

# TECUMSEH

c. 1768–1813



**WHY HE MADE HISTORY** Tecumseh was a famous Shawnee Indian chief who fought to unite all the Native American tribes to stand up against the invasion by white settlers.



*As you read the biography below, think about the courage Tecumseh must have had to defend his native people against invasion by the American settlers.*



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In the late 1700s, white settlers began exploring and staking claims in western North America. Tecumseh was born during this time, when Native American tribes faced conflict from the advancing settlers. Tecumseh grew to be one of the most recognized and remembered Native Americans in our history.

Tecumseh was the son of a Shawnee war chief. His name meant “shooting star” or “meteor.” Both Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa struggled against the settlers to maintain their native land. They took part in many raids against the settlers in Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

Tecumseh led the Shawnee people to resist **incursions** into their territory by white settlers. In 1811 Tecumseh traveled through the South, attempting to recruit and persuade southeastern tribes to join his cause.

In the early 1800s, the governor of the Indiana Territory was William Henry Harrison. Harrison made a treaty with the Indians while also selling the native land to white settlers. Tecumseh was infuriated. He condemned Harrison’s treaty and argued against the sale of Indian land. This conflict led to the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811.

## VOCABULARY

**incursion** invasion

Harrison attacked the Indians during the Battle of Tippecanoe, which led to a victory for the settlers and Harrison himself. Tecumseh had missed the battle because he had traveled south to try to get other Indian tribes to join the battle. But Tecumseh was determined to fight back at all costs.

In 1812 Tecumseh returned to the Northwest and became an ally to the British troops. During the War of 1812 Tecumseh fought beside the British, where he was made a brigadier general. He led other American Indians to fight with the British during this war.

Tecumseh was killed on October 5, 1813, while commanding his Indian forces in Canada at the Battle of the Thames. Tecumseh's courage and leadership make him a recognized Native American figure today.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What was Tecumseh protesting? Why?

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2. **Make Judgments** Would you have preferred to be an American Indian, or a new American settler during Tecumseh's time? Explain your answer.

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### ACTIVITY

Imagine that Tecumseh has been awarded a "person of the year" award by his Native American tribe. Write a short acceptance speech for Tecumseh to recite to his people. Include as many details as you can from what you have read.