

Indian Removal and the Trail of Tears

Name: _____ Date: _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze primary source perspectives on Indian Removal and map the forced relocation routes to build historical empathy and understanding.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- printed or hand-drawn outline map of the southeastern/central United States
- ruler
- colored pencils
- index cards (3)
- notebook paper
- pencil

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Read the excerpt below, adapted from Cherokee Chief John Ross's 1836 protest letter regarding removal: "We are stripped of every attribute of freedom and eligibility for legal self-defense... We are denationalized; we are disenfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family!"
2. On your outline map, label the homelands of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations in the Southeast, and mark Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) to the west.
3. Draw the approximate route of the Cherokee Trail of Tears (roughly 800 miles) from Georgia/Tennessee to Indian Territory, using your ruler for a straight-line estimate if the exact path is unavailable.
4. On three index cards, write three specific facts about the hardships of the Trail of Tears (e.g., death toll, weather conditions, lack of supplies), researching briefly if needed.
5. Write a 4-5 sentence paragraph responding to John Ross's letter, explaining in your own words what rights and dignities he says were taken away, and how this connects to the facts on your index cards.

QUESTIONS

1. According to Chief John Ross's letter, what specifically was taken from the Cherokee people beyond just their land?
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2. About how many miles was the Cherokee Trail of Tears, and roughly how many Cherokee people are estimated to have died during the journey?

3. What law authorized the forced removal of Native American nations, and who signed it?

4. Why is it important for historians to include primary sources from Native Americans themselves, like Chief John Ross's letter, when teaching about Indian Removal?
