

Gord Downie



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What band was Gord Downie in? What was his role?
2. What is an icon?
3. Why is it useful for a singer to be a poet?
4. What is a dress rehearsal?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|---|
| _____ | 1. icon | a) on one's own |
| _____ | 2. pal | b) a person who speaks up and fights for social causes and change |
| _____ | 3. debut | c) a well-known person or thing that represents something bigger |
| _____ | 4. millennium | d) incurable, expected to result in death |
| _____ | 5. solo | e) a church-run, government-funded school for Indigenous children |
| _____ | 6. activist | f) a friend |
| _____ | 7. residential school | g) to cry with great emotion |
| _____ | 8. terminal | h) a thousand years (often refers to the year 2000) |
| _____ | 9. weep | i) a non-fiction film |
| _____ | 10. documentary | j) the first (recording, appearance, release) for the public |

Reading

1. Gord Downie was the lead singer and songwriter of the Tragically Hip, a legendary Canadian rock band. Downie was an **icon** who loved and represented Canada and its people throughout his 30-year career.
2. Gordon Edgar Downie (“Gord”) was born on February 6, 1964. He grew up near Kingston, Ontario. Like many Canadian kids, Gord played hockey for his hometown. In high school, Downie joined a band with his **pals**. In 1983, they became “The Tragically Hip.”
3. The Tragically Hip released its self-titled **debut** album in 1987. A year later, MCA records signed the band after hearing them play at a club in Toronto. Their first full-length album, *Up to Here*, was a major success in Canada. Early hits, including “New Orleans Is Sinking” and “38 Years Old,” are still popular today.
4. Over the next decade, Canadians fell in love with the Hip’s poetic front man, whose lyrics told stories of history, social injustice, and small-town life. In 2000, the band put on a New Year’s show in Toronto to ring in the new **millennium**. The following year, the Hip won a Juno Award for best rock album (*Music @ Work*). Downie began a **solo** career that year. He did side projects with several other musicians, but he also continued making albums with his band.
5. In addition to his music career, Gord Downie was an **activist**. He spent his last few years fighting for the protection of the Great Lakes and the needs of Canada’s First Peoples. In 2016, he worked with a writer on a special project called *Secret Path*. The album and graphic novel are about a First Nations boy named Chanie Wenjack, who died running away from a **residential school**.
6. In May 2016, the Tragically Hip announced that Gord Downie had **terminal** brain cancer. The Hip then embarked on a national 10-city tour with a final stop in Kingston, Ontario. In the summer of 2017, all five members of the Hip received Canada’s highest honour when they became Members of the Order of Canada. They received this award for their contribution to Canadian music and support for social and environmental causes.
7. On October 17, 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau **wept** over the news of Gord Downie’s death. He spoke for many Canadians, saying the Hip “helped us understand each other while capturing the complexity and vastness of the place we call home.” *Long Time Running*, a **documentary** of Downie’s life, aired that Friday. Downie’s final solo album, *Introduce Yerself*, was scheduled for release the following week.

*“No dress rehearsal,
this is our life.”*

—Gord Downie, from the song
“Ahead by a Century”

The Tragically Hip

The Hip (as many Canadians call them) refers to Gord Downie (lead vocalist), Gord Sinclair (bass), Rob Baker (guitar), Johnny Fay (drums), and Paul Langlois (guitarist). In 1986, Langlois replaced Davis Manning (saxophonist).

The Hip released 13 albums together, ending with *Man Machine Poem* (2016).

Comprehension

A. Timeline

Place the following in chronological order (1–10) based on information from the reading.

- _____ Downie and his high school pals started a band.
- _____ Gord Downie played hockey for his hometown.
- _____ Gordon Edgar Downie was born in a small town near Kingston, Ontario.
- _____ Downie began his solo career.
- _____ Downie won over the hearts of many Canadians.
- _____ MCA records signed the Tragically Hip.
- _____ The Tragically Hip performed a final tour.
- _____ The Tragically Hip released a self-titled album.
- _____ Gord Downie died of terminal brain cancer at the age of 53.
- _____ The *Long Time Running* documentary aired across Canada.

B. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information in your notebook.

- _____ 1. "38 Years Old" is from the album *Man Machine Poem*.
- _____ 2. Downie was a solo artist for most of his 30-year career.
- _____ 3. Gord Downie cared a lot about protecting the Great Lakes.
- _____ 4. All of the members of the Tragically Hip are Members of the Order of Canada.
- _____ 5. Gord Downie fans knew that he was likely going to die from brain cancer.

Vocabulary Review

A. Odd One Out

Circle the word that does not belong in the group.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. a) terminal
b) legend
c) icon | 4. a) cry
b) weep
c) prepare | 7. a) deadly
b) complex
c) terminal |
| 2. a) activist
b) protestor
c) pal | 5. a) film
b) documentary
c) album | 8. a) millennium
b) thousand
c) self-titled |
| 3. a) solo
b) activist
c) alone | 6. a) first
b) debut
c) popular | 9. a) member
b) pal
c) buddy |

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
 You may need to change the word form.

1. He was a human rights _____. He wanted people to know about the struggles of Canada's First Peoples.
2. In the _____ you learn all about his 30-year music career.
3. I like the band, but I prefer when he sings alone. I can't wait to hear his _____ album.
4. I have been friends with my high school _____ for 20 years.
5. I _____ when I heard the sad news.

Grammar Review

MULTIPLE-WORD ADJECTIVES

A. Reference

#	Rule	Examples
1	If a multiple-word adjective comes before a noun, use a hyphen between the words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a two-hour documentary. • I like Canadian-themed music. • They were long-term pals.
2	Most adverb/adjective combinations are NOT hyphenated. One common exception is with the adverb <i>well</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Gord Downie is a very-famous singer. ✓ The Tragically Hip is a well-known band.
3	When the multiple-word adjective or adverb/adjective combination comes after the main verb , hyphens are usually not used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The documentary lasted for two hours. ✓ The Tragically Hip's lyrics are well known.

B. Practice

Now look for five multiple-word adjectives in the reading on page 2. Then use each one in a new example sentence of your own.

#	Multiple-Word Adjective	Sentence
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Discussion

1. Why are some famous people so hard to say goodbye to?
Which other icons have we lost recently?
2. Are you familiar with Gord Downie's music? Ask your teacher to play some Tragically Hip songs. What do you like about this music?
3. Gord Downie was a family man. He had a wife (recently separated) and four kids, but he kept them out of the spotlight. Was this a good idea? Why or why not?
4. Gord Downie felt strongly about living life to the fullest. He died young, but he lived a full life. In his popular song "Wheat Kings" from the album *Fully Completely*, he sings "no one's interested in something you didn't do." Is there something you want to do that you haven't done yet? How can you live your life fully and completely?

***Note:**

In writing, use "quotation marks" around a song title.
Use *italics* for an album title.

Further Learning

Gord Downie cared about Canada's First Peoples. His special project, *Secret Path*, has helped many Canadians learn the dark history behind the residential school program. Acknowledging the past is an important part of the "truth and reconciliation" process that Canada has committed to in order to have better relations with its First Peoples.

Watch *Secret Path* and discuss it with your class:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGd764YU9yc>

You can also listen to ESL Library's podcast about residential schools or try the full Historic Events lesson:
<http://blog.esllibrary.com/2016/06/22/podcast-residential-schools/>