

# TERRY FOX: REMEMBERING A CANADIAN HERO

## Introduction

### Focus

Terry Fox was only 18 years old when he learned he had bone cancer. He lost part of his right leg due to that cancer, and eventually died of the disease—but not before he ran a cross-Canada marathon to raise awareness and money for a cure. It has been 30 years since he died, and in this *News in Review* story we look at his life and legacy.

### Note to Teachers

Cancer has made an impact on virtually every Canadian family. It is important to create a safe place for students to consider the topic of cancer and its effect on friends and family members. Students could write a journal reflection on a way that cancer is impacting their life or has impacted their lives, thus connecting the story of Terry Fox to their own lives. The teacher could model this journal-writing activity so students see how the teacher's life has also been affected by this topic. A focus on hope and remembrance is important to maintain throughout all classroom activities.

### Introductory Activity

Create a placemat with a group. In the centre of the placemat, print the word *hero*. Draw lines on the placemat to create equal space for everyone in your group to record individual answers to the following prompts.

1. List two or three words to describe a “hero.”
2. List two or three people that you consider heroes in your life.
3. Share your answers with your group and create a group definition of the word *hero*.

A hero is someone who faces a challenge with bravery and who thinks more about other people than themselves. Terry Fox certainly fits this definition of hero. He battled cancer at a young age with bravery and a sense of purpose. He thought about how his suffering could be turned toward the good of others.

When faced with the news that he was very sick, Fox could have felt sorry for himself and focused only on his own needs. Instead, he focused on a dream—that one day a cure for cancer

would exist. Fox knew that medical research and greater understanding of the disease were important steps to realizing this dream. He also knew that thousands of people and families shared the same dream.

What was unique about Fox is the way he decided to enact his dream. He imagined that by running across Canada, he could raise funds for cancer research. He also knew he might inspire others to have hope when they faced a cancer diagnosis.

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## Video Review

### Pre-viewing Questions

With a partner or in a small group discuss the following questions and record your responses.

1. Why is cancer such a frightening topic? Have you or someone you know had cancer?

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2. Why is research so important in the fight against cancer?

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3. Have you every participated in a Terry Fox Run, or do you know someone who has? Why do people participate in such runs?

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4. The producers of *News in Review* believed it was important to remember Terry Fox through this story.

a) Do you agree that he is worth remembering or not? Explain your answer.

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b) Of all the people who have died in the past, how do we decide who is worth remembering? In other words, how do we decide who is significant enough to remember?

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### Viewing Questions

As you watch the video, record your responses in the space provided.

1. How old was Terry Fox when he died?

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2. Why did Fox decide to begin his training as a runner?

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3. Where and when did Fox begin his run?

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4. What did Fox hope to achieve in his run?

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5. Give two reasons why the first few weeks of his run were difficult.

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6. Give two reasons why his Marathon of Hope improved once he reached Ontario.

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7. Explain how Greg Scott gave Fox inspiration.

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8. Where and why did Fox have to stop his run?

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9. What honour was given to Fox by the Canadian government?

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10. For how many years have Terry Fox Runs been held?

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11. How much money has the Terry Fox Foundation raised?

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12. How did Fox's family carry on his legacy?

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### **Post-Viewing Activity: Reflective Writing**

In your notebook describe how you felt listening to Fox's words and seeing him run along the highways and roads. Describe your feelings as you saw the crowds cheer him on. How did you feel when his death was announced? How did you feel listening to other people talk about why they participate in a Terry Fox Run? Finally, why do you think Fox is described as "running on forever?"

# TERRY FOX: REMEMBERING A CANADIAN HERO

## Who was Terry Fox?

### Before Reading

With a partner discuss the two questions below:

1. What do you already know about Terry Fox's life?
2. What would you like to know?

### During Reading

As you read Fox's story, create a visual organizer like the one below that helps you to summarize important information about his life before he began his Marathon of Hope.

<b>Family</b>	
<b>Likes/Interests</b>	
<b>Future Goals</b>	
<b>Personality</b>	
<b>Challenges Faced</b>	

### Terry Fox: The Early Years

Terrance Stanley Fox was born in Winnipeg in 1958. He had an older brother, Fred, a younger brother, Darrell, and a younger sister, Judith. His father, Rolland, worked for the Canadian National railway and his mother, Betty, worked in the home. In 1966, the Fox family moved to British Columbia and settled in Port Coquitlam.

