

The Trail of Tears
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Middle school and regular high school students

Directions: Analyze the following documents. Use the documents and your knowledge of American History, to answer the questions that follow each document. Your answers will help you write a short essay related to the documents.

Document A:

"My friends, circumstances 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 the sooner you do this, the sooner you will commence your career of improvement and prosperity."

Andrew Jackson

1. Who is the above quote directed towards?

2. According to President Jackson, how can the problem be solved?

Document B:

"We, the great mass of the people think only of the love we have to our land for...we do love the land where we were brought up. We will never let our hold to this land go...to let it go it will be like throwing away... [Our] mother that gave... [Us] birth."

(Letter from Aitooweyah, to John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokees.)

3. What does Aitooweyah compare to giving up their land?

4. What are the feelings of Native Americans towards the land?

Document C:

"I saw the helpless Cherokees arrested and dragged from their homes, and driven at the bayonet point into the stockades. And in the chill of a drizzling rain on an October morning I saw them loaded like cattle or sheep into six hundred and forty-five wagons and started toward the west....On the morning of November the 17th we encountered a terrific sleet and snow storm with freezing temperatures and from that day until we reached the end of the fateful journey on March the 26th 1839, the sufferings of the Cherokees were awful. The trail of the exiles was a trail of death. They had to sleep in the wagons and on the ground without fire. And I have known as many as twenty-two of them to die in one night of pneumonia due to ill treatment, cold and exposure..."

Private John G. Burnett
Captain Abraham McClellan's Company,
2nd Regiment, 2nd Brigade, Mounted Infantry
Cherokee Indian Removal 1838-39

Document D:

Georgia militiaman who participated in the "roundup" of the Cherokee Indians

"I fought through the Civil War and have seen men shot to pieces and slaughtered by thousands, but the Cherokee removal was the cruelest work I ever knew

(questions refer to C and D)

5. How were the Cherokee treated by the Army?
6. What was the weather like on the trip?
7. What was the cause of death for many Cherokee?
8. What were sleeping conditions like on the trail of tears?
9. How did the average soldier feel about treatment of the Cherokee?

Document E:
James Mooney, Ethnologist
From interviews with survivors of the Trail of Tears

"Families at dinner were startled by the sudden gleam of bayonets in the doorway and rose up to be driven with blows and oaths along the weary miles of trail that led to the stockades. Men were seized in their fields or going along the road, women were taken from their spinning wheels and children from their play. In many cases, on turning for one last look as they crossed a ridge, they saw their homes in flames, fired by the lawless rabble that followed on the heels of the soldiers to loot and pillage, So keen were these outlaws on the scent that in some instances they were driving off the cattle and other stock of the Indians almost before the soldiers had fairly started their owners in the other direction."

10. Where the Cherokee surprised by the soldiers?
11. What were the children doing?
12. What did the Cherokee see when they turned to get one last look at their homes?
13. Who burned the Cherokee's homes?
14. What else happened before the Cherokee left?

