

# Native American Removals and the Cherokee Trail of Tears, 1835–1840



*Robert Lindneux, The Trail of Tears, 1942  
(Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma)*

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

TL TEACHING LITERACY  
TH THROUGH HISTORY



# Native American Removals and the Cherokee Trail of Tears, 1835–1840

BY DALE HOGGATT (CREATED IN 2024)

*Dale Hoggatt taught primary grades for thirty-five years in Oklahoma and Missouri. He was named the 2021 Missouri History Teacher of the Year.*

**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** Four 45-minute class periods

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 3–5

## UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary source materials. These skills enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

Over the course of four lessons, students will explore Native American removals and Indian removal policies through primary sources: correspondence from President Andrew Jackson, Chief John Ross, and witnesses to the Trail of Tears, images, population data, and a map. Learners will also compare and contrast the information from primary sources with an artistic work. They will demonstrate their understanding through analysis of primary sources in class discussions, drawing, and writing.

Students will be able to

- Close read primary sources
- Summarize the meaning of a text
- Identify different points of view (e.g., White settlers, the Cherokee people, Congress, and the president)
- Use charts and maps to explain historical context

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What was the Trail of Tears?
- How did US politicians explain their decision to remove Native peoples from their land?
- How did Native people resist Indian removal policies?
- What were the results of Indian removal policy?

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.9: Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3: Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

## MATERIALS

- Teacher's Resource: Historical Background: "Native American Removals and the Cherokee Trail of Tears" by K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Myskoke/Creek Nation descent), Professor of Indigenous Studies (retired), Arizona State University
- Activity Sheet 1: Two Promises in Georgia Leading to the Trail of Tears
- Activity Sheet 2: Excerpts from President Andrew Jackson's Letter to the Cherokee, "To the Cherokee Tribe of Indians East of the Mississippi" [circular], March 16, 1835, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC07377, [gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc07377](http://gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc07377)
- A Portrait of John Ross, a Cherokee Chief, by Charles Bird King (1785–1862), *John Ross, A Cherokee Chief*, 1872–1874, lithograph with applied watercolor, 20 x 12 9/16 in., Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, 2004.19.88, [cartermuseum.org/collection/john-ross-choerokee-chief-20041988](http://cartermuseum.org/collection/john-ross-choerokee-chief-20041988)
- Activity Sheet 3: Letter from Chief John Ross, "To the Senate and House of Representatives," *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, ed. Gary E. Moulton, vol. 1, 1807–1839 (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985)
- Activity Sheet 4 (Groups A–D): Excerpts from Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25, May 17, 1838, Letters Received and Other Papers of Major General Winfield Scott Relating to the Cherokees, May 14–22, 1838, National Archives, [catalog.archives.gov/id/6172200](http://catalog.archives.gov/id/6172200)
- A Map of the Cherokee Removal Routes, Teaching with Historic Places, National Park Service, [nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/images/Trail-of-Tears-Routes-Map.jpg](http://nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/images/Trail-of-Tears-Routes-Map.jpg)
- A Chart of Cherokee Population Data adapted from Russell Thornton, "Table 2: Cherokee Population Size, 1808–9 to 1880," in "The Demography of the Trail of Tears Period: A New Estimate of Cherokee Population Losses" in *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*, ed. William Anderson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), p. 88. Available through the Internet Archive,

- Activity Sheet 5: Graphing Population Data
- Example of a Completed Graph
- Eyewitness Accounts from the Trail of Tears
  - o Excerpts from a Letter from a Native of Maine, excerpted from “A Native of Maine, traveling in the Western Country,” 1839, *New York Observer*, January 26, 1839, reprinted in Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), pp. 305–307. Available on Google Books, [hgoogle.com/books/edition/Indian\\_Removal/L8ZOg03I0s0C?hl=en](https://books.google.com/books/edition/Indian_Removal/L8ZOg03I0s0C?hl=en).
  - o Excerpts from a Letter from Cherokee leader William Shorey Coodey to John Howard Payne, August 13, 1840, Papers of John Howard Payne, MS 689, Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, reprinted in Vicki Rozema, ed., *Voices from the Trail of Tears* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2003), p. 134.
- Activity Sheet 6: Historical Evidence about the Trail of Tears
- Art paper and drawing supplies
- A Painting of *The Trail of Tears*, by Robert Lindneux, 1942, Wolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma
- Activity Sheet 7: Artistic Expression v. Primary Sources



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Native American Removals and the Cherokee Trail of Tears

by K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Arizona State University

Building the United States on Native homelands meant forcibly removing Native Peoples. European colonists moved Natives through the 1600s and the 1700s; the US did the same through the early 1900s. Exact numbers are hard to compute. Tens of thousands of people and dozens of nations were moved; for example, the Oneida, Miami, Potawatomi, Seneca, and Quapaw in the East and Midwest, and Navajo, Nez Perce, and many Native Californians in the West. The Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans were moved repeatedly, through Massachusetts, New York, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma.

Christian settlers believed they possessed a superior right to lands over people they considered heathens. Despite sophisticated Indigenous agriculture and ancient towns, settlers misrepresented Native Peoples as savages wandering the wilderness. Lewis Cass, governor of the Michigan Territory, condemned “Indians” in 1830 as doomed to extinction: “a barbarous people, depending upon the scanty and precarious supplies furnished by the chase, [who] cannot live in contact with a civilized community.”<sup>1</sup>

#### Cherokee Removal


The case of the Cherokee Nation is perhaps the best-known example of removal. The Cherokee had signed treaties with the US in 1785 and 1791 ceding (transferring ownership of) some lands while retaining ownership of a reduced homeland. The US promised to protect Cherokee lands, but they also promised Georgia in 1802 to extinguish (eradicate) all Native title to lands within the state. The US could not keep both contradictory promises.

In the 1820s, the cotton gin and enslaved labor made cotton agriculture increasingly profitable, fueling greed for land. Georgia passed laws (violating US treaties, constitutionally designated as “the supreme law of the land”) to dissolve the Cherokee government, annul their laws, and distribute Cherokee lands and homes to White citizens by lottery. The alleged superiority of Christian civilization justified dispossession despite Cherokee adoption of a constitutionally based government, high literacy rates in Sequoyah’s writing system, and a national newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*. In 1827 the Georgia Assembly proclaimed, “If the United States will not redeem her pledged honor [the 1802 promise]; and if the Indians continue to turn a deaf ear to the voice of reason and friendship, we now solemnly warn them of the consequences. The lands in question belong to Georgia. She must and she will have them.”<sup>2</sup> The consequences included the threat to secede from the Union and potentially, civil war.

