

Indian Removal Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

Why did people in the 1830s support Indian Removal?

Materials:

- Indian Removal PPT
- United Streaming Video Segment: Forced Westward (from The West: Empire Upon the Trails 1806-1848):
<http://player.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm?guidAssetId=CB1A4167-B96E-4D5B-BB15-8EAB5AEB3A03&blnFromSearch=1&productcode=US>
- Copies of Indian Removal Timeline
- Copies of Document A: Jackson
- Copies of Document B: Boudinot
- Indian Removal Guiding Questions

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Show PPT slide of “Trail of Tears.” Ask students to write down what they see.

Elicit student responses. Explain that this is a painting made in 1942 of an event that happened in 1838, when Cherokees were forced to march over 800 miles to Indian territory in Oklahoma. 4,000 died along the way.

Show students **slide #2** with map of Indian Territory.

Today we’re going to learn about the policy of Indian Removal and try to answer the question: Why did some people in the 1830s support Indian Removal?

2. Show United Streaming segment: Forced Westward (from The West: Empire Upon the Trails 1806-1848):
<http://player.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm?guidAssetId=CB1A4167-B96E-4D5B-BB15-8EAB5AEB3A03&blnFromSearch=1&productcode=US>
3. Hand out Indian Removal Timeline and read through with students. The notes below are *optional* lecture notes to supplement the timeline.
 - Two basic ideas among whites about how to deal with the Indian “problem:” Civilization or Removal
 - **Civilization** means that the Native Americans would become farmers; would convert to Christianity; would own individual

portions of land, rather than share; would learn to read and write English; would ultimately become Americans.

- **Removal** was based on the idea that that civilization was never going to succeed and the only thing to do was to find some place in the West to settle Native Americans.
 - George Washington and his administration pushed for civilization, thinking that they could solve the “Indian problem” by civilizing the tribes and assimilating them into the states. But by the 1820s, racial categories had evolved and it seemed more and more clear that whites would never accept Native Americans as equals, and would never respect their right to their land.
 - There were Five Civilized Tribes in the Southeastern U.S.: Creeks, Chikasaw, Seminole, Choctaw and Cherokee.
 - The Cherokee were the most “civilized” in the sense that they had a newspaper and many had converted to Christianity; they adopted a Constitution; they had farms and owned slaves.
 - By **1810**, many Native Americans began to migrate west voluntarily, but most refused.
 - Jackson was elected in **1828** and favored Indian Removal and Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in **1830**. Jackson supported the state of Georgia’s decision to take over Cherokee land. In **1831**, the Cherokee brought their case to the Supreme Court and won. But Jackson ignored the ruling.
 - In **1833**, a small group of Cherokee agreed to sign a removal agreement: the Treaty of New Echota. The leaders of this group were not the recognized leaders of the Cherokee Nation, and over 15,000 Cherokees—led by Chief John Ross—signed a petition in protest. Congress ignored their demands and ratified the treaty in **1836**.
 - The Cherokee were given two years to migrate voluntarily. By **1838** only 2,000 had migrated; 16,000 remained on their land. The U.S. government sent in 7,000 troops, who forced the Cherokees out at bayonet point.
4. Hand out Jackson Document and have students answer Guiding Questions in pairs.
 5. Review student answers.

6. Hand out Boudinot Document and have students answer Guiding Questions in pairs.
 7. Review student answers.
 8. Discussion:
 - Why did Jackson or Boudinot think Indian Removal was in the best interest of the Cherokee?
 - Do you believe them? What parts sound sincere/ believable?
 - Why might some people at that time have believed that Indian Removal was a reasonable policy?
 - How have our attitudes changed/ stayed the same since the 1830s?
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Citations:

Andrew Jackson, State of the Union. December 6, 1830.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1230>

Elias Boudinot, Letter to John Ross, 1837. In *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*. Ed., Theda Purdue, (Georgia: Univeristy of Georgia Press, 1983), pp. 224-225. <http://books.google.com/books?id=KOWYSGpP-3AC>

Cherokee Indian Removal Timeline

1785 First treaty between Cherokee and United States, established peaceful relations.

1796 George Washington initiated “civilization” program among Cherokees.

1802 Georgia ceded some of its western land to the United States; the U.S. government, in exchange, promised to purchase for Georgia all of the Indian lands remaining within the state. However, the Federal Government could only buy land through treaty.

