser, his voyageurs, and the Aboriginal groups who were so essential to the success of Fraser's exploration. The group's task is to prepare a proposal for this sign that will then be evaluated by government committee.

Each group must:

- recommend an appropriate spot for the sign (a park, a town, along the river, etc.)
- recommend appropriate material for the memorial and sketch what it will look like (an engraved metal plaque mounted on stone, an eye level wooden sign, or?)
- write text for the sign, which must not exceed 200 words
- prepare drafts of any illustrative material that might go on the sign
- devise, describe, and use a strategy for ensuring that their text is clear, concise, interesting, and accurate. (There is great expense involved in preparing such a sign, so it must be flawless.)
- give evidence that each group member contributed to the project
- present the project to the rest of the class

Discuss your expectations for the project with students before they begin. These might include: appropriateness of choice of information for the sign, effective choice of language for the sign, effective use of a strategy to eliminate mistakes from the project, care in the presentation of the project for the class, participation from all group members, adherence to the specifications of the project as listed above.

After reviewing all projects, have students evaluate their own work to suggest where they might have improved their own project. Ask them to describe the biggest challenge in completing their project and whether they have any ideas that might make this challenge easier with a similar project next time.

