

Indian Removal Act

Read the text and answer the questions.

Settlers moving into the southeastern U.S. wanted land that belonged to the Indians. The movement of these U.S. settlers threatened the land, laws, and governments of the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole Indians.

The U.S. federal and state governments saw the Indians as a problem. Settlers wanted to claim Indian land and expand the United States for farming. The Indian tribes tried many ways to protect their lands, but the U.S. government used laws, treaties, and warfare to take the Indian's land.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was a highly influential law that allowed Congress to trade land with the Indians. Jackson used the Indian Removal Act to trade land in the Louisiana Purchase in the west to the Indians for their home lands in the southeastern U.S. President Andrew Jackson told Congress that the new Indian Territory would belong to the Indians as long as they lived there.

Some Indian tribes moved soon after the Indian Removal Act was passed. However, many tribes, including many of the Cherokee people, refused to leave their homelands. After the Treaty of New Echota, the U.S. Government forcefully relocated the Cherokee to Indian Territory in 1838. The journey from the southeastern U.S. to Indian Territory in the west was a long and difficult path through wilderness. Over 4,000 Cherokee Indians died on the journey, and the Cherokee people named it "The trail where we cried," which later became known as the Trail of Tears.

1. Why did U.S. settlers want to remove the Indians from the Southeastern United States?
2. What power did the Indian Removal Act give Congress?
3. How did the Louisiana Purchase relate to the Indian Removal Act?
4. Identify the cause and effect relationship between the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears.
5. Why is the Indian relocation to Indian Territory called the Trail of Tears?

COMPARISON OF PRIMARY SOURCES

Jackson vs. Cherokee

Read the quotations and answer the questions. Then complete the writing prompt.

“What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?”

—Andrew Jackson
Message to Congress on Indian Removal (1830)

“We, the great mass of the people this country of the love we have for our land for...we do love the land where we were brought up. We will never let our hold on this land go... To let it go will be like throwing away...[our] mother that gave [us] birth.”

—Cherokee Legislative Council in New Echota (1830)

1. What is the common theme shared between these quotations?
2. Summarize the point of view expressed in each quotation.
3. What strategies does each speaker use to promote his point of view? Provide examples.
4. What can you infer about Andrew Jackson’s opinion of Indian culture? What words or phrases support your conclusion?

Writing Prompt

- A. Choose the perspective of a Cherokee Indian or United States settler and write a short speech to your people. State your opinion on the uses of land. Use the points of view expressed in the quotations to support your position.
- B. Edit and revise your speech. Vary sentence structure, include transitions, use impactful words and literary devices, and proofread.
- C. Give your speech to the class. Can your audience accurately determine whether you are speaking as a Cherokee or a settler?

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

John Ross' Speech

This speech is an excerpt from John Ross' address to the Iroquois League of Indian Tribes on behalf of the Cherokee tribe.

Read the text and answer the questions.

"Ever since [the whites came] we have been made to drink of the bitter cup of humiliation; treated like dogs...our country and the graves of our Fathers torn from us...through a period of upwards of 200 years, rolled back, nation upon nation [until] we find ourselves fugitives, vagrants and strangers in our own country..."

The existence of the Indian nations as distinct independent communities within the limits of the United States seems to be drawing to a close.... You are aware that our Bretheren, the Choctaws, Chickasaws and Creeks of the South have severally disposed of their country to the United States and that a portion of our own Tribe have also emigrated West of the Mississippi- but that the largest portion of our Nation still remain firmly upon our ancient domain.... Our position there may be compared to a solitary tree in an open space, where all the forest trees around have been prostrated by a furious tornado."

- What is the overall tone of the text?
 - How does the author's choice of words create that tone?
- Write an appropriate title to convey the main idea of John Ross' speech.
- Is the phrase, "drink from the bitter cup of humiliation," figurative or literal? Explain.
- Use the text to identify who or what is being described:
_____ "our country and graves of our Fathers," "our ancient domain"
_____ "our Bretheren"
_____ "all the forest trees around"
_____ "a solitary tree in an open space"
_____ "a furious tornado"
- What can you infer about the author's opinion of white settlers? Cite evidence to support your conclusion.