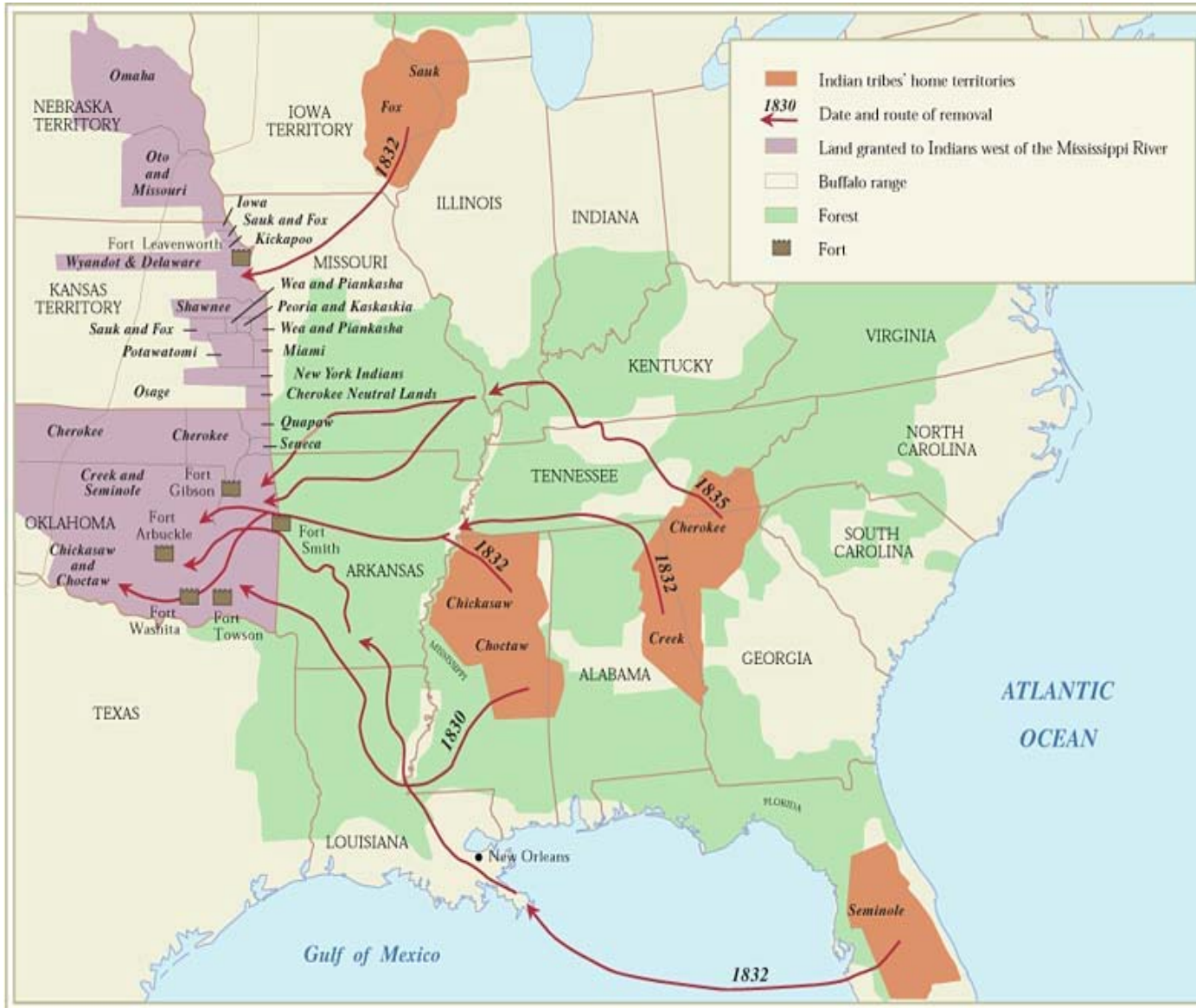
Document F:
An observer of the departure of the first group to make the long overland journey
October 1, 1838

"At noon all was in readiness for moving. The teams were stretched out in a line along the road through a heavy forest, groups of persons formed about each wagon. The day was bright and beautiful, but a gloomy thoughtfulness was depicted in the lineaments of every face. In all the bustle of preparation there was a silence and stillness of the voice that betrayed the sadness of the hearts. At length the word was given to move on. Going Snake, an aged and respected chief whose head eighty summers had whitened, mounted on his favorite pony and led the way in silence, followed by a number of younger men on horseback. At this very moment a low sound of distant thunder fell upon my ear ... a voice of divine indignation for the wrong of my poor and unhappy countrymen, driven by brutal power from all they loved and cherished in the land of their fathers to gratify the cravings of avarice. The sun was unclouded --- no rain fell --- the thunder rolled away and seemed hushed in the distance."

15. How does the weather contrast with the mood of the Cherokee?

16. Who led the way for the other Cherokee?

Document G:



www.google.com (images)

17. Where are the Indians being moved?

18. Where does the trail of tears start?

19. Where does the trail of tears end?

20. The Native Americans were moved to what present day states?

Document H:



The Trail of Tears, was painted by Robert Lindneux in 1942

21. What is happening in the painting?

22. In your opinion, what is the mood of the Native Americans?

23. In your opinion, are the people taking a trip or move to a permanent location?

24. In your opinion, do you think they were forced to move? How can you tell?

Essay Question

Directions: Using the information in the document provided, and your knowledge of History, write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, a body of several paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Was the Trail of Tears necessary to advance civilization as President Jackson said, or a cruel injustice to the Cherokee? Include a discussion of why they were removed, what the soldiers thought of the removal, what the Indians thought of the land, what the Cherokee had to endure on the trip, what was the mood of the Cherokee and where the trail of tears finally ended.