Terry Fox was a very good student. He earned mostly As and Bs in his school work. He was also an exceptional athlete despite the fact he was not as tall or brawny as most boys his age. His determination to succeed and his willingness to put in extra hours of practice helped him to achieve his goals of playing on school sports teams. He loved many sports—soccer, basketball, rugby, and baseball—and would join all the school teams he could. Fox's room was filled with sports trophies. One of

Fox's best friends, Doug Alward, played on the same teams he did and they were very competitive with each other. Alward would later accompany Fox on his run across Canada.

As a child and young man Fox was very intense. He would play imaginary games with plastic soldiers for days by himself. He would finish any task that he started and reach any goal that he set. He was determined and could be stubborn.

When Fox graduated from Port Coquitlam Secondary School, he began his studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC. He studied kinesiology (the study of the movement of the human body) in the hopes that one day he might be a physical education teacher.

### Cancer

On November 12, 1976, Fox was in a car accident with a truck. No one was seriously hurt, but Fox noticed he had a

**Did you know . . .**

Terry Fox's mother, Betty, was chosen to light the Olympic flame in BC Place on February 12, 2010. She had carried on the work begun by her son. One of the other Olympic torch bearers was Rick Hansen, whose own Man in Motion world tour was inspired by Fox's Marathon of Hope.

sore right knee that continued to bother him for months. In early March, he went to the hospital for a bone scan and was diagnosed with cancer—specifically, malignant osteosarcoma—in his right knee. Fox was in shock. He had gone in for the scan expecting that some type of ligament damage was the cause of his pain. He never imagined he had cancer. Days after the scan, his right leg was amputated six inches above the knee.

Three weeks later, he went back to the hospital to be fitted for a prosthetic leg. He also began his chemotherapy sessions at a cancer clinic in Vancouver.

Fox was deeply affected by the time he spent in a children's orthopaedic ward and chemotherapy treatments. He saw the crying families, the sickness the patients had to endure that was caused by the chemotherapy treatments, and the hopelessness triggered by the disease. When Fox's doctor told him that his

cancer treatment was new and that survival rates had improved as a result—increasing from 20 per cent to 50 per cent—Fox realized that cancer research was the true source of hope for all those affected by cancer.

Fox's cancer treatment lasted 16 months. During that time, Fox lost his hair, which is a typical side effect of the cancer medication he was taking. He was upset about this loss, and he and his mother bought a wig. He began to play wheelchair basketball after an invitation from fellow athlete Rick Hansen, and during one particular practice Fox's wig flew off, leaving his team mates speechless. Fox decided to laugh the situation off, which allowed everyone else to laugh too. His hair eventually grew back as thick, brown curls. Fox and his wheelchair basketball team became the 1978 Canadian champions, only a few short months after Fox's operation.

**To Consider**

1. Would you consider Fox a "normal" young man or an "exceptional" young man or both? State reasons for your answer.
2. If you could ask Fox three questions about his life what would they be?
3. Consider inviting a cancer survivor to speak to your class about their life experiences, the challenges they faced, and the hopes they have regarding finding a cure for cancer.
4. Write a journal entry on how cancer has affected your family or someone that you know. Ask your parents/guardians for assistance in your writing. Alternatively, write a journal entry about how you feel about Terry Fox, his struggles, and his accomplishments.

# TERRY FOX: REMEMBERING A CANADIAN HERO

## *The Marathon of Hope*

### Did you know . . .

Terry Fox hoped to raise \$1-million in his Marathon of Hope.

### Focus for Reading

Consider these three character attributes: courage, resilience, empathy. Discuss in a group and record in a chart what these three words look like, sound like, and feel like in your lives.

As you read about Fox's Marathon of Hope, and consider his own words, return to the three attributes of courage, resilience, and empathy and note if and how Fox possessed these attributes.

Terry Fox was only 19 years old when his right leg was amputated above the knee due to cancer. How he responded to his own deep physical and emotional loss is what makes him a true Canadian hero. While most people would naturally focus on their own recovery and health with family and friends, Fox took upon himself a commitment to action based on the hope that continued research would one day beat cancer.

### Fox Has a Big Idea

Early in 1979 Fox began training for marathon running. Six months later, he was running 16 kilometres a day. On August 30, 1979, he completed a marathon in Prince George in three hours and nine minutes. The other participants waited for him at the finish line. They were moved by his bravery and skill.

The day he arrived back home from this marathon, Fox told his mother of his idea to run across the country to raise money for cancer research. She yelled at him and told him it was a stupid idea that would jeopardize his health. She tried to convince him to run in British Columbia alone to raise funds. But Fox was determined because people across the country—not just in British Columbia—have to fight cancer. She lost the argument. It was at this point that the Fox family realized Terry had not been training for a Vancouver marathon—which is what he had led

them to believe—but for a marathon across Canada. His training continued, and the only day he rested was Christmas Day, after 101 days of training. Before leaving for Newfoundland to start his cross-Canada marathon, he had run over 5 000 kilometres.

