



Madeleine Takes Command

Ethel C. Brill, Bruce Adams (Illustrator)

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Madeleine Verchere's story is based on a true account of colonial French Canada of the 1690's. Harassed by Iroquois, the Verchere family's fort must keep a continual guard. 14-year-old Madeleine is left alone with two younger brothers and few others when the Indians attack. We follow the brave and determined stratagems of Madeleine and her small circle. Madeleine's youthful leadership, especially of her brothers, will win the reader's admiration.

Madeleine Takes Command Details

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Author : Ethel C. Brill , Bruce Adams (Illustrator)

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Academic, School, Childrens, Young Adult, Cultural, Canada, Juvenile, Middle Grade, Christian



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From Reader Review Madeleine Takes Command for online ebook

Nicole Marie says

One of the better books that I've been required to read.

3.5 stars

Dawn says

Worldview - Christian - See Review

Read Aloud - 8 yrs +

Independent Reader - 10 yrs +

Setting:

Location - New France, Verchères, St. Lawrence River

Time Period - 1692

Review

Left in charge of the family seigneury, fourteen-year-old Madeleine must ensure that the habitant farmers are safe and that the fort is guarded for the sake of her family and for king and country.

The Iroquois attack without warning, killing the habitant men in the fields. Under siege, with all but two soldiers captured or killed, Madeleine must take charge. With the help of her two young brothers she must hold the fort and ensure that the women and children are kept safe and fed inside the blockhouse.

Knowing that they cannot withstand a full assault should the Iroquois mount one, the children set out to deceive them into believing they are facing a fully garrisoned fort. Together the three children and an eighty-year-old retired soldier must protect the stockade day and night, ensuring constant activity and noise. They must keep the attackers at bay, ensuring no scouts come close enough to realize the fort is essentially undefended. Two soldiers, who may go AWOL at any moment, and Monsieur Fontaine are the last line of defense to protect the women and children in the blockhouse, should the stockade fall.

An exciting story based on real events that is sure to thrill children. The courage of Madeleine and her brothers in the face of overwhelming obstacles is quite wonderful. This book presents the idea that to win a battle one does not always need to be stronger. When we are smarter we can overcome things that at first seem impossible.

The Catholic faith of the family comes through clearly in the story. It is not overly preachy, but reflects the primary faith of the people of New France at the time. They pray, both for help and in thanksgiving, trusting God with their fate, should the fort fall.

The book contains some charming pen and ink drawings that children will enjoy.

Teacher Application

A seigneurie was a large parcel of land that was under the care of a landlord called a seigneur. He cared for the land on behalf of the king, allowing tenant farmers, called habitants, to work the land and live there. They paid taxes to the seigneur. The seigneur in turn, maintained a garrisoned fort to which the habitants could retreat in times of trouble. Although they had the authority to require the habitants to work for them without pay, this authority was rarely enforced in New France.

The Mohawk, who are members of the Iroquois confederation, are presented in an interesting light in this story. In most works of Canadian historical fiction, set during this time period, we see the Iroquois vilified. In this book, although Madeleine does portray a degree of racism in her statement “They are ignorant and wicked”, she balances this by going on to say that the Iroquois are “God’s creatures” and that much of their behavior was retaliatory, stemming from their treatment at the hands of the settlers. Later in the book it is stated that some of the mission Iroquois who were allied with the French helped to rescue some of the settlers taken captive in this story.

As the book was written in 1946 it is not surprising to see the sentiment that in order for an aboriginal person to be civilized and respectable he must first be “converted” or “westernized”. This is something that should be discussed with students, no matter what their beliefs are.

From a Biblical standpoint, which is the stance this book has perhaps misrepresented, we must recognize that the great commission stated “go and preach the gospel” not to go and force others to become like you. Often in traditional missionary situations, such as the colonization of North America, we see this idea that “Western” and “Christian” are one and the same, but this is not so. Biblically God loves all people and created each person. He wants to see them come to know Him, but there is nothing in the New Testament that suggests he likes or dislikes one culture or language better than others. For a very interesting read on this subject Bruchko: The Astonishing True Story of a 19-Year-Old American, His Capture by the Motilone Indians and His Adventures in Christianizing the Stone Age Tribe by Bruce Olson is both fascinating and illuminating.

Field Trip Opportunity:

The Fort and house from Madeleine’s time do not remain, but there is a statue in her honor there.
<http://ville.vercheres.qc.ca/visiteur...>

Parental Warning

First Nations people are treated in a less than ideal light at times. See review above.

Mariah Mead says

I read 'Madeleine Takes Command' last year and really enjoyed it. In fact I read it in 1 day, believe it or not. It was about a girl called Madeleine living in 'New France' (now Canada) whose father was in military service. Her Mother goes away to attend to promised business, leaving Madeleine at home with her 2 brothers and only a few tenant farmers and armed guards. Then the Iroquois Indians make siege on the fort they are staying in. Madeleine takes command as the title suggests and rallies the fort to fight for their lives hoping against all hope that help will come in time. This book was full of adventure and courage and was a great read. I recommend it!

