

# Jackson's Policy Toward Native Americans

## One American's Story

In 1821, a brilliant Cherokee named **Sequoya** invented a writing system for the Cherokee language. Using this simple system, the Cherokees soon learned to read and write. A traveler in 1828 marveled at how many Cherokees had learned to read and write without schools or even paper and pens.

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“I frequently saw as I rode from place to place, Cherokee letters painted or cut on the trees by the roadside, on fences, houses, and often pieces of bark or board, lying about the houses.”

—Anonymous traveler, quoted in the *Advocate*



Sequoya invented a writing system of 86 characters for the Cherokee language.

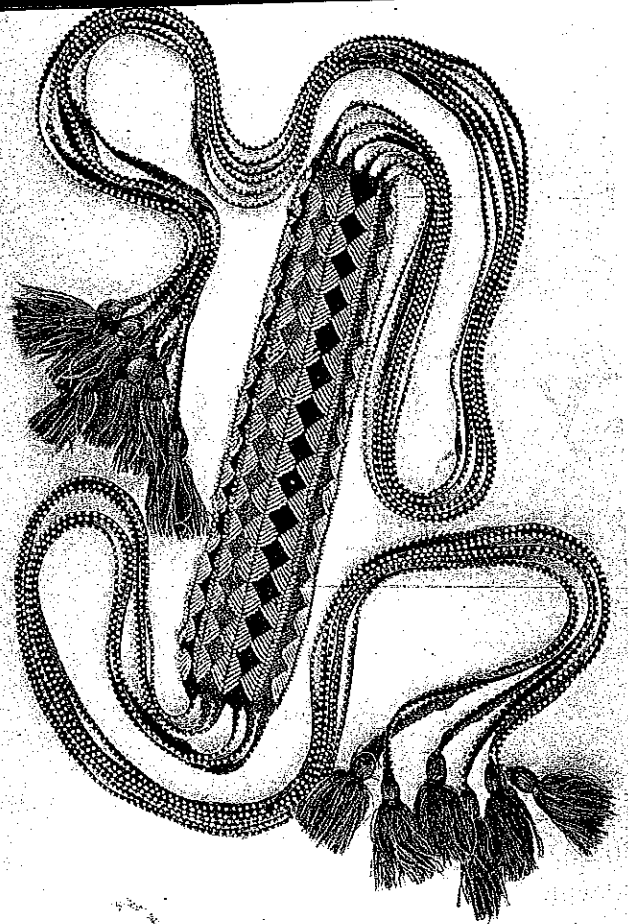
Sequoya hoped that by gaining **literacy**—the ability to read and write—his people could share the power of whites and keep their independence. But even Sequoya's invention could not save the Cherokees from the upheaval to come.

## Native Americans Forced West

▼ **KEY QUESTION** Why did Jackson want native people moved to the West?

By the early 1800s, there were still many Native Americans living east of the Mississippi, despite the fact that white settlers had been pushing them westward for two hundred years. These remaining tribes were viewed by many whites as an obstacle to progress. They debated what to do with the native population.

**Tribes of the Southeast** Some whites hoped that Native Americans could **assimilate**, or be absorbed into white culture. Others wanted Native Americans to move. They believed this was the only way to avoid conflict over land. Also, many whites felt that Native Americans were “uncivilized” and did not want to live near them.



Traditional Creek belt

By the 1820s, about 100,000 Native Americans remained east of the Mississippi River. Most lived in the Southeast. The major tribes were the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole. Whites called them the Five Civilized Tribes because they had adopted many aspects of white culture. They held large areas of land in Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

More than any other Southeastern tribe, the Cherokee had adopted white customs, including their way of dressing. Cherokees owned prosperous farms and cattle ranches. From Sequoya, they acquired a written language, and they published their own newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Some of their children attended missionary schools. In 1827, the Cherokees drew up a constitution based on the U.S. Constitution and founded the Cherokee Nation.

**Jackson's Removal Policy** Andrew Jackson had long supported a policy of moving Native Americans west of the Mississippi. He first dealt with moving the Southeastern tribes after the War of 1812. The federal

government had ordered Jackson, then acting as Indian treaty commissioner, to make treaties with the Native Americans of the region.