Fox's goal was to run across Canada, which is a total of 8 529 kilometres. That is the equivalent of running approximately two hundred marathons in a row—an Olympic marathon is 42 kilometres—with no rest in between. Fox hoped that people who would see him might be inspired and donate money for cancer research. Most people thought this was an impossible journey, and for good reason.

### The Journey Begins

On April 12, 1980, Fox began his incredible journey in St. John's, Newfoundland. He and his childhood friend, Doug Alward, would eat, sleep, and rest in a van. The mayor of St. John's gave him an honorary send-off, but there was little media attention at the beginning of his marathon. That day he ran 17 kilometres.

As you can imagine, a young man running on the side of a road was at considerable risk from speeding traffic, roaming dogs, extreme cold, extreme heat, and rain and sleet. Alward followed closely in a van that was donated by Ford. Fox also faced his own emotional

**Did you know . . .**

To compete in a marathon, most athletes train for months and take a week to recuperate after each one.

and physical fatigue and pain as he proceeded in his running. His unique and endearing running gait was two hops, a skip and a sort of a jump. Watching video footage of Fox running is the only way to appreciate his incredible endurance.

**Fox Gets Noticed**

Many people and businesses in the East offered food and shelter for Fox at the beginning of his run when hardly anyone knew of his efforts. As he moved across the Atlantic provinces, through Quebec, and finally into Ontario, the media paid more attention to his quest, and more and more Canadians were introduced to and became mesmerized by the brave young amputee who was selflessly committing his life to raising money. People of all ages would stand at the side of the road to watch him run, and some people would run with him for a short while. With the media taking more notice, Fox spent time speaking to crowds and reporters at events to increase awareness of his mission.

Fox was a very handsome young man, who smiled easily, spoke from the heart, and related well to people, especially children and those who had experience with cancer. Many young woman and girls asked to give him a kiss during his public events and he always obliged. One young boy living in Sault Ste. Marie snuck into Fox's room despite warnings from his parents (Fox was resting after his daily run). Fox and the boy spent time talking until there was a knock on the door. Sensing the boy's fear that he was about to be caught and punished for disobeying his parents, Fox told him to

hide under his bed. A few minutes later the conversation and laughter between the two continued.

**Fox's Own Words**

"I believe in miracles, I have to. I set a thousand goals today. It would be impossible to take it all at once."  
— *Terry*. Douglas Copeland. *The Terry Fox Foundation: 2005*. Fox was referring to his habit of running the marathon one tree, one road sign, and one day at a time.

"At 4:30 a.m., I couldn't get out of bed. I was sick and my stomach was in knots. I finally tried to run. It was snowing and miserable and I had a huge hill to go up. I managed three miles and then crawled into the van. I cried so hard and felt so weak." — May 4, past St. George's Junction, NL ("Terry and us," *Toronto Star*, August 29, 2010)

"Many people are congratulating me and I can't figure out what for." — May 26, Charlottetown, PE ("Terry and us," *Toronto Star*, August 29, 2010)

"If I ran to a doctor every time I got a little cyst or abrasion, I'd still be in Nova Scotia. Or else, I'd never even have started." — June 30, Hull, QC ("Terry and us," *Toronto Star*, August 29, 2010)

"I'm not going to give up. Even if I don't finish, we need others to continue. It's got to keep going without me." — July 10, Scarborough, ON (*Terry*. Douglas Copeland. *The Terry Fox Foundation: 2005*)

# TERRY FOX: REMEMBERING A CANADIAN HERO

## What did Terry Fox accomplish?

Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope lasted for 143 days. He ran from Newfoundland to northern Ontario, and he captured the hearts of Canadians. Despite his artificial limb, harsh conditions, and increasing physical pain, Fox ran the equivalent of a marathon a day for 143 days. He had to call an end to his run in Thunder Bay, ON, because his cancer had spread to his lungs. He wisely predicted, "Even if I don't finish, we need others to continue. It's got to keep going without me" (*Terry*. Douglas Copeland. *The Terry Fox Foundation*: 2005).

Fox's words have become a reality: 2.5 million schools hold Terry Fox runs every year, over two million Canadians take part in community Terry Fox Runs every year, and over \$553-million have

been raised for cancer research in his name.

Another amazing accomplishment of Fox's life's work was to bring discussions about cancer out into the open. Most people in Fox's lifetime would not talk about the disease. It remained a private issue within families and often shrouded in dread and secrecy. When Fox spoke about his cancer and displayed his prosthetic leg for all to see, he paved the way for others to begin talking to each other about their experiences. Fox helped to normalize the topic of cancer in homes, communities, and medical institutions. His hope that cancer could be beaten was eagerly embraced by Canadians.

