

## Continuity/Change over Time, *The Indian Removal Act of 1830*

### Skill Type 1: Chronological Reasoning

Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationships among multiple historical causes and effects, distinguishing between those that are long-term and proximate, and among coincidence, causation, and correlation.

### Skill 2: Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time

Historical thinking involves the ability to recognize, analyze, and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time of varying lengths, as well as the ability to relate these patterns to larger historical processes or themes.

#### Proficient students should be able to

- Analyze and evaluate historical patterns of continuity and change over time.
- Connect patterns of continuity and change over time to larger historical processes or themes

### Key Concept 4.3: The U.S. interest in increasing foreign trade and expanding its national borders shaped the nation's foreign policy and spurred government and private initiatives.

- I. Struggling to create an independent global presence, the United States sought to claim territory throughout the North American continent and promote foreign trade.
  - A) Following the Louisiana Purchase, the United States government sought influence and control over North America and the Western Hemisphere through a variety of means, including exploration, military actions, **American Indian removal**, and diplomatic efforts such as the Monroe Doctrine.
  - B) Frontier settlers tended to champion expansion efforts, while American Indian resistance led to a sequence of wars and federal efforts to control and relocate American Indian populations.

**Prompt:** Evaluate the extent to which the Indian Removal Act maintained continuity and fostered change in the relationship between the United States government and American Indian nations.

#### Directions:

1. Read the additional notes. Highlight main ideas and select at least three items to focus on in your analysis. At least one should come from the era prior to the Jackson Era (or Era of the Common Man) in which the Indian Removal Act was created, and at least one should come from the era following it.
2. Create a timeline.
3. Write a thesis and contextualization (introductory paragraph)
4. Consider planning a Ping-Pong complexity paragraph.

## Additional Reading

At the beginning of the 1830s, nearly 125,000 Native Americans lived on millions of acres of land in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida—land their ancestors had occupied and cultivated for generations. By the end of the decade, very few natives remained anywhere in the southeastern United States. Working on behalf of white settlers who wanted to grow cotton on the Indians' land, the federal government forced them to leave their homelands and walk thousands of miles to a specially designated "Indian territory" across the Mississippi River. This difficult and sometimes deadly journey is known as the Trail of Tears.

### **The 'Indian Problem'**

White Americans, particularly those who lived on the western frontier, often feared and resented the Native Americans they encountered: To them, American Indians seemed to be an unfamiliar, alien people who occupied land that white settlers wanted (and believed they deserved). Some officials in the early years of the American republic, such as President George Washington, believed that the best way to solve this "Indian problem" was simply to "civilize" the Native Americans. The goal of this civilization campaign was to make Native Americans as much like white Americans as possible by encouraging them convert to Christianity, learn to speak and read English, and adopt European-style economic practices such as the individual ownership of land and other property (including, in some instances in the South, African slaves). In the southeastern United States, many Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek and Cherokee people embraced these customs and became known as the "Five Civilized Tribes."

*Did you know? Indian removal took place in the Northern states as well. In Illinois and Wisconsin, for example, the bloody Black Hawk War in 1832 opened to white settlement millions of acres of land that had belonged to the Sauk, Fox and other native nations.*

But their land, located in parts of Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, Florida and Tennessee, was valuable, and it grew to be more coveted as white settlers flooded the region. Many of these whites yearned to make their fortunes by growing cotton, and they did not care how "civilized" their native neighbors were: They wanted that land and they would do almost anything to get it. They stole livestock; burned and looted houses and towns; committed mass murder; and squatted on land that did not belong to them. State governments joined in this effort to drive Native Americans out of the South. Several states passed laws limiting Native American sovereignty and rights and encroaching on their territory. In a few cases, such as *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the U.S. Supreme Court objected to these practices and affirmed that native nations were sovereign nations "in which the laws of Georgia [and other states] can have no force." Even so, the maltreatment continued. As President Andrew Jackson noted in 1832, if no one intended to enforce the Supreme Court's rulings (which he certainly did not), then the decisions would "[fall]...still born." Southern states were determined to take ownership of Indian lands and would go to great lengths to secure this territory.