Jackson believed that the government had the right to regulate where Native Americans could live. He viewed them as conquered subjects who lived within the borders of the United States. He thought Native Americans had two choices. They could either assimilate and become U.S. citizens, or they could move into western territories. They could not, however, have their own government within the nation's borders.

In 1828, gold was discovered on Cherokee land in Georgia. Now, not only settlers but also miners wanted to move the Cherokee. Many whites began to move onto Cherokee land. Georgia and other Southern states passed laws that gave them the right to take over Native American lands. When the Cherokee and other tribes protested, Jackson supported the states.

**The Indian Removal Act** Jackson asked Congress to pass a law that would require Native Americans to either move west or submit to state laws. Many Americans objected to Jackson's proposal. Massachusetts congressman Edward Everett warned against forcing Native Americans to a distant land, saying that the "inevitable suffering" would be "incalculable." Religious groups such as the Quakers also opposed moving Native Americans against their will. After heated debate, Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act** of 1830. The act called for the government to negotiate treaties that would require Native Americans to relocate west of the Mississippi.

▲ **CLARIFY** Explain why Jackson wanted Native Americans moved to the West.

# The Trail of Tears

**KEY QUESTION** What were the effects of the Indian Removal Act?

Jackson immediately set out to enforce the law. He claimed his policy was "just and liberal" and would allow Native Americans to keep their way of life. Instead, his policy caused much hardship and forever changed relations between whites and Native Americans.

**The Forced March** As whites invaded their homelands, many Native Americans saw no choice but to sign treaties. Under the treaties, Native Americans would exchange their current lands for lands in an area that covered what is now Oklahoma and parts of Kansas and Nebraska. This area came to be called **Indian Territory**.

Beginning in 1831, the Choctaw and other Southeast tribes were moved west. The Cherokees, however, appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court to protect their land from being seized by Georgia. In 1832, the Court, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, ruled that only the federal government, not the states, could make laws governing the Cherokees. This ruling meant that the Georgia laws did not apply to the Cherokee Nation. However, both Georgia and President Jackson ignored the Supreme Court. Jackson said, "John Marshall has made his . . . let him enforce it."