Despite unchecked violence by Georgia militia and citizens, the Cherokee chose peaceful resistance: petitions to Congress, newspaper editorials, alliance with Christian churches, and two Supreme Court cases. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) the Court invented the classification “domestic dependent nation” to deny the Cherokee legal standing to file a case. A missionary ally, William Worcester, then filed *Worcester v. Georgia*. In 1832, the Court ruled the Cherokee people were entitled to govern themselves: the laws of Georgia “have no force” in Cherokee Territory. Congress had already passed,

<sup>1</sup> Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Perdue and Green, p. 75.



by a vote of 102 to 97 in the House of Representatives and 28 to 19 in the Senate, the 1830 Indian Removal Act, however, and President Andrew Jackson enforced new removal treaties. Land was gained and civil war was averted—for a time.

In 1838, Army troops forced Cherokees across Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee into stockades. Baptist missionary Evan Jones led a detachment of 1,250 Cherokee (of an estimated total population about 17,000) on the Trail of Tears. He wrote: “The Cherokees . . . have been dragged from their houses and encamped at the forts and military posts. . . . Multitudes were allowed no time to take anything with them, except the clothes they had on. Well-furnished houses were left a prey to plunderers.”<sup>3</sup> Mortality estimates during the march range as high as 25–30% and remained high—especially among the elderly and young children—in the first decade in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma).

Cherokee people never surrendered easily; they moved to save their families and ways of life. Despite the devastation of removals, the Civil War, and attacks on their sovereignty when Indian Territory was incorporated into the new state of Oklahoma in 1907, the Cherokee—and Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and others—drew on dynamic cultural values to survive and thrive. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, they have rebuilt their sovereign governments, reclaimed their heritage languages, and reasserted their national identity and cultural integrity.

*K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Muskoke/Creek Nation descent) is a retired professor and distinguished scholar of Indigenous education in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. She co-founded the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, which she served as president in 2012–2013. Lomawaima is the author of They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School (1994) and co-author of To Remain an Indian: Lessons for Democracy from a Century of Native American Education (2006; 2nd ed. 2024).*

### Sources

Perdue, Theda, and Michael Green. *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Weaver, Jace and Laura Adams. *Red Clay, 1835: Cherokee Removal and the Meaning of Sovereignty*. University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Cherokee National History Museum, Tahlequah, OK  
<https://visitcherokeenation.com/attractions/cherokee-national-history-museum/>

Museum of the Cherokee People, Cherokee, North Carolina  
<https://motcp.org/>

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail  
<https://www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm>

Cherokee Retracement at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Garfield, Arkansas. (NPS)  
<https://www.nps.gov/trte/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

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<sup>3</sup> Perdue and Green, p. 171.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE TRAIL OF TEARS AND INDIAN REMOVALS

BY DALE HOGGATT (CREATED IN 2024)

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will read excerpts from a scholarly essay on Native American, or Indian, removals. Students will demonstrate their understanding by selecting important words and phrases and summarizing the text in their own words.

*Dale Hoggatt taught primary grades for thirty-five years in Oklahoma and Missouri. He was named the 2021 Missouri History Teacher of the Year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 3–5

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary source materials. Over the course of four lessons, students will explore Native American removals and Indian removal policies through primary sources.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What was the Trail of Tears?
- How did US politicians explain their decision to remove Native peoples from their land?
- How did Native people resist Indian removal policies?
- What were the results of Indian removal policy?

## MATERIALS

- Teacher's Resource (p. 5): Historical Background: "Native American Removals and the Cherokee Trail of Tears" by K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Myskoke/Creek Nation descent), Professor of Indigenous Studies (retired), Arizona State University
- Activity Sheet 1: Two Promises in Georgia Leading to the Trail of Tears

## PROCEDURE

1. A Historical Background essay by Professor K. Tsianina Komawaima has been provided for your information (see p. 5). You may choose to share information from the essay with your students at any point during the lesson plans.
2. Discuss with students the key terms "Trail of Tears" and "Indian removal" (also called "Native American removals").<sup>4</sup> Then ask students to contrast the words "barbarous" and "civilized." Explain that these words were used in the nineteenth century both descriptively and to convey a moral judgment. Discuss the meaning of "peaceful resistance." Tell students that they will now read about some of the events that became known as the Trail of Tears.

<sup>4</sup> For information about terminology, you may want to refer to "The Impact of Words and Tips for Using Appropriate Terminology" provided by the National Museum of the American Indian's resource Native Knowledge 360 (link in 2024: <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/informational/impact-words-tips>).

3. Activity Sheet 1 is a secondary source containing three paragraphs about the leadup to the Trail of Tears based on the Historical Background essay.
4. As you read the activity sheet with the students, you may choose to construct a simple timeline based on the text (with students guiding the construction). Confirm that students understand the sequence of events.
5. “Share read” each paragraph of the text by having the class follow along silently while you read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. After you have read all three paragraphs, start again, asking the students to join in with the reading while you continue to read aloud. This technique will support struggling readers and English language learners (ELL). If students do not know the meaning of a word, go through the process of looking it up in a dictionary or provide the students with a suitable synonym. This process is also important to literacy and understanding subject-specific vocabulary.
6. After reading each paragraph, ask students to identify the problem presented in the text. What was the solution offered by the government? What was the Trail of Tears’ outcome? The students will use evidence (words, phrases) from the text to answer the questions. It may require a full reading of all three paragraphs before some of these questions are fully answered.
7. Along the way, you should ask students to identify important phrases. Students will circle the most important phrase in each paragraph. Call on students to share their phrases with the class, one at a time, and record them on the board or screen. Are there any phrases that are repeated by multiple students? Ask why they believe these are the most important in the paragraph.
8. Narrow the list of words/phrases to a single phrase from each paragraph agreed on by the class. You should carefully guide this portion of the lesson with the intention that students will learn the process. Students will now explain why they think that this is the most important phrase in that text.
9. Work with the students to summarize the main point of each paragraph. Have them write the final sentence in the In Your Own Words section.
10. Are students beginning to form opinions of the three groups involved (the Cherokee people, the US government, and the White settlers)? Remind them of the original problem: overwhelming numbers of White squatters in the traditional homelands of Indigenous peoples.
11. Finally, remind students this text is based on a secondary source written by a historian who used primary sources to uncover and interpret the past. The historian was not present when these events occurred. What kinds of questions might be answered by referencing a secondary source? What kinds of questions might be answered by consulting a primary source?
12. Ask students: If they wanted to know what struggles Indigenous peoples encountered when they were forced to leave their homes and migrate westward, where would they look? In what kinds of sources might Indigenous peoples and other witnesses have recorded their experiences and feelings?
13. The activity sheets will be used later in this unit. You may choose to collect these activity sheets in a central location so that students don’t misplace them.



# PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON'S LETTER TO THE CHEROKEE, 1835, AND THE CHEROKEE RESPONSE FROM CHIEF JOHN ROSS, 1836

BY DALE HOGGATT (CREATED IN 2024)

## OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces students to a letter (circular) Andrew Jackson printed and distributed in 1835, addressed to the Cherokee people. Students will also read excerpts from Cherokee Chief John Ross's response, which he directed to Congress in 1836.

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GRADE LEVELS: 3–5

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary source materials. Over the course of four lessons, students will explore Native American removals and Indian removal policies through primary sources.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS


- How did US politicians explain their decision to remove Native peoples from their land?
- How did Native people resist Indian removal policies?

## MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 2: Excerpts from President Andrew Jackson's Letter to the Cherokee, "To the Cherokee Tribe of Indians East of the Mississippi" [circular], March 16, 1835, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC07377, [gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc07377](https://gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc07377)
- A Portrait of John Ross, a Cherokee Chief, by Charles Bird King (1785–1862), *John Ross, A Cherokee Chief*, 1872–1874, lithograph with applied watercolor, 20 x 12 9/16 in., Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, 2004.19.88, [cartermuseum.org/collection/john-ross-choerokee-chief-20041988](https://cartermuseum.org/collection/john-ross-choerokee-chief-20041988)
- Activity Sheet 3: Excerpts from a Letter from Chief John Ross, "To the Senate and House of Representatives," *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, ed. Gary E. Moulton, vol. 1, 1807–1839 (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985)

## PROCEDURE

1. The students should review what they learned the previous day. You may have them take out Activity Sheet 1, or you may write the three final summaries from Activity Sheet 1 on the board. They may work in groups of 3–5 or as a whole class. Ask the students to discuss and summarize the most important




points from the secondary source about the removal of the Cherokee from Georgia and the relationship between the federal government, the government of Georgia, the White settlers, and the Cherokee. You may contribute additional information from the Historical Background to the conversation.

2. Distribute Activity Sheet 2 with excerpts from a letter President Andrew Jackson published addressed to the Cherokee still living east of the Mississippi. Share read the text as described in Lesson 1, remembering that reading fluency is the goal. Students should read aloud along with you, matching rhythm, inflection, and speed and attending to punctuation.
3. Make sure the students understand that this text is an excerpt from a longer document. Explain the use of ellipsis points to show that some of the text has been deleted to focus on the main points of the message. We have provided links to the original full documents in the materials list if you want to show the students the full text.
4. Instruct students or student groups to circle (or highlight) 5–7 of the most important words or short phrases in this excerpt. Some of these words and phrases are highlighted below:

I have no motive, my friends, to deceive you. I am sincerely desirous to promote your welfare. Listen to me, therefore, while I tell you that **you cannot remain where you now are**. Circumstances that cannot be controlled . . . render it **impossible** that you can flourish in the midst of a civilized community. You have but **one remedy** within your reach. And that is, to remove to the West and join your countrymen, who are already established there. And the sooner you do this, the sooner you will commence your career of improvement and prosperity. . . . As certain as the sun shines to guide you in your path, so certain is it that you **cannot drive back the laws** of Georgia from among you. Every year **will increase your difficulties**. Look at the condition of the Creeks [another tribe of Native Americans]. See the **collisions** which are taking place with them. See how their young men are **committing depredations** upon the property of our citizens, and are **shedding their blood**. This cannot and **will not be allowed**. **Punishment** will follow, and all who are engaged in these offences **must suffer**.

5. Call on students to share their words with the class while you write them on the board. If students do not know the meaning of a word, look it up in a dictionary or provide an appropriate synonym. Identify the most popular words and phrases the students provided and eliminate the rest.
6. Guide the students through the process of creating a sentence using some of the phrases and words that they identified that summarizes what President Jackson was saying in his letter. A possible sentence might sound like this: *If you remain where you are, you will suffer shedding of blood, punishment, and increased difficulties.*
7. Help students re-write that sentence in their own words. You may ask students to do this task individually, in their groups, or as a whole class. Their sentence might sound something like this: *If you don't leave, the US government will punish you.*

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8. Finally, on the bottom of the activity sheet there are six words that students may choose from to identify the feeling evoked by their summary sentence: forceful, compassionate, warning, concerned, encouraging, and hopeful. Students should share their choice and the reason for their choice with their group or the class.
  9. Display or project Charles Bird King's portrait of John Ross (1843). Ask students to make some observations about the portrait. They may say:

*There is a man sitting at a table.*

*The man is dressed in fancy clothes.*

*His hand is on some papers.*

Zoom in and read the words immediately beneath the portrait. They say "JOHN ROSS" and "A CHEROKEE CHIEF." Ross was an elected leader of the Cherokee Nation.

10. Distribute Activity Sheet 3. For the remainder of the class period, the students will read and analyze Chief John Ross's letter of September 28, 1836. Explain that the 1836 Treaty of New Echota committed the Cherokee people to relocate westward. The US government enforced this treaty even though no legitimate representative of the Cherokee Nation had agreed to it, a majority of Cherokee people opposed it, and Chief John Ross disavowed it. In a letter to the Senate and House of Representatives (Congress), Ross explained why his people wished to reject the treaty. Ross identified ten ways that treaty enforcement would harm the Cherokee people. These ten harmful results are the topic of Activity Sheet 3.
11. Students will match the quotations from this primary source in the left column to the simpler explanation in the right column. Answers: 1 – G, 2 – A, 3 – I, 4 – F, 5 – B, 6 – J, 7 – H, 8 – C, 9 – E, 10 – D.
12. You should give students just enough support to encourage learning. If students will achieve more by cooperating with partners or small groups, then break into groups. If students need direct instruction from you, provide assistance. If students are successful working independently, allow them to do so.
13. Some vocabulary in the primary source will be unfamiliar to students. If students do not know the meaning of a word, and cannot pick up the meaning through context clues, they can look it up in a dictionary or you can provide an appropriate synonym.
14. Provide some follow-up information after the activity: Cherokee leaders pressed lawsuits and lobbied politicians. Cherokee people delayed their relocation as long as possible. But eventually the US Army forced the Cherokee people to move, as well as many Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole people.
15. Collect and save all activity sheets for students' use with upcoming lessons.

# CONDITIONS AND RESULTS OF THE TRAIL OF TEARS, 1809–1880

BY DALE HOGGATT (CREATED IN 2024)

## OVERVIEW

Today, the class will read about how the US Army structured the removal of the Cherokee and what some of the consequences were.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What was the Trail of Tears?
- What were the results of Indian removal policy?

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GRADE LEVELS: 3–5

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period


UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary source materials. Over the course of four lessons, students will explore Native American removals and Indian removal policies through primary sources.

## MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 4 (Groups A–D): Excerpts from Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25, May 17, 1838, Letters Received and Other Papers of Major General Winfield Scott Relating to the Cherokees, May 14–22, 1838, National Archives, [catalog.archives.gov/id/6172200](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6172200)
- A Map of the Cherokee Removal Routes, Teaching with Historic Places, National Park Service, [nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/images/Trail-of-Tears-Routes-Map.jpg](https://nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/images/Trail-of-Tears-Routes-Map.jpg)
- A Chart of Cherokee Population Data adapted from Russell Thornton, "Table 2: Cherokee Population Size, 1808–9 to 1880," in "The Demography of the Trail of Tears Period: A New Estimate of Cherokee Population Losses" in *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*, ed. William Anderson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), p. 88. Available through the Internet Archive,
- Activity Sheet 5: Graphing Population Data
- Example of a Completed Graph

## PROCEDURE

1. Review the previous lessons with the students and check for understanding. Have them consider Native American removals from different points of view. Ask, What did the settlers want? Why didn't Indigenous people want to leave? Whose interests did the US government most support?

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2. Explain that Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25 instructed US troops on how to coerce the Cherokee people into beginning and continuing to migrate. Students should be reminded that these instructions suggest General Scott's intentions, but do not necessarily tell us whether or not his instructions were followed.
  3. Divide the class into four groups in preparation for a jigsaw exercise. Start by distributing one of the four versions of Activity Sheet 4 to each group. Each version contains a different pair of quotations.

Group D might be surprised by the fact that some Cherokee people were slaveholders. In 1835, about 7 percent of Cherokee people owned a total of approximately 1600 enslaved people.
  4. Each group will read their quotations and restate the quotations in their own words.
  5. Distribute all the versions of Activity Sheet 4 so that every student has a copy of all four versions.
  6. Then, each group will share their findings with the whole class. Conduct this as a quick discussion. Make sure that all students take notes on the three versions they did not analyze, as they may want to use this information in the summative exercise in Lesson 4.
  7. Share some information with the class: It took the Cherokee four months to travel almost 1,000 miles to a "tract of country west of the Mississippi, for the use of the Cherokee nation." Historians estimate that as many as 4,000 Cherokee people or more died while on the journey. That is one-quarter of the population (William Anderson, 1992, and Russell Thornton, 1991).
  8. Distribute or project a map of the Trail of Tears: [Trail-of-Tears-Routes-Map.jpg \(1500x948\)](#). Ask the class to share observable facts illustrated on the map. Encourage students to cite evidence.
  9. This might be an appropriate time to review some of the information from the Historical Background essay by Professor K. Tsianina Lomawaima with students.
  10. Russell Thornton (Distinguished Research Professor and Professor Emeritus of History, UCLA) published a chart in 1991 to show how the Cherokee population declined and gradually regrew between 1808 and 1880. Provide students with the population data and Activity Sheet 5.
  11. When completing Activity Sheet 5, students will supply the title as well as the years across the bottom. Use straight edges or rulers to connect the dots on the line graph. Guide students through the process of plotting dots for each of the data points provided in Thornton's chart or work through the whole process with them starting with a blank page projected or displayed. An example of a completed graph is provided.
  12. Encourage students to explain the graph. What have they learned that can help explain why population declined between 1835 and 1850? Students can do the math to estimate the loss of life during the Trail of Tears.
  13. Collect all activity sheets, saving them for the next lesson.



# EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS AND ARTISTIC DEPICTIONS, 1839–1942

BY DALE HOGGATT (CREATED IN 2024)

## OVERVIEW

Students will review what they learned in the previous three lessons and use that information in this lesson. They will compare and contrast a twentieth-century artistic depiction of the Trail of Tears with primary source documents.

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GRADE LEVELS: 3–5

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

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## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What was the Trail of Tears?
- What were the results of Indian removal policy?

## MATERIALS

- Completed Activity Sheets 1–5 and the portrait of John Ross and the population data
- Eyewitness Accounts from the Trail of Tears, 1838 and 1840
  - o Excerpts from a Letter from a Native of Maine, excerpted from “A Native of Maine, traveling in the Western Country,” 1839, *New York Observer*, January 26, 1839, reprinted in Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), pp. 305–307. Available on Google Books, [hgoogle.com/books/edition/Indian\\_Removal/L8ZOg03I0s0C?hl=en](https://books.google.com/books/edition/Indian_Removal/L8ZOg03I0s0C?hl=en).
  - o Excerpts from a Letter from Cherokee leader William Shorey Coodey to John Howard Payne, August 13, 1840, Papers of John Howard Payne, MS 689, Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, reprinted in Vicki Rozema, ed., *Voices from the Trail of Tears* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2003), p. 134
- Activity Sheet 6: Historical Evidence about the Trail of Tears
- Art paper and drawing supplies
- A Painting of *The Trail of Tears*, by Robert Lindneux, 1942, Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma
- Activity Sheet 7: Artistic Expression v. Primary Sources



## PROCEDURE

1. You may have students work individually, with a partner, or in a small group. Redistribute to students their work from previous lessons.
2. Distribute and then share read Eyewitness Accounts from the Trail of Tears.
3. Distribute Activity Sheet 6 and have the students answer questions 1–4 based on the accounts by “A Native of Maine” and William Shorey Coodey.
4. Have the students answer questions 5 and 6 based on all the work they did and texts they read in Lessons 1–3.
5. Distribute art paper and colored pencils or crayons. Have the students visualize a scene from the Trail of Tears, but only as described on their primary resources. After a minute of quiet thinking, give them time to illustrate the scene that they imagine. Students must be prepared to defend the items they include in their illustrations: they must be able to point back to the primary sources to explain their choices. Give them approximately ten minutes to complete their illustrations.
6. Stop everything and have students clean up.
7. Distribute Activity Sheet 7 and display Robert Lindneux’s *The Trail of Tears* (1942). During the discussion, students will take notes on Activity Sheet 7.
  - a. First ask “What do you notice?” By allowing students to make observations of the artwork (without judgment or explanation) you give all students an opportunity to enter the lesson with little apprehension. The goal is to bring students into the lesson and involve them. All of the details in the provided painting are important to the discussion. You may notice that students are already becoming critical of the artist’s depiction of the event but should limit students’ expression of those critiques.
  - b. Expand on what students notice in the painting by asking who the people in the painting are, what modes of transportation they are using, how many of their belongings are being brought along. These are some of the same topics that were on the activity sheets they just completed.
  - c. This initial engagement then deepens when you open the discussion further with a second question: “What do you wonder?” which directs students to a deeper comprehension, looking for connections students already have from previous lessons. These are the types of things they will be asked to provide on the final evaluation page. Remind learners that they are asking questions based only on the artwork before them. At the same time, show some excitement that students are making the contrasts that will be called for in the assessment.
8. Direct the conversation to compare and contrast their own depictions of the Trail of Tears with observations about the Lindneux painting. At your discretion, the final assessment (Activity Sheet 7) may be completed in groups, in pairs, or individually. Learners will be required to identify one area in which the painting matches their drawings and one way in which the two are different. They will answer two questions on the activity sheet with specific examples from the primary sources.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity Sheet 1: Two Promises in Georgia Leading to the Trail of Tears

The following three paragraphs provide some background information about why and how the Cherokee people were forced to leave Georgia in the 1830s. Circle the most important phrase in each section. Copy the phrase in the Phrase Chosen section and explain why you chose that phrase. Then write a sentence In Your Own Words that summarizes the meaning of the paragraph.

