

MICHAEL P. SPRADLIN

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The Legend of Blue Jacket

by Michael P. Spradlin

Illustrated by Ronald Himler



About the book:

He was only sixteen when the Shawnee Indians took him from his home. But he wasn't captured. He went willingly. And, after many years of proving his bravery in battle against the colonists, he was named the war chief of the Shawnee. His name was Blue Jacket.

Here, told in riveting narrative and stunning historically accurate illustrations, is the incredible story of a white boy who spent the first sixteen years of his life among white settlers and the rest of his life fighting them.

About the author:

Michael P. Spradlin is a life-long student of American history. He has worked in the publishing industry for eighteen years as an editor, publisher, and marketing director, as well as in several other positions. ***The Legend of Blue Jacket*** is his first book for children. He lives in Michigan with his wife, Kelly, son, Michael Jr., and a daughter, Rachel. Visit him at www.michaelspradlin.com

Ronald Himler has illustrated more than one hundred books for children including *The Lily Cupboard* by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim, *Hook Mon Night* by Faye Gibbons, and *The Wall* and *Fly Away Home* both by Even Bunting. His work also appears in art galleries throughout the Southwest, where he is highly acclaimed for his portrayal of the Plains Indians. Mr. Himler lives in the desert just outside Tucson, Arizona.

Author Interview:

1. How did you become interested in Blue Jacket's story?

I've always been interested in American History. I first discovered Blue Jacket while reading a history of the Ohio River Valley. He was a brilliant military tactician and as I learned about him, I learned about the fascinating story surrounding him.

2. What's your best advice for kids who are interested in history?

The great thing about History, as I like to say, is that there's so much of it. Find an area, a person, or a period that you're interested in and study it. Understanding and knowing history helps you to understand human behavior. That's a very useful skill to have.

3. What's your writing process like?

It's a different process between novels and non-fiction obviously. I tend to do a heck of a lot more rewriting and revision than I do writing. The most important thing to know about writing is that it's a skill that gets better with practice.

Pre-reading:

Do you know what the word legend means? Why do you think the author decided to use the word legend rather than "story?" How do you think legends come to be?

Questions to consider:

- 1.** Why did Duke Van Swearingen's father teach him to be careful and alert when in the forest? When are you careful and alert? What else did his father teach him?
- 2.** Describe how young Duke comes to live with the Shawnee People. What do you think Charlie told his parents?
- 3.** What is the gauntlet? Why do you think the People tested him this way? Would you be willing to make the run?
- 4.** How did Blue Jacket get a "Shawnee heart?" What would you call your own heart?
- 5.** Who do the Shawnee believe created man? What other stories did they share with Blue Jacket? Why do you think these were important for him to learn?
- 6.** Why is the Caintuckee hunting grounds so important to the Shawnee? What do they do to protect them?
- 7.** How did Blue Jacket lose his family as both a son and a father? What do you think would be the hardest part of being separated like this?
- 8.** What famous frontiersman was a good friend of Blue Jacket? How did they help each other?
- 9.** During the American Revolution who did the Shawnee fight for and against? Why?

10. What great honor did the Shawnee People offer Blue Jacket? How did he serve them? Do you think it was a difficult choice for him or not? What makes you say this?
11. Read the Preface and the Afterword then discuss why you think the author decided to include these details in the book. What is the most interesting thing you learned by these additional materials?
12. Which illustration is your favorite? Why? Why do you think the illustrator chose to you the palette that he did?

Projects:

Language Arts:

Write a letter from Blue Jacket back to his family in Virginia. What would he tell Charlie and his other brothers and sisters? What would he say to his mom and dad?

Fill out the following character chart based on Blue Jacket's life:



	Early Life	Becoming Shawnee	Important People	A leader
Blue Jacket				

History:

Study the Shawnee People or another Native American tribe. Find out where they lived, what they believed, the types of housing they built, and what types of crops they relied on. Create a poster, pamphlet, or PowerPoint presentation about what you discovered and share it with the class.

Art:

Inspired by the palette of Ronald Himler, illustrate another scene from the book. Explain in a short paragraph why you decided on this scene.

Or, create a diorama or three-dimensional scene out of materials found in your home. Use the illustrations as a guide for accurate representations of the buildings.

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.