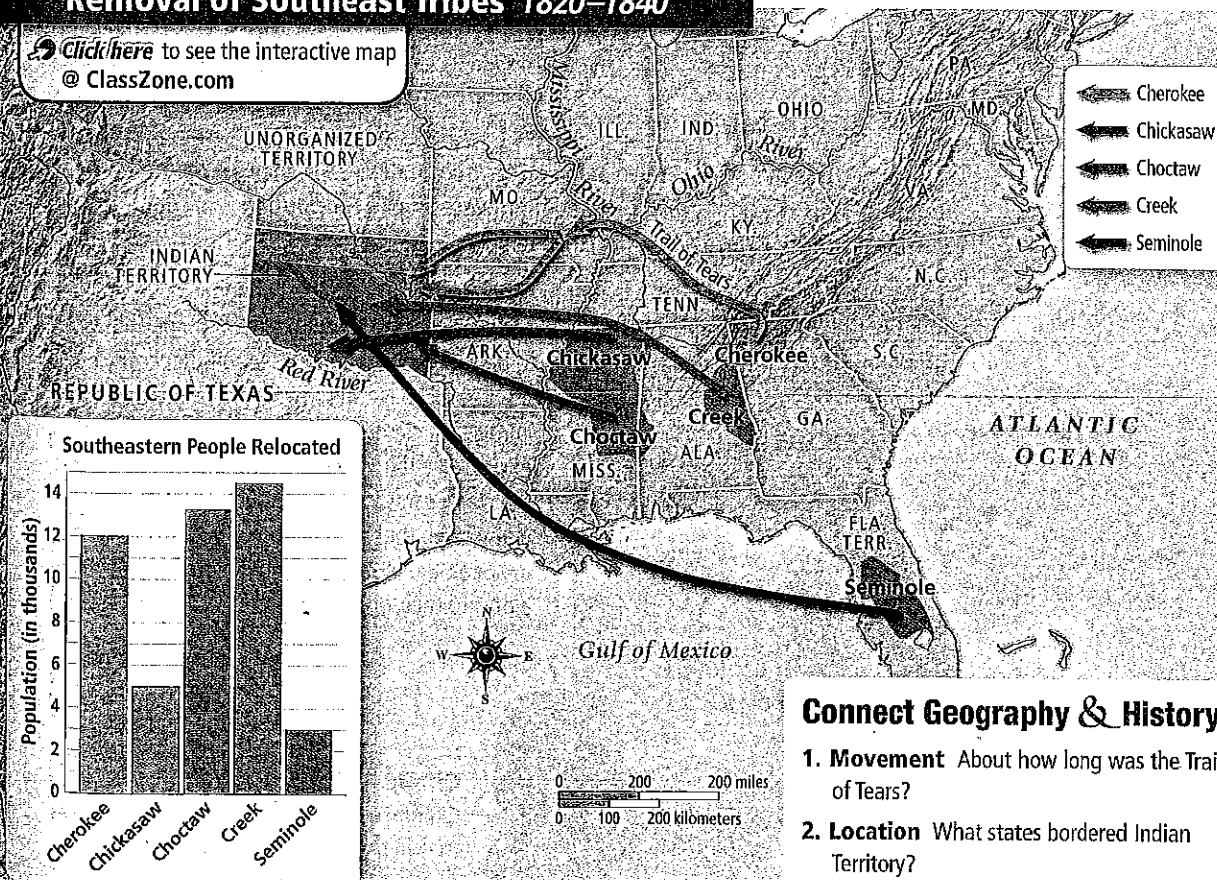
## Connecting History

**Westward Expansion**  
By 1890, the western half of Indian Territory had opened up to white settlement as Oklahoma Territory. Native Americans tried to organize their remaining lands into the state of Sequoia. The federal government rejected this idea, and in 1907 the two territories formed the state of Oklahoma.

## Animated GEOGRAPHY

### Removal of Southeast Tribes 1820–1840

[Click here](#) to see the interactive map @ [ClassZone.com](#)



### Connect Geography & History

- 1. Movement** About how long was the Trail of Tears?
- 2. Location** What states bordered Indian Territory?

A small group of Cherokees gave up and signed a treaty. But most Cherokees, led by John Ross, opposed the treaty. Jackson refused to negotiate with these Cherokees.

In 1838, federal troops commanded by General Winfield Scott forced about 16,000 Cherokees into camps. Soldiers took people from their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Over the fall and winter these Cherokees were forced to make the long journey west in the cold, rain, and snow. Many grew weak and ill. A quarter of the Cherokees died. The dead included John Ross's wife. One soldier never forgot what he witnessed.

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

“Murder is murder and somebody must answer. . . . Somebody must explain the four-thousand silent graves that mark the trail of the Cherokees to their exile. I wish I could forget it all, but the picture of six-hundred and forty-five wagons lumbering over the frozen ground with their cargo of suffering humanity still lingers in my memory.”

—John G. Burnett, quoted in *The Native Americans*,  
edited by Betty and Ian Ballantine

This harsh journey of the Cherokee from their homeland to Indian Territory became known as the **Trail of Tears**.

### CONNECT To Today

#### THE CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA

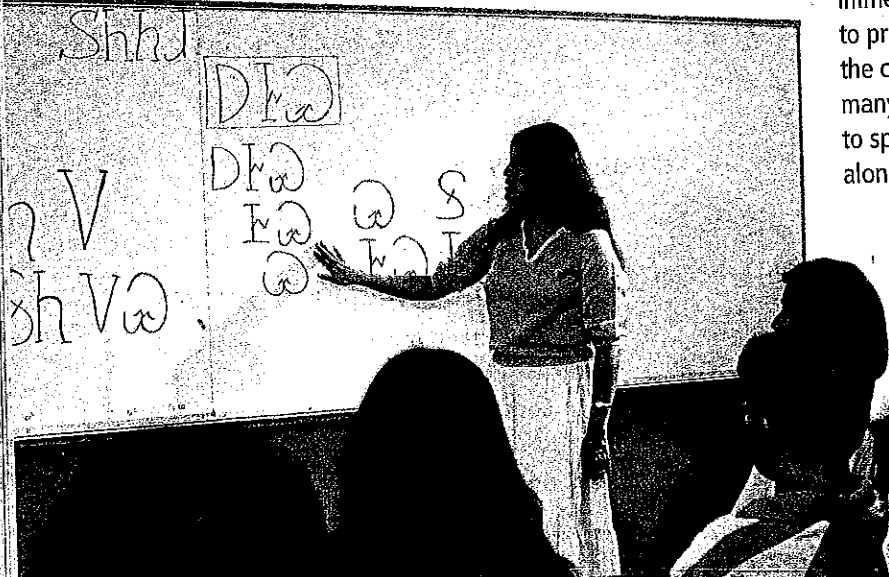
As soon as the Cherokees arrived in Indian Territory in the 1830s, they set out to rebuild. They established schools, churches, and businesses. A new constitution was adopted and newspapers and periodicals began circulating.