1.

In the late 1700s and early 1802, the United States government made different promises to different people. The U.S. government and the Native American Cherokee Nation had signed treaties in 1785 and 1791, agreeing that the Cherokee would surrender some of their land. The U.S. government promised not to take the rest. A few years later, in 1802, something changed. The government then made a different promise to Georgia's White citizens. It promised to remove all Native Americans from the state. The U.S. government could not keep both promises.

Phrase Chosen:

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Why did you choose that phrase?

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In Your Own Words

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

2.

By the 1820s, cotton farming became more profitable and gold was discovered on Cherokee land. The potential to become wealthier brought more White settlers into the area. New Georgians moved closer and closer to Cherokee land and soon wanted the Cherokee to leave. The state of Georgia took the side of the new settlers and ordered the Cherokee Nation to leave, making room for more Georgians.

Phrase Chosen:

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Why did you choose that phrase?

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In Your Own Words

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

3.

The Cherokee peacefully protested by going to court. The Supreme Court upheld the Cherokee Nation’s land claims. However, the U.S. government passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. In 1838, soldiers forced the Cherokee to move west and live on reservations. Many died on the long journey, now called the Trail of Tears. Despite all of this, the Cherokee and other Native nations survived. Over time, they rebuilt their communities, restored their languages, and kept their culture alive. They showed great strength and resilience.

Phrase Chosen:

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Why did you choose that phrase?

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In Your Own Words

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Activity Sheet 2: Excerpts from President Andrew Jackson's  
Letter to the Cherokee, 1835

Circle 5–7 of the most important words or short phrases in this part of President Jackson's letter:

I have no motive, my friends, to deceive you. I am sincerely desirous to promote your welfare. Listen to me, therefore, while I tell you that you cannot remain where you now are. Circumstances that cannot be controlled . . . render it impossible that you can flourish in the midst of a civilized community. You have but one remedy within your reach. And that is, to remove to the West and join your countrymen, who are already established there. And the sooner you do this, the sooner you will commence your career of improvement and prosperity. . . . As certain as the sun shines to guide you in your path, so certain is it that you cannot drive back the laws of Georgia from among you. Every year will increase your difficulties. Look at the condition of the Creeks [another tribe of Native Americans]. See the collisions which are taking place with them. See how their young men are committing depredations upon the property of our citizens, and are shedding their blood. This cannot and will not be allowed. Punishment will follow, and all who are engaged in these offences must suffer.

*From Andrew Jackson, "To the Cherokee Tribe of Indians East of the Mississippi" [circular], March 16, 1835, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC07377.*



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Use the words you circled in a sentence that summarizes this part of the letter:

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Write a sentence expressing Jackson's ideas in your own words:

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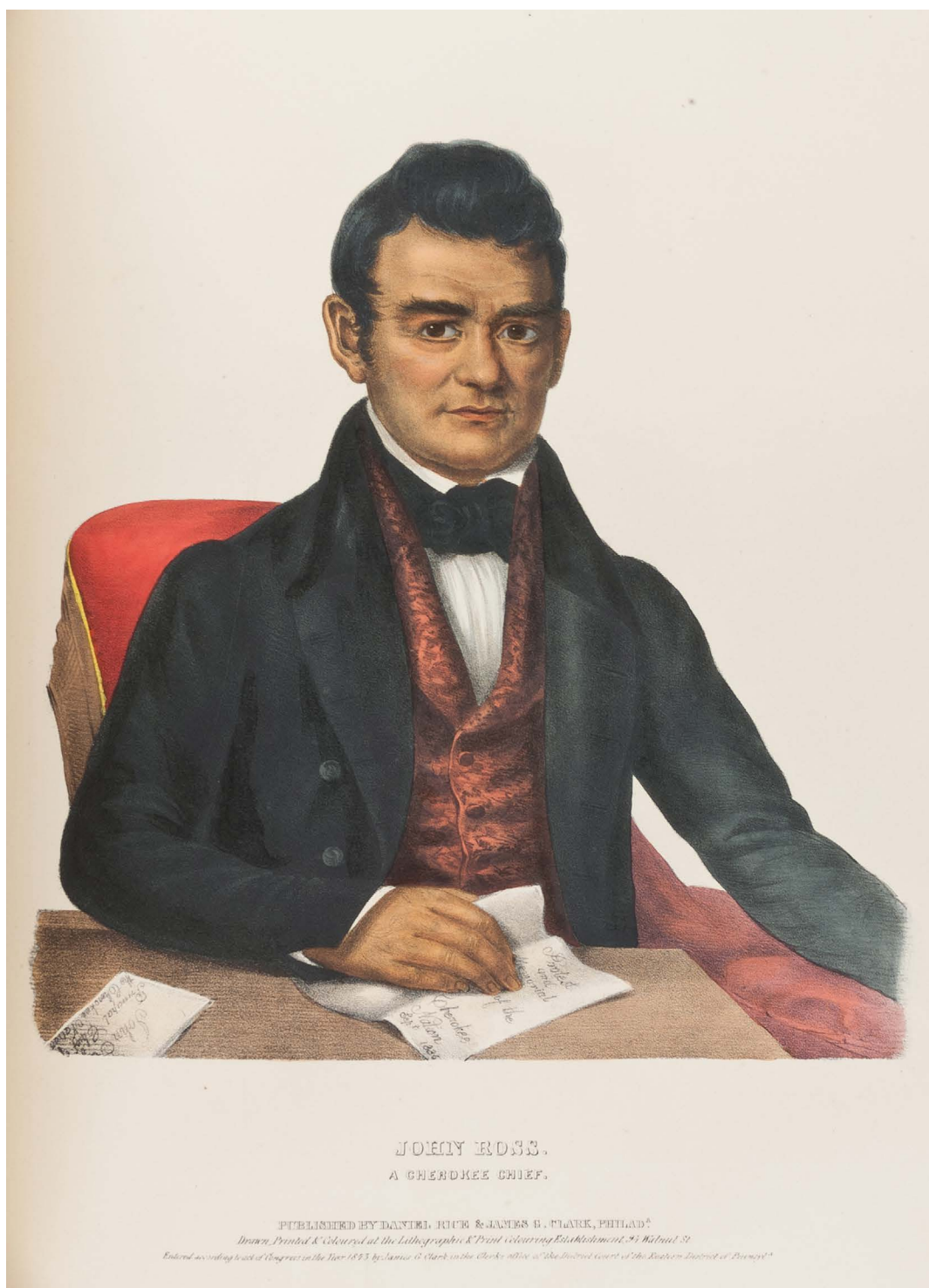
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Which of these words describes the tone of the sentence you wrote? Circle one.