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### At a Glance: The Marathon of Hope Continues

35 million	Estimated number of people around the world participating in Terry Fox Runs
\$553-million	Amount of money for cancer research raised in Fox's name
40	Countries in which Terry Fox Runs are held
8 000	Schools in Canada holding Terry Fox Runs
80%	Survival rate today for patients with osteogenic sarcoma, the cancer that Fox had
20%	Survival rate for patients with the same cancer in 1977

Source: Terry Fox Foundation

An excellent book on Terry Fox and his life is *Terry Fox: His Story*, by *Toronto Star* reporter Leslie Scrivener. Scrivener covered Fox's Marathon of Hope almost from the beginning. Another good source about Fox's life and legacy was written by Douglas Copeland, the same man who designed a new memorial located

in British Columbia dedicated to Fox. Copeland's book *Terry* highlights a collection of artifacts (photos, letters, and interviews) about Fox's life. As well, NBA star Steve Nash, who considers Fox one of his personal heroes, produced a powerful documentary on Fox's life called *Into the Wind*.

### Analysis

Respond to the opening question of this section: "What did Terry Fox accomplish?" You may choose to include information from other sections of this Resource Guide—or from other sources—in your response. Be prepared to share your response with your classmates.



# TERRY FOX: REMEMBERING A CANADIAN HERO

## *Is Terry Fox historically significant?*

### Web Link

To learn more about historical significance visit the website of The Historical Thinking project at [www.historicalthinking.ca](http://www.historicalthinking.ca).

Terry Fox was a brave young man who accomplished a great feat over 30 years ago in Canada. But is he a historically significant Canadian? Why do you think you are learning about him in school today? Why are people of all ages still participating in Terry Fox Runs to raise money to fight cancer? There have been many people before and after Fox who have raised funds for cancer, so what makes Fox's story so unique?

### Historical Significance

Your task will be to argue that Terry Fox is, or is not, a historically significant person. Historical significance is more than a personal belief ("I think Terry Fox is a great Canadian hero") or a statement made in a history book. Historical significance can be defined as "people or events that resulted in great change over long periods of time for large numbers of people." Use the chart below and the criteria of historical significance (great change, over time, large numbers of people impacted) to demonstrate either that Fox was, or was not, a historically significant person.

### Determining if Terry Fox is Historically Significant

What sources are you using to determine Fox's historical significance (news reports, interviews with Fox, personal accounts)?

Brief description of Fox's accomplishments:

Criteria for historical significance	Proof that Fox meets (or does not meet) the criteria	Does Fox meet the criteria?	
		Yes	No
Did Fox's life result in a great change?			
How many people were impacted by Fox?			
How long-lasting was the change that Fox made?			
Does Fox help us to understand the past?			

Do you think Fox will remain historically significant for the next 30 years? Give two reasons for your answer.

# TERRY FOX: REMEMBERING A CANADIAN HERO

## **Activity: Remembering Terry Fox**

Do you have special memories? Are there ways you try to remember them that go beyond picturing them in your mind?

Over 30 years have passed since a curly-haired, determined young man lost part of his leg to cancer and began his amazing cross-country marathon to raise money for cancer research. Despite the time that has passed, Canadians and people worldwide continue to commemorate his life. Terry Fox is a person no one wants to forget. His remarkable courage, strength, and determination have come to symbolize hope and goodness in the face of pain and despair.

While many people have personal memories of Fox, our nation has been moved to create special public memories of him so that people can gather together to think about his life. Some of the memorials include statues of him (Thunder Bay, Ottawa, and Vancouver) while other tributes include schools, roads, and gardens named in his honour. As well, a special edition loonie was issued in Fox's honour in 2005. He was the first person on a circulating Canadian coin who was not a king or a queen. Canadians continue to think of ways to honour him.

### **Your Task: Creating a Commemoration (Ceremony or Celebration) for Terry Fox**

Think of a way that you or your class or school could commemorate Fox. Some ideas could be a poster in your class, an online tribute, a garden in your home or on school grounds, a mural in the hallway that includes pictures of Fox, or pictures of your school participating in a Terry Fox Run, a song, poem or dance.

Before you begin planning, discuss in detail the question, "What makes a good commemoration?"

Some criteria might be that it inspires people to do good, has emotional impact, or provides a few powerful and accurate details about Fox's life.

You might consider sharing your tribute with the Terry Fox Foundation.

### **Planning Notes**

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