Today the Cherokee Nation is a leader in education, business, and economic development in Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation and its agencies employ over 3,000 people. Cherokee history and language continue to be taught in Cherokee schools. Recently,

the Cherokee Nation began offering language immersion classes to preschoolers in an effort to preserve the Cherokee language. By teaching the classes in Cherokee at such an early age, many hope that the children will not only learn to speak the language, but will one day pass it along to their own children.

#### CRITICAL THINKING

**Evaluate** In what ways have the Cherokees worked to preserve their culture?





**Native American Resistance** Some Native Americans resisted relocation. In 1838, a Cherokee farmer named Tsali and his family struggled to escape as U.S. soldiers were taking them to a camp. Two soldiers were killed before Tsali fled with his family to the Great Smoky Mountains. There they found other Cherokees. According to Cherokee tradition, Tsali was assured by the U.S. Army that if he and his sons were found, the others could remain. They surrendered or were captured, and all except the youngest son were executed. This sacrifice allowed some Cherokees to stay in their homeland.

In 1835, the Seminoles' refusal to leave Florida led to the Second Seminole War. One of the most important leaders in the war was **Osceola**. Hiding in the Everglades, Osceola and his band used surprise attacks to defeat the U.S. Army in many battles. In 1837, Osceola was tricked into capture when he came to peace talks during a truce. He later died in prison, but the Seminoles continued to fight. Some went deeper into the Everglades, where their descendants live today. Others moved west. The Second Seminole War ended in 1842.

Some Northern tribes also resisted relocation. In 1832, a Sauk chief named Black Hawk led a band of Sauk and Fox from Indian Territory back to their lands in Illinois. In the Black Hawk War, the Illinois militia and the U.S. Army crushed the uprising.

**CAUSES AND EFFECTS** Describe the effects of the Indian Removal Act.



Osceola led the Seminole in the fight against removal.



## Section Assessment



### ONLINE QUIZ

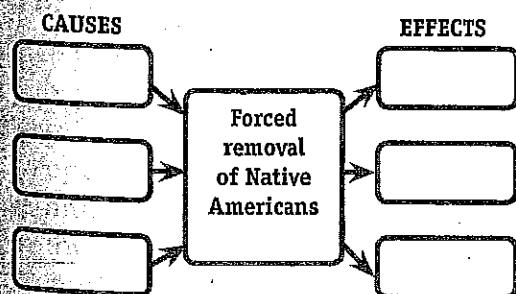
For test practice, go to  
Interactive Review @ [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com)

### TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of
  - Sequoia
  - Trail of Tears
  - Indian Removal Act
  - Osceola
  - Indian Territory

### USING YOUR READING NOTES

2. **Causes and Effects** Complete the diagram you started at the beginning of this section.



### KEY IDEAS

3. How did Americans react to Jackson's Native American policy?
4. Why were the Cherokees forced to move even though the Supreme Court ruled in their favor?
5. Describe how Native Americans resisted relocation.

### CRITICAL THINKING

6. **Main Ideas and Details** In what ways had the Cherokee adapted to white culture?
7. **Connect Geography & History** How did the land in Indian Territory differ from the homelands of Southeastern Native Americans?
8. **Writing Journal** Write a journal entry as a Cherokee on the Trail of Tears. Include details about the traveling conditions and the people around you.