forceful    compassionate    warning    concerned    encouraging    hopeful

## Portrait of Chief John Ross



Charles Bird King (1785–1862), John Ross, A Cherokee Chief, 1872–1874, Lithograph with applied watercolor, 20 x 12 9/16 in. (Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, 2004.19.88)

### Activity Sheet 3: Excerpts from a Letter from Chief John Ross to Congress, 1836

Chief John Ross, an elected leader of the Cherokee Nation, wrote to Congress explaining why the Treaty of New Echota, which claimed that the Cherokee had agreed to move, should not be enforced. Ten of his reasons are written on the left. Match the reason on the left with the explanation of the reason on the right. Put the correct letter in the blank line next to the numbered list.

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|---|--|
| _____ 1. "[W]e are despoiled of our private possessions, the indefeasible property of individuals." | A. We are not free and cannot take our case to a judge in court. |
| _____ 2. "We are stripped of every attribute of freedom and eligibility for legal self-defence."    | B. We could be killed.   |
| _____ 3. "Our property may be plundered before our eyes[.]"   | C. We aren't allowed to vote.                                    |
| _____ 4. "[V]iolence may be committed on our persons[.]"  | D. We can never return home.                                     |
| _____ 5. "[O]ur lives may be taken away[.]"   | E. We are being treated like we are not people.                  |
| _____ 6. "[T]here is none to regard our complaints[.]"  | F. We could be physically attacked.                              |
| _____ 7. "We are denationalized[.]"   | G. Our property has been stolen.                                 |
| _____ 8. "[W]e are disfranchised[.]"  | H. We no longer have a nation of our own.                        |
| _____ 9. "We are deprived of membership in the human family!"                                       | I. We may witness people stealing from us.                       |
| _____ 10. "We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own[.]"          | J. No one listens to our concerns and no one tries to help us    |



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity Sheet 4, Group A**  
**Excerpts from Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25 (1838)**

Restate each of these quotations from Order No. 25 in your own words.  
Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

If . . . individuals, or a party, . . . here and there, should seek to hide themselves, they must be pursued and invited to surrender, but not fired upon unless they should make a stand to resist. Even in such cases, mild remedies may sometimes better succeed than violence.

**In Your Own Words:**

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[T]he men will be guarded and escorted, except it may be, where their women and children are safely secured as hostages; but, in general, families, in our possession, will not be separated. . . .

**In Your Own Words:**

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From Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25, May 17, 1838, National Archives.





Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity Sheet 4, Group B

#### Excerpts from Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25 (1838)

Restate each of these quotations from Order No. 25 in your own words.  
Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

It may happen that Indians will be found too sick, in the opinion of the nearest Surgeon, to be removed. . . . In every such case, one or more of the family, or the friends of the sick person, will be left in attendance, with ample subsistence and remedies, and the remainder of the family removed by the troops. . . .

In Your Own Words:

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Infants, [elderly] persons, lunatics and women in a helpless condition, will all, in the removal, require peculiar attention, which the brave and humane will seek to adapt to the necessities of the several cases.

In Your Own Words:

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From Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25, May 17, 1838, National Archives.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity Sheet 4, Group C**  
**Excerpts from Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25 (1838)**

Restate each of these quotations from Order No. 25 in your own words.  
Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

All strong men, women, boys & girls, will be made to march under proper escorts. . . .

*In Your Own Words:*

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For the feeble, Indian horses and ponies will furnish a ready resource, as well as for bedding and light cooking utensils—all of which, as intimated in the Treaty, will be necessary to the emigrants both in going to, and after arrival at, their new homes. . . . If the horses and ponies be not adequate . . . wagons must be supplied. . . .

*In Your Own Words:*

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From Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25, May 17, 1838, National Archives.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Sheet 4, Group D

Excerpts from Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25 (1838)

Restate each of these quotations from Order No. 25 in your own words.  
Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

. . . Such, and all other light articles of property, the Indians will be allowed to collect and to take with them, as also their slaves, who will be treated in like manner with the Indians themselves. . . .

In Your Own Words:

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. . . Corn, oats, fodder and other forage, also beef cattle, belonging to the Indians to be removed, will be taken possession of by the proper departments of the Staff, as wanted, for the regular consumption of the Army, and certificates given to the owners, specifying in every case, the amount of forage and the weight of beef, so taken, in order that the owners may be paid for the same on their arrival. . . .

In Your Own Words:

