



The Chickasaw Nation

Secondary Student Curriculum

Unit 1

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Lesson 3

Chickasaw Removal

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Lesson Plan

BENCHMARKS

This lesson will fulfill the following Oklahoma Academic Standards:

- ✓ **Oklahoma History and Government: *The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma*, Content Standard 2, Items 3 and 4.A**
- ✓ **United States History, *The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present***

Set (5 min.)

Note: The following is a suggested script for you, the teacher, to reference while discussing this lesson plan. Based on a number of factors, such as your students' age or maturity level, you may choose to deviate from the script as you see fit.

“If you’ve ever moved, you know it can be a difficult experience. What are some of the possible challenges you would face? [*Take a couple of minutes to talk about the question.*] Now imagine moving in the mid-nineteenth century: traveling by foot or by horse, being exposed to wildlife and the elements, falling ill, not having enough to eat and heading toward a place you’ve never seen with no idea of what might await you.

“That was the Chickasaw experience during the tribe’s removal from their Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee homelands. Do you know what that event is commonly called today? [*Pause for response.*] You are right! Lots of people and other tribes refer to it as the *Trail of Tears*; however, for us as Chickasaw people we refer to it as Chickasaw Removal. The journey was terrible, but the tribe stayed together through it—and though individual men and women died, the Chickasaw Nation survived.

“Giving up your home is never a decision that is made lightly. Today we will be talking about the events leading up to Chickasaw Removal. By the end of the lesson, you’re going to know how it came to pass that the Chickasaws decided surrendering their homelands and moving westward was the best option available to them.”

OBJECTIVES

1. The student will analyze the reading by answering discussion questions.
2. The student will defend his/her answers by answering follow-up questions.

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3. The student will draft and discuss a “packing list” of items to take west.

READING PROCEDURE (20 min.)

- a. The teacher will hand out the included reading text to students, and read the first two paragraphs aloud. The students will then read the rest of the text aloud.
- b. The teacher will lead the students in a discussion of some or all of the included questions, asking the students follow-ups as appropriate. The students will answer the questions, and are encouraged to pose questions of their own.

If the student is uncomfortable with reading aloud, the teacher may wish to consider reading the entire passage themselves to model good reading habits. For students who already display great comfort with oral reading, the teacher may wish to have the students read the entire passage. Teachers should feel free to stop the reading and pose knowledge questions about the text—e.g., asking students to define words or explain more. Similarly, the discussion questions may be answered in discussion, as intended, or the teacher may use them to make a free-response worksheet for the students.

MATERIALS

1. Reading text (provided)
2. Discussion questions (provided)

EVALUATION

The teacher will grade students based on some combination of: their oral reading; their participation in discussion; and any comments they make that the teacher considers being particularly insightful. These grades may be evaluative or for completion, at the teacher’s discretion.

ACTIVITY PROCEDURE (20 min.)

- a. The teacher will introduce the activity to the students: “Now, imagine that you are one of the Chickasaws about to be removed to the west. I am about to hand out a list of items owned by your family. While you read it, keep this question in mind: what will you be able to take with you? Remember that you can’t pack everything. It’s your job to bring what you’ll need and want, and dispose of the

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rest.” (Note: While the government did put a limit on the amount of items Chickasaw people could bring with them, our people ignored this limit because they knew that the Choctaws had reached Indian Territory and didn’t have any provisions that first winter. The Chickasaws wanted to make sure this didn’t happen to them.)

- b. The teacher will supervise the students as they draft their lists.
- c. At the end of the writing period, the teacher will select one to three students and have them present their lists. If time permits, the class can then discuss why certain items should or should not be brought on the trail, and what should be done with the others.

MATERIALS

1. Notebook paper
2. Pen/Pencil
3. List of household possessions

EVALUATION

The teacher will grade the packing lists using the following criteria: whether they adequately provide for a family’s needs in Indian Territory, and whether they have a plan for disposing of items not selected. The teacher should keep in mind that creativity is encouraged, and that it is all right to pack a few luxuries or family heirlooms.

CLOSURE (5 min.)

“So, what have we learned today? Which president was most responsible for the Indian Removal? Why were the Chickasaw lands so coveted? [*Pause for brief answers to questions.*] Good! The Chickasaws had lived in their homelands for centuries, and the tribe considered their lands a part of them. But when forced to make a choice between their lands and their people, they made the only choice they could—they left their lands and journeyed west as a people. President Andrew Jackson played a major role in removing the southeastern tribes from their homelands, initiating the Indian Removal Act of 1830. They encountered many hardships on the way.”

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Reference Material

In 1804, following his successful completion of the Louisiana Purchase, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned William Clark and Meriwether Lewis to lead an expedition up the Missouri River to the Pacific Coast. Their goal was to find a water route through the Rocky Mountains and to record all they could learn about the animals, plants, climate, people and geography of the west.

President Jefferson wanted all American land to be opened up to settlers. The problem was that many native tribes already lived on land Americans claimed. So, Jefferson developed a Native American policy to guide America's dealings with tribal nations. He said that the government should "intercede to give [Indians] a space to live undisturbed by white people as they gradually adjust to civilized ways." In reality the actual effect of the policy was far different. Tribes became indebted to the federal government through trade, and then had to sell their land to the United States to pay their debt. The Chickasaws were the first tribe to cede lands in this way with the Treaty of the Chickasaw Nation in 1805.

