

Timeline for the Trail of Tears

- 1750 – 1775** The British government gives “King’s Grants” to the Native Americans allowing them to own their land. During the Revolutionary war the Cherokees fight on the side of the British. Once the new American government is established, the United States refuses to honor the earlier ‘King’s Grants’ and forces the Cherokees to sign new treaties, requiring them to give up more land.
- 1786** Treaty of Hopewell in South Carolina is signed. The Cherokee think this will end invasion by settlers. However within 3 years, fighting has erupted as settlers continue to take over Cherokee land. Over the next 20 years, more treaties are signed. Cherokee land gets smaller and smaller.
- 1800** By this time the Cherokee Nation is $\frac{1}{4}$ of its original size and is confined to east Tennessee and northern Georgia. Many Cherokees adapt White ways, learn English, and are educated in American ways. Many become farmers and own slaves.
- 1803** Thomas Jefferson writes to the future president encouraging him to sell goods to the Native Americans on easy credit. Once in debt, the Native Americans would be forced to give away land in repayment.
- 1820s** Sequoya develops the Cherokee alphabet. Within a few months, almost all the Cherokee within the Cherokee Nation can read and write.
- 1827** Cherokees declare themselves a nation and write their own constitution.
- 1828** Andrew Jackson is elected president of the United States. AND... Gold is discovered in Georgia. Georgia tries to drive out Native Americans; however the US government has treaties to uphold. Regardless, Georgian gold miners invade Cherokee land. Incidences of rape, murder and arson are reported. Some Cherokees try to hang the invaders (as was their legal right). Georgia is outraged at the hanging and announces that they have the right to do what they want with the land within their state boundary – Cherokee inhabited or not.
- 1829** The Cherokee people oppose relocation in a letter written in the Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate vol. 1, no. 51, p. 2 (the Cherokee Newspaper).
- 1830** Jackson passes The Indian Removal Act which authorizes the transfer of Native American tribes to the west of the Mississippi River. Through this Act, Jackson describes removal as “voluntary” and promises “aid and assistance” by the U.S. government.
- 1831** Georgia tries to subject the Cherokee to state law and the Cherokee in turn sue the state. The Supreme Court rules for Georgia saying “that an Indian tribe living within the United States cannot be a ‘foreign state’ or nation in the sense intended in the Constitution, in part because the Indians look to the U.S. government for protection. Finally, he concludes that it is not proper for the Supreme Court to overrule a state law