1808-1810 First major Cherokee migration to land west of the Mississippi.

1820s Cherokees became the most “civilized” of the five “Civilized Tribes” (Creeks, Chikasaw, Seminole, Choctaw and Cherokee).

The Cherokee had a newspaper and many had converted to Christianity; they adopted a Constitution; they had farms and owned slaves.

1828 Andrew Jackson elected President and declares his support for removal.

1828 Georgia extended its state power over Cherokee Nation and nullified (makes illegal) Cherokee law.

1832 Cherokee won their case in *Worcester v. Georgia*. U.S. Supreme Court upheld Cherokee sovereignty in Georgia.

Andrew Jackson ignored the ruling.

1836 Treaty of New Echota signed; provided for removal of Cherokees to land west of the Mississippi.

Chief John Ross led 15,000 in protesting the treaty.

Only 2,000 Cherokee agreed to migrate voluntarily.

1838 U.S. government sent in 7,000 troops, who forced the Cherokees out at bayonet point. 4,000 Cherokee people died of cold, hunger, and disease on their way to the western lands.

1839 Execution of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot for their role in the Treaty of New Echota.

Document A: Andrew Jackson (Modified)

It gives me great pleasure to announce to Congress that the Government's benevolent policy of Indian removal has almost been achieved.

We have wept over the fate of the natives of this country, as one by one many tribes have disappeared from the earth. However, we must accept this the way we accept when an older generation dies and makes room for the younger.

We would not want to see this continent restored to the condition in which our forefathers found it. What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and occupied by a few thousand savages to our great Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, decorated with art and industry, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?

The United States will pay to send the natives to a land where they may live longer and possibly survive as a people.

Can it be cruel when this Government offers to purchase the Indian's land, give him new and extensive territory, pay the expense of his removal, and support him for the first year in his new home? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of moving West under such conditions!

The policy of the Government towards the red man is generous. The Indian is unwilling to follow the laws of the States and mingle with the population. To save him from utter annihilation, the Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.

Vocabulary

Benevolent—kind

Annihilation—destruction

Source: Andrew Jackson, State of the Union speech. December 30, 1830.

Document B: Letter by Elias Boudinot (Modified)

Look at our people! They are wretched! Look, my dear sir, around you, and see the progress that vice and immorality have already made! See the misery!

If the darker picture which I have described here is a true one, can we see a brighter possibility ahead? In another country, and under other circumstances, there is a better prospect. Removal, then, is the only remedy, the only *practical* remedy. Our people may finally rise from their very ashes, to become prosperous and happy, and a credit to our race. I would say to my countrymen, fly from your life here that is destroying our nation.

What is *your* (John Ross) plan of relief? It is dark and gloomy beyond description. You want the Cherokee to live according the laws of Georgia, no matter how unfair they are? Instead of fix the evil, you would tie our people down in the chains of slavery. The final destiny of our race, under such circumstances is too revolting to think of. Take my word, it is the sure end of our race if you succeed in preventing the removal of your people. There will come a time when there will be few of us left as reminders of this brave and noble race. May God protect us from such a destiny.

Vocabulary

wretched—miserable

vice—sin

prospect—possibility

Source: The letter above was written in 1837 by Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee who supported Indian Removal (and who signed the Treaty of New Echota that gave away Cherokee land). The letter is to Chief John Ross, leader of the Cherokees who opposed Indian Removal.

Guiding Questions

Name _____

Document A: Jackson

1. (Sourcing) What do you already know about President Jackson's feelings about Indian Removal? What do you predict he will say in this speech?
2. (Contextualization) Why does Jackson think the United States was better in 1830 than in 1609?
3. (Contextualization) Why does Jackson think that the Cherokee will be better off in Indian Territory?
4. (Close reading) Why does Jackson think his policy is kind and generous?

Document B: Boudinot

1. (Sourcing) Who is Elias Boudinot? What do you predict he will say about Indian Removal?
2. (Contextualization) What was life like for the Cherokee in Georgia, according to Boudinot?
3. (Contextualization) What does Boudinot hope will happen if the Cherokees move west?