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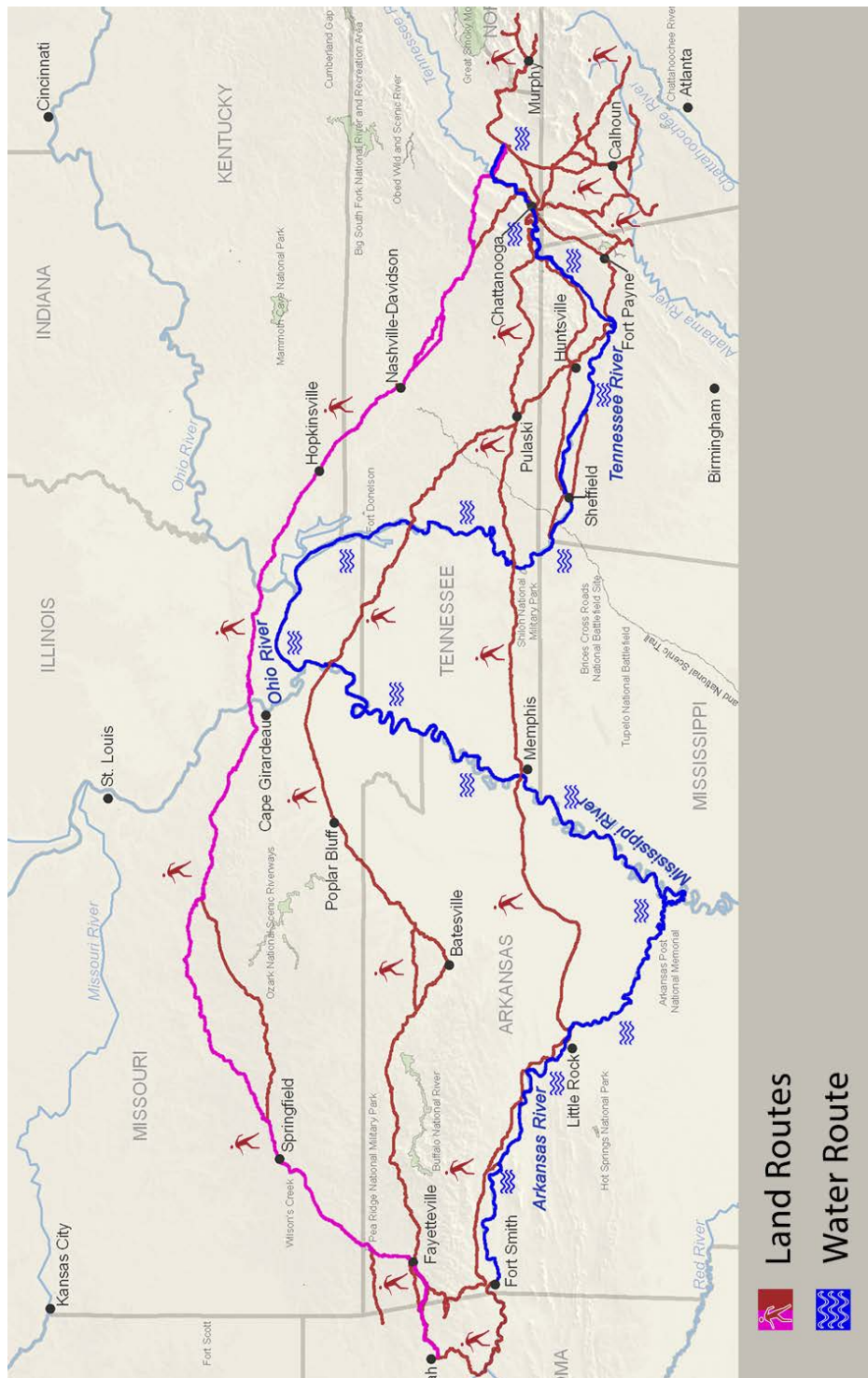
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From Major General Winfield Scott's Order No. 25, May 17, 1838, National Archives.

# A Map of the Cherokee Removal Routes



(National Park Service)

## A Chart of Cherokee Population Data

Year	Population
1808–1809	13,395
1826	17,713
1828	18,722
1835	21,542
1851–1852	15,802
1867	15,566
1875	19,717
1880	21,920

*From Russell Thornton, "The Demography of the Trail of Tears Period: A New Estimate of Cherokee Population Losses" in Cherokee Removal: Before and After, ed. William Anderson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), p. 88.*



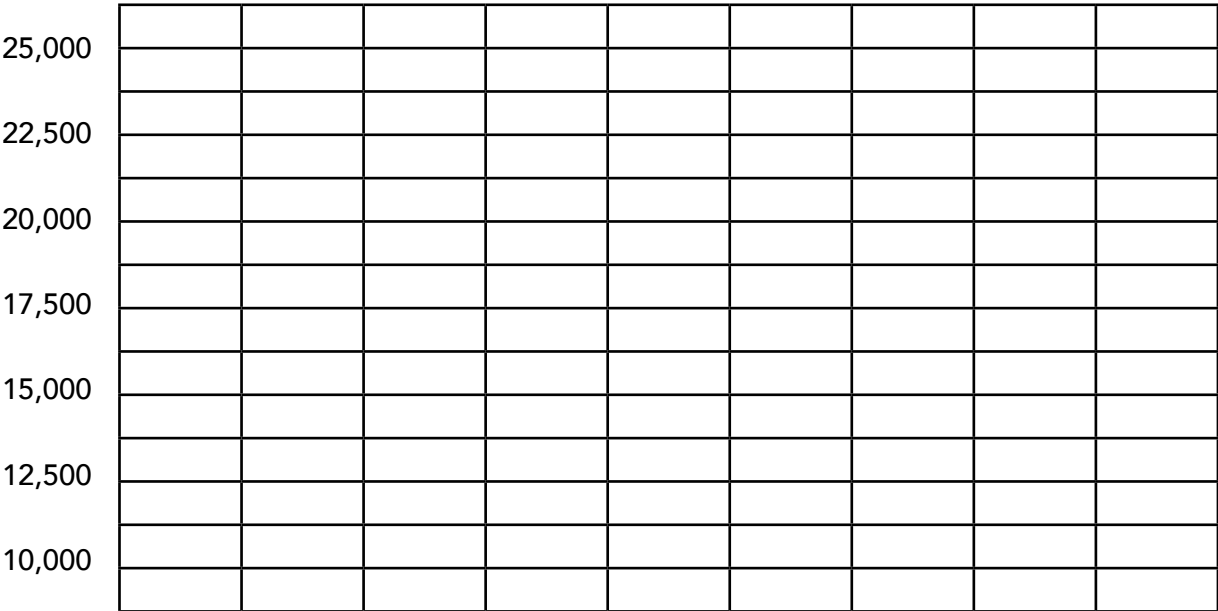


Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity Sheet 5: Graphing Population Data

Write your own title above the graph and then write in the years from the Population Data chart across the bottom of the graph. Use the population numbers from the chart to plot the populations.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_



What do you notice about the population of the Cherokee people during this time period?