Megan Myrick says

Read with my daughter for history. It really is an amazing story and I enjoy anecdotal history so I am glad that we read it. There was a lot of discuss after we read it: bravery, perseverance, existing on meager food and protection, relations between the Native Americans and the colonists. I think I learned a lot alongside of Olivia. The writing style and content is appropriate for children. However, I think the story could have been told in half of the chapters. We found ourselves sighing and eyerolling toward the end when several successive chapters detailed night patrols and threat of Indian raids in grueling repetitive detail. If you take this on with your kiddo be prepared to fight through some boredom.

Rachel Osborne says

An enjoyable, historically accurate story of the girl who saved the French settlements in Canada.

Bookworm says

A well written story of a true account concerning a fourteen year old girl who holds off a Indian attack in New France (Canada).

With her father in Montrial, her mother just left on a business trip, and all but two of the garrison captured or killed while on a hunting expedition, it is up to Madeline, her two younger brothers, a family servent, the two untrustworthy garrison men and a neighboring man to hold the fort together from the Iroque tribe.

Based off of the true tale, this was very interesting and well written.

The other John says

I really hate child prodigies in fiction. When some snot nose punk saves the day while all the adults stand around drooling, I just want to close the book and toss it. This book, however, is the child prodigy done right. Maybe it's because the story is true. The Madeleine of the title is Madeleine de Vercères, who lived in Quebec--or New France, as they called it--back in the late 17th Century. Her family lived in and oversaw a manor house and fort on the St. Lawrence River. It was a time when there was frequent skirmishes between the French settlers and the Iroquois Indians. Things had been peaceful for a season in their area, and folks around the fort were pretty relaxed. One day when Madeleine's father was off with the army and her mother had gone to Montreal to conduct some business, a band of Iroquois attacked. There were ten soldiers

assigned to the fort, but only two happened to be in the fort when it fell under siege. Madeleine was the eldest member of her family at home and, despite the fact that she was only fourteen, assumed the responsibility of protecting the families that were able to reach the safety of the fort. It was a heroic tale, with the victory won not by any particular genius of the child, but rather through her determination and honor. Y'all should definitely check this one out.

Mads says

i thought it was good. for me personally, sometimes it was a bit boring... however the more you read it the more interesting it gets. i think it's a good book though, and i especially like Madeleine!!!! i don't really think there was a point of Antione... maybe if he was Madeleine's love interest or contributed more to the story i would have given it a 5 stars

Shelley Lee says

What a great story of courage and determination to overcome in the face of fear and danger! This is such an inspiring story and great to read to children who are studying this time period. It makes it even more wonderful that the story is true.

Jessica Claxton says

This was a read-aloud with my boys. What a story! The heroine is a 14-year-old girl, and along with her two little brothers and a elderly servant, she held off an Iroquois attack for an entire week. The children in this true story endured sleeplessness and hunger while they demonstrated amazing courage and level-headedness. It was an honor to relay Madeleine's story to my boys.

Amy Meyers says

Another good book from Bethlehem Books. It did get bogged down sometimes in descriptions of setting, and I think it could have gotten to the Indian attack as well as through it a bit quicker, but overall it was good and very exciting in many places. Went great with studying the colonial era of history in N. America, especially if you're using SOTW3.

Francesca Morales says

This was a great book about a time and place in history you don't read about often. Definitely recommend for all ages!

Elisabeth Tyler says

I read this to my kids as a read aloud. We all loved it so much. It's historical fiction based on a true story and real people. All the events actually happened which made it so much better for the kids. It's a story of the strength and courage of a big sister to keep her brothers safe. And of her two little brothers who work along side her to accomplish the mission of protecting their home. They had an old man to help and a neighbor but it was the courage and determination of the girl that made it happen.

It would make a great audiobook if your kids love audio stories

Stacy M. Patton says

Wonderful story of heroism and courage from a 14 year old girl and her 10 and 12 year old brothers who held down a whole fort after an Iroquois attack. This took place in 1692 in Canada (which was called New France). A truly amazing story of strength, resilience, faith and incredible bravery!

I read this book to my daughter who is 11 and my son who is 10. They both rated this book 5 stars. This book starts off a little slow but soon the excitement makes you not want to put it down! This is a great book to read to your kids as the children true character!

Heather says

With her mother and father away, 14-year-old Madeleine stepped into the commander's role when a group of Iroquois attacked. Because of her bravery, a statue of her stands on the St. Lawrence River about 20 miles downriver from Montreal. Madeleine Takes Command is her story, based largely on her own written account of that week. The story is fascinating and impressive, though at times the narrative drags. I recommend it to people studying or interested in Canadian history.
