

## What if...

### *Exploring decision making and the War of 1812*

History allows us to recognize how important the decisions we make are, because we have the benefit of hindsight when examining the consequences. The events of the War of 1812 are due to the decisions made by key individuals and the actions and reactions these decisions caused; whether positive or negative. What this lesson plan will explore is what could have happened if different decisions were made, or if certain key historical figures decided not to react at all. Would battles have been lost? Could war have been prevented? What would have happened to the fate of Upper Canada if the Americans won and the land became American territory? What would Canada look like if Detroit became a province? What would North America be like if Tecumseh had realized his vision of a Pan-Indian nation?

**Learning outcomes:** This activity will provide students with the opportunity to use critical thinking to explore the War of 1812 in counterfactuals and attempt to predict what Canada would be like today if history had played itself out differently.

### Activity

**Whole group:** Watch the **Laura Secord** Heritage Minute. After watching the clip, lead the class in a discussion with the following questions:

1. Who was Laura Secord?
2. Who was staying at Secord's house during the War of 1812?
3. What did she overhear the American Soldiers say?
4. What did she decide to do?
5. What were the results of her actions?
6. Working pairs, imagine different scenarios if Secord had not made the decision she made. Be ready to share.

**Small group:** Working in small groups or in pairs, present students with information on the battle at Detroit. What would have happened if Tecumseh decided not to join forces with the General Brock in creating the ruse that eventually defeated General Hull at Detroit? What would have happened if the ruse had failed and General Hull initiated a battle against Brock and Tecumseh? Explore and develop the possible outcomes. Be ready to share.

### **Independently:**

Students will explore counterfactuals by selecting one of the following events or event to research, and then by altering its history and explaining alternative possible outcomes:

- [British interference with American Merchant ships](#)
- The alliance between [Brock](#) and [Tecumseh](#)
- Brock's death at the [battle of Queenston Heights](#)

- The American's successful attack at York (present day Toronto)
- The death of Tecumseh at [Moraviantown](#)
- The Advance on Montreal at [Crysler's Farm](#)
- The [Treaty of Ghent](#)

Once their research is complete students can present their outcomes in a variety of ways including:

- A brief narrative
- A powerpoint presentation, with visuals
- "Make your own Heritage Minute" video presentation (see Make your own Heritage Minute lesson plan for tips)

**Question for discussion/reflection:**

1. How does altering the course of action during the War of 1812 affect Canada as we know it today?