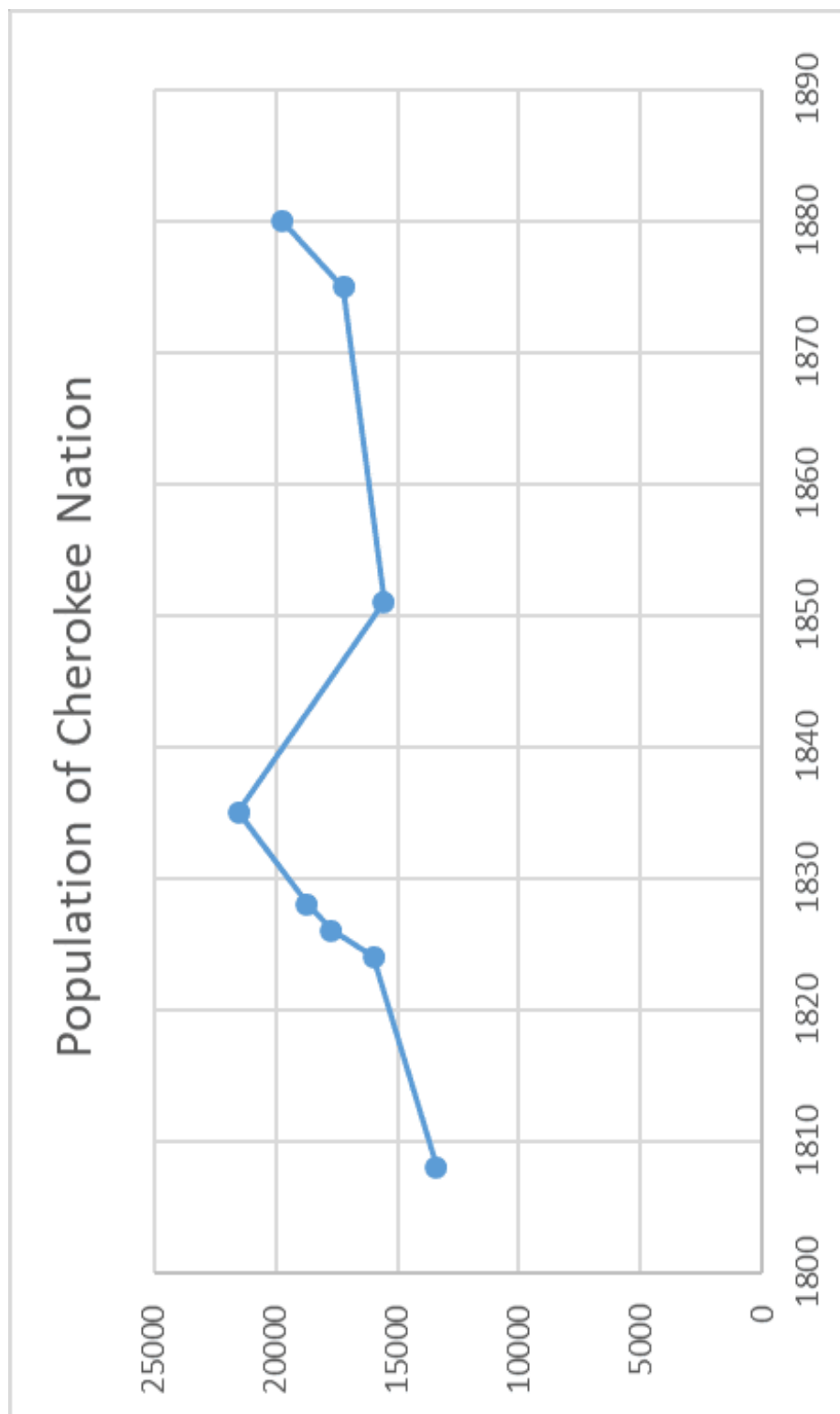
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## Example of a Completed Graph





# Eyewitness Accounts from the Trail of Tears, 1838 and 1840

## Excerpts from a Letter from a Native of Maine, 1838

This letter was written to the *New York Observer* newspaper in the winter of 1838, reporting on an encounter with the Cherokee near Nashville, Tennessee.


... On Tuesday evening we fell in with a detachment of the poor Cherokee Indians ... about eleven hundred Indians—sixty waggons—six hundred horses, and perhaps forty pairs of oxen. We found them in the forest camped for the night by the road side ... under a severe fall of rain accompanied by heavy wind. With their canvas for a shield from ... the weather, and the cold wet ground for a resting place, after the fatigue of the day, they spent the night. ... Many of the aged Indians were suffering extremely from the fatigue of the journey. ... Several were then quite ill, and one aged man ... was then in the last struggles of death. ...

Some carry a downcast dejected look bordering upon the appearance of despair; others a wild frantic appearance as if about to burst the chains of nature and pounce like a tiger upon their enemies. ... Several missionaries were accompanying them to their destination. Some of the Cherokees are wealthy and travel in style. One lady passed on in her hack in company with her husband, apparently with as much refinement ... as any of the mothers of New England. ... Her youngest child about three years old was sick in her arms, and all she could do was to make it comfortable. ... She could only carry her dying child in her arms a few miles farther, and then she must stop in a stranger-land and consign her much loved babe to the cold ground. ...

*From the New York Observer, January 26, 1839, reprinted in Grant Foreman, Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), pp. 305–307.*

## Excerpts from a Letter from Cherokee Leader William Shorey Coodey to John Howard Payne, 1840

At noon all was in readiness for moving. The trains were stretched out in a line along the road through a heavy forest, groups ... formed about each waggon, others shaking the hand of some sick friend or relative who would be left behind. The temporary camps covered with boards and some of the bark, that for three summer months had been their only shelter and home were crackling and falling under a blazing flame. The day was bright and beautiful, but a gloomy thoughtfulness was strongly depicted in ... every face. In all the bustle of preparation there was a silence and stillness of the voice that betrayed the sadness of the heart.



At length the word was given to move on. . . . Going Snake, an aged and respected chief whose head eighty winters had whitened, mounted on his favorite poney passed before me . . . followed by a number of young men on horse back.

At this very moment a low sound of distant thunder fell on my ear. . . . A dark spiral cloud was rising above the horizon. . . . I almost fancied a voice of divine [anger] for the wrongs of my poor and unhappy countrymen, driven by brutal power from all they loved and cherished in the land of their fathers. . . .

*From a Letter from Cherokee leader William Shorey Coodey to John Howard Payne, August 13, 1840, Papers of John Howard Payne, MS 689, Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, reprinted in Vicki Rozema, ed., Voices from the Trail of Tears (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2003), p. 134.*



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Sheet 6: Historical Evidence about the Trail of Tears

Answer the questions below about the Trail of Tears. You may refer to any of the primary sources from previous lessons.

1. Based on the excerpts from a letter from a native of Maine, make a list of belongings the Cherokee took with them on the journey.

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2. According to the excerpt from a letter from a native of Maine, what types of transportation were used on the journey?

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3. How did the Cherokee feel about their removal from tribal lands? Find information in the excerpt from a letter from a native of Maine to help you.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

4. Use the letter written by Cherokee leader William Shorey Coodey to describe other observable details about the Trail of Tears.

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5. Recall Order No. 25 from the previous lesson. Who else was present during the Trail of Tears?

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6. What other observations from any of the other primary sources we read would help paint an accurate picture of the Trail of Tears?

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## ***The Trail of Tears* by Robert Lindneux, 1942**



*Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma*





Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Sheet 7: Artistic Expression v. Primary Sources

1. What is one way that Robert Lindneux’s painting matches your own drawing?

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2. What evidence do you have from the primary sources to support that part of the painting? Quote the eyewitnesses.

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3. What is one way that the painting does not appear to be like your drawing? Which is more accurate according to the primary sources?

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4. What evidence do you find in the primary sources to support your decision and question the artist’s choice? Quote the eyewitnesses.

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Do your partners agree with your reasoning?