By the time Andrew Jackson became president in 1829, tribal nations, for the most part, had been largely erased or removed from the northeastern part of the country. On the other hand, in the southeast, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks and Seminoles still occupied large portions of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Florida. Jackson

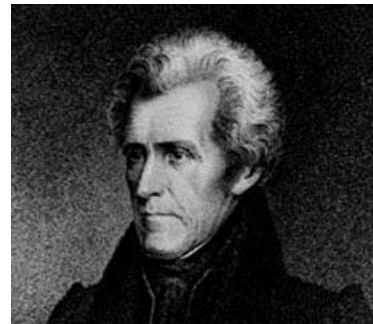


Figure 1: Andrew Jackson.

was determined to clear the southeast of Native Americans to make way for American settlement and the opening of more cotton lands. In his mind, Native Americans needed to assimilate to what he believed was the superior ways of American society or remove them to the west out of harm's way.

In the case of the Chickasaws, our homelands were situated on some of the richest farmlands in the southeast. The Natchez Trace, a 444-mile path extending from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, wound its way through the heart of our dominant

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homelands. By this time our economy was primarily built on farming, ranching, trade and mercantile activities. Our planters exported over 1,000 bales of cotton during a year's time.

In his inauguration speech, Andrew Jackson promised Native Americans that his administration would give their rights "humane and considerate attention." His plan was for Congress to pass federal laws for Indian Removal. By forcing Native American tribes to move west, he would secure the country's southern frontier.

Jackson's solution called for setting aside land west of the Mississippi River that was not part of any U.S. state or territory. In this place, the president thought that relocated tribes would once again find the freedom they enjoyed before the arrival of the white man. They could stay sovereign there. This fair exchange of land would show the "humanity and justice" of the government. Jackson made it clear that any native person who elected to stay in the southeast would become a U.S. citizen.

After many months and much debate, the Indian Removal Act was passed and signed into law on May 28, 1830. The Act authorized the president to exchange land west of the Mississippi River for land held by tribes east of the Mississippi. It guaranteed the tribes perpetual ownership of their new land and monetary compensation for buildings and improvements they left behind. The government was to be responsible for the cost of moving people west and for a year's worth of supplies after they arrived. A total of \$500,000 was set aside to cover Chickasaw costs. If these measures had remained true, the outcome would not have been particularly bad, unfortunately the reality of the situation was much different. Chickasaws were supplied less rations than promised by the federal government. When the rations were delivered, it was spoiled or rotten due to exposure to the elements and disease. Thus began the terrible period when we were uprooted and sent west to Indian Territory.

As a group of Choctaws were waiting to be loaded onto boats to cross the Mississippi River toward their new home, French writer Alexis de Tocqueville watched the tragic departure. "The sight will never fade from my memory," he wrote. "All the Indians had already got into the boat that was to carry them across; their dogs were still

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on the bank; as soon as the animals finally realized that they were being left behind forever, they all together raised a terrible howl and plunged into the icy waters of the Mississippi to swim after their masters.” (From Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, 1835.)



Figure 2: This painting by Chickasaw artist Tom Phillips illustrates the Chickasaws’ Removal to Indian Territory.

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Discussion Questions

1. The Chickasaw Nation entered into legal agreements with the federal government many times in the course of their long history together. These legal agreements were called treaties. Why did the federal government want to sign treaties with Native American tribes? Why couldn't the tribes just say no?
 - a. **Sample answer:** *The federal government wanted to sign treaties with tribal nations because this would place tribes in a binding agreement releasing tribal ownership of land, rights and resources in exchange for land west of the Mississippi River. The federal government wanted tribes to relinquish their homelands in the southeast so land would become available for American settlement. Furthermore, Native Americans were not part of the idea or plan for American settlement and development; instead, they were deemed "in the way" and needed to be removed.*
2. What is the Indian Removal Act? How did it impact tribes living in the southeast?
 - a. **Sample answer:** *The Indian Removal Act was an act signed by Andrew Jackson that called for the removal of Native American tribes from their southeastern homelands to new lands promised in Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma. The Act impacted tribes because it eradicated tribal sovereignty and displaced them from their traditional homelands. In addition, many tribes were forcibly removed from their homelands by military-style regimentation. This included individuals who were forced to walk the journey from the southeast to Indian Territory in shackles. Ultimately, many Native Americans lost their lives and loved ones during the Removal.*
3. Why did President Andrew Jackson sign the Indian Removal Act of 1830?
 - a. **Sample answer:** *Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act because he was determined to clear the southeast of Native Americans in order to make way for American settlement and the opening of more cotton lands. He thought Native Americans needed to assimilate to what he believed was the superior ways of American society or remove them to the west out of harm's way.*
4. The ancient Natchez Trace is a 444-mile path extending from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee. Why was this area so important to the Chickasaw Nation?
 - a. **Sample answer:** *This area was very important for the Chickasaws because it provided a means for communication and trade with neighboring tribes and later European settlers. In addition, the Natchez Trace provided some of the richest farmlands around, producing over 1,000 bales of cotton in a*

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year's time. This ultimately increased the Chickasaws economy and way of life.

5. What did President Andrew Jackson promise to the Native Americans? Were these promises kept?
 - a. **Sample answer:** *In his inauguration speech, Andrew Jackson promised Native Americans that his administration would give their rights “humane and considerate attention.” However, these promises were not met, and tribal sovereignty was ignored.*

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Reference List

For more information, see the following sources:

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