### **Indian Removal**

Andrew Jackson had long been an advocate of what he called "Indian removal." As an Army general, he had spent years leading brutal campaigns against the Creeks in Georgia and Alabama and the Seminoles in Florida—campaigns that resulted in the transfer of hundreds of thousands of acres of land from Indian nations to white farmers. As president, he continued this crusade. In 1830, he signed the Indian Removal Act, which gave the federal government the power to exchange Native-held land in the cotton kingdom east of the Mississippi for land to the west, in the "Indian colonization zone" that the United States had acquired as part of the Louisiana Purchase. (This "Indian territory" was located in present-day Oklahoma.) The law required the government to negotiate removal treaties fairly, voluntarily and peacefully: It did not permit the president or anyone else to coerce Native nations into giving up their land. However, President Jackson and his government frequently ignored the letter of the law and forced Native Americans to vacate lands they had lived on for generations. In the winter of 1831, under threat of invasion by the U.S. Army, the Choctaw became the first nation to be expelled from its land altogether. They made the journey to Indian Territory on foot (some "bound in chains and marched double file," one historian writes) and without any food, supplies or other help from the government. Thousands of people died along the way. It was, one Choctaw leader told an Alabama newspaper, a "trail of tears and death."

## **The Trail of Tears**

The Indian-removal process continued. In 1836, the federal government drove the Creeks from their land for the last time: 3,500 of the 15,000 Creeks who set out for Oklahoma did not survive the trip.

The Cherokee people were divided: What was the best way to handle the government's determination to get its hands on their territory? Some wanted to stay and fight. Others thought it was more pragmatic to agree to leave in exchange for money and other concessions. In 1835, a few self-appointed representatives of the Cherokee nation negotiated the Treaty of New Echota, which traded all Cherokee land east of the Mississippi for \$5 million, relocation assistance and compensation for lost property. To the federal government, the treaty was a done deal, but many of the Cherokee felt betrayed; after all, the negotiators did not represent the tribal government or anyone else. "The instrument in question is not the act of our nation," wrote the nation's principal chief, John Ross, in a letter to the U.S. Senate protesting the treaty. "We are not parties to its covenants; it has not received the sanction of our people." Nearly 16,000 Cherokees signed Ross's petition, but Congress approved the treaty anyway.

By 1838, only about 2,000 Cherokees had left their Georgia homeland for Indian Territory. President Martin Van Buren sent General Winfield Scott and 7,000 soldiers to expedite the removal process. Scott and his troops forced the Cherokee into stockades at bayonet point while whites looted their homes and belongings. Then, they marched the Indians more than 1,200 miles to Indian Territory. Whooping cough, typhus, dysentery, cholera and starvation were epidemic along the way, and historians estimate that more than 5,000 Cherokee died as a result of the journey. By 1840, tens of thousands of Native Americans had been driven off of their land in the southeastern states and forced to move across the Mississippi to Indian Territory. The federal government promised that their new land would remain unmolested forever, but as the line of white settlement pushed westward, "Indian country" shrank and shrank. In 1907, Oklahoma became a state and Indian Territory was gone for good.

## **More History on RESERVATIONS**

The Indian reservation system established tracts of land called reservations for Native Americans to live on as white settlers took over their land. The main goals of Indian reservations were to bring Native Americans under U.S. government control, minimize conflict between Indians and settlers and encourage Native Americans to take on the ways of the white man. But many Native Americans were forced onto reservations with catastrophic results and devastating, long-lasting effects.

### **Treaty of Hopewell**

In 1785, the Treaty of Hopewell was signed in Georgia—the largest state at the time—placing the native Cherokees under the protection of a young United States and setting boundaries for their land. But it wasn't long before European settlers intruded on Cherokee land. The Cherokees cried foul and revolted against the white settlements. To reestablish peace between the Cherokees and the settlers, the Treaty of Holston was signed in 1791 in which the Cherokees agreed to give up all land outside of their established borders. Not only did the federal government want Native Americans to give up their land, they also encouraged them to become farmers and Christians. In the early 19th century, settlers moved into southern Cherokee territory en masse and wanted their government representatives to claim the land. The United States acted to remove all Indian nations from the southeast. Georgia agreed to cede her western land to the government in return for Indian land title.

### **Andrew Jackson**

After the Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson hoped to move eastern Indian tribes past the Mississippi River—but most Indians rejected his idea. When Georgia held lotteries to allocate seized Indian land, the battle-weary Creeks who'd sought sanctuary in east Alabama fought for their independence against the militia of Andrew Jackson, which included so-called "friendly Indians." After suffering a devastating defeat at what became known as the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, the Creeks yielded more than 20 million acres of land to the federal government. Over the next several years, the government passed several acts to diminish Indian autonomy, despite the Cherokee forming a new constitution-based government of their own. And in December 1828, Georgia ordered the seizure of the remaining Cherokee land in their state.

### **Indian Removal Act**

On May 28, 1830, the Indian Removal Act was signed by President Jackson. The Act allowed the government to divide land west of the Mississippi to give to Indian tribes in exchange for the land they'd lost. The government would pick up the cost of relocating the Indians and helping them resettle. The Indian Removal Act was controversial, but Jackson argued it was the best option since settlers had rendered Indian lands incompatible with sustaining their way of life.

### **Trail of Tears**

Over the next few years, the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Creeks were forced to move westward on foot, often in chains and with little or no food and supplies. Even some Indians in the North were forced to relocate. In 1838, President Martin Van Buren sent federal troops to march the remaining southern Cherokee holdouts 1,200 miles to Indian Territory in the Plains. Disease and starvation were rampant, and thousands died along the way, giving the tortuous journey the nickname "Trail of Tears." A group of Seminoles, however, refused to leave and hunkered down in Florida. They fought federal troops for almost a decade before their leader was killed and they finally surrendered.

### **The Indian Appropriations Act**

As white settlers continued westward and needed more land, Indian Territory shrank—but there was no more land for the government to move them to. In 1851, Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act which created the Indian reservation system and provided funds to move Indian tribes onto farming reservations and hopefully keep them under control. Indians were not allowed to leave the reservations without permission.

### **Life on Indian Reservations**

Daily living on the reservations was hard at best. Not only had tribes lost their native lands, but it was almost impossible to maintain their culture and traditions inside a confined area. Feuding tribes were often thrown together and Indians who were once hunters struggled to become farmers. Starvation was common, and living in close quarters hastened the spread of diseases brought by white settlers. Indians were encouraged or forced to wear non-Indian clothes and learn to read and write English, sew and raise livestock. Missionaries attempted to convert them to Christianity and give up their spiritual beliefs.

### **The Dawes Act**

In 1887, the Dawes Act was signed by President Grover Cleveland allowing the government to divide reservations into small plots of land for individual Indians. The government hoped the legislation would help Indians assimilate into white culture easier and faster and improve their quality of life. But the Dawes Act had a devastating impact on Native American tribes. It decreased the land owned by Indians by more than half and opened even more land to white settlers and railroads. Much of the reservation land wasn't good farmland, and many Indians couldn't afford the supplies needed to reap a harvest. Prior to the Indian reservation system, women Indians farmed and took care of the land while men hunted and helped protect the tribe. Now, men were forced to farm, and women took on more domestic roles.

### **The Indian Reorganization Act**

After a review of life on Indian reservations known as the Meriam Survey, it was clear the Dawes Act was severely detrimental to Native Americans. The law was ended in 1934 and replaced with the Indian Reorganization Act with the goals of restoring Indian culture and returning surplus land to tribes. It also encouraged tribes to self-govern and write their own constitutions and provided financial aid for reservation infrastructure. Modern Indian reservations still exist across the United States and fall under the umbrella of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The tribes on each reservation are sovereign and not subject to federal laws.

**Evaluate the extent to which the Indian Removal Act maintained continuity and fostered change in the relationship between the United States government and American Indian nations.**

What is the skill being tested?

How will you ensure you ATFP?

Define your parameters, and identify at least three events in addition to the act itself that you could use as evidence in your essay.



Did the Indian Removal Act maintain more continuity or foster more change?

Write your thesis with contextualization. Use your thesis formula and contextualization strategy.