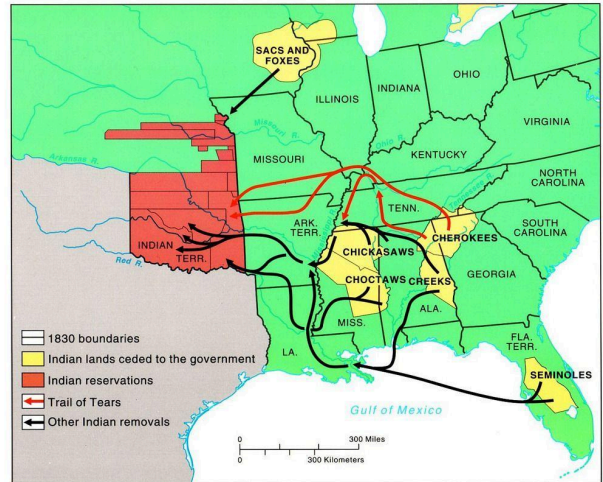


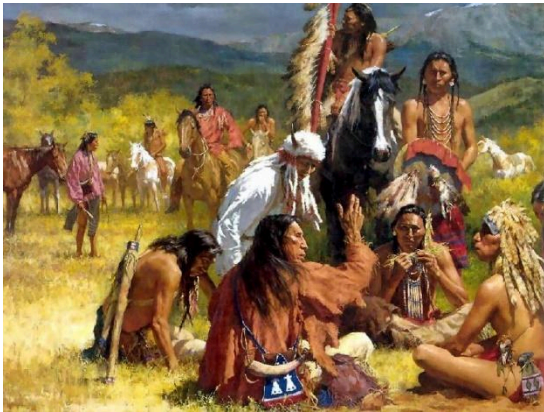
The Indian Removal Act

Native Americans had long lived in settlements stretching from Georgia to Mississippi. However, President Jackson and other political leaders wanted to open this land to settlement by American farmers. Under pressure from Jackson, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, authorizing the removal of Native Americans who lived east of the Mississippi River to lands in the West.

Congress then established Indian Territory, U.S. land in what is now Oklahoma — and planned to move Native Americans there. Some supporters of this plan, like John C. Calhoun, argued that removal to Indian Territory would protect Indians from further conflicts with American settlers. “One of the greatest evils to which they are subject is that incessant [constant] pressure of our population,” he noted. “To guard against this evil . . . there ought to be the strongest . . . assurance that the country given [to] them should be theirs.” To manage Indian removal to western lands, Congress approved the creation of a new government agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs.



The Choctaw were the first Indians sent to Indian Territory. The Mississippi legislature abolished the Choctaw government and then forced the Choctaw leaders to sign the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. This treaty gave more than 7.5 million acres of their land to the state. The Choctaw moved to Indian Territory during a disastrous winter trip. Federal officials in charge of the move did not provide enough food or supplies to the Choctaw, most of whom



were on foot. About one-fourth of the Choctaw died of cold, disease, or starvation. News of the Choctaw's hardships caused other Indians to resist removal. When the Creek resisted in 1836, federal troops moved in and captured some 14,500 of them. They led the Creek, many in chains, to Indian Territory. One Creek woman remembered the trip being filled with “the awful silence that showed the heartaches and sorrow at being taken from the homes and even separation from loved ones.” The Chickasaw, who lived in upper Mississippi, negotiated a treaty for better supplies on their trip to Indian Territory. Nevertheless, many Chickasaw lives were also lost during removal.

Cherokee Resistance



Many Cherokee had believed that they could prevent conflicts and avoid removal by adopting the contemporary culture of white people. In the early 1800s they invited missionaries to set up schools where Cherokee children learned how to read and write in English. The Cherokee developed their own government modeled after the U.S. Constitution with an election system, a bicameral



council, and a court system. All of these were headed by a principal chief. A Cherokee named Sequoya used 86 characters to represent Cherokee syllables to create a writing system for their

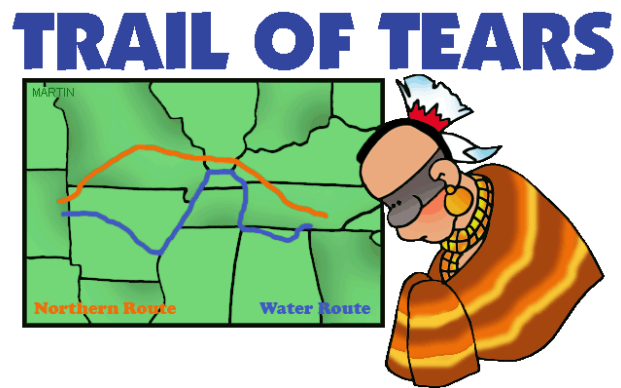
own complex language. In 1828 the Cherokee began publishing a newspaper printed in both English and Cherokee. The adoption of white culture did not protect the Cherokee. After gold was discovered on their land in Georgia, their treaty rights were ignored. Georgia leaders began preparing for the Cherokee's removal. When they refused to move, the Georgia militia began attacking Cherokee towns. In response, the Cherokee sued the state. They said that they were an independent nation and claimed that the government of Georgia had no legal power over their lands.

In 1832 the Supreme Court, under the leadership of Chief Justice John Marshall, agreed. In *Worcester v. Georgia* the Court ruled that the Cherokee nation was a distinct community in which the laws of Georgia had no force. The Court also stated that only the federal government, not the states, had authority over Native Americans. Georgia, however, ignored the Court's ruling, and President Jackson took no action to make Georgia follow the ruling. "John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it," Jackson supposedly said. By not enforcing the Court's decision, Jackson violated his presidential oath to uphold the laws of the land. However, most members of Congress and American citizens did not protest the ways Jackson removed Native Americans. In the spring of 1838, U.S. troops began to remove all Cherokee to Indian Territory. A few were able to escape and hide in the mountains of North Carolina. After the Cherokee were removed, Georgia took their businesses, farms, and property. The Cherokee's 800-mile forced march became known as the Trail of Tears. During the march, the Cherokee suffered from disease, hunger, and harsh weather. Almost one-fourth of the 18,000 Cherokee died on the march.

Other Native Americans Resist

Other Native Americans decided to fight U.S. troops to avoid removal. Chief Black Hawk, a leader of Fox and Sauk Indians, led his people in a struggle to protect their lands in Illinois. By 1832, however, the Sauk forces were running out of food and supplies, and by 1850 they had been forced to leave. In Florida, Seminole leaders were forced to sign a removal treaty that their followers decided to ignore. A leader named Osceola called upon his people to resist with force, and the Second

Seminole War began. Osceola was captured and soon died in prison. His followers, however, continued to fight. Some 4,000 Seminole were removed, and hundreds of others killed. Eventually, U.S. officials decided to give up the fight. Small groups of Seminole had resisted removal, and their descendants live in Florida today.



1. What major changes did President Jackson make to U.S. policy regarding Native Americans?
2. Why did government officials want to relocate Native Americans to the West? How was the conflict resolved?

3. What was the Worcester v. Georgia ruling, and what was Jackson's response?

4. **Understanding Causes and Effects:** Identify the causes and effects of the Jackson administration's policy of Indian relocation.

<u>Native American Group</u>	<u>Response to Removal</u>

5. How effective was Native American resistance to removal?

6. How were the Seminole and the Sauk resistance efforts similar and different?

7. What do you think of President Jackson's refusal to enforce the Worcester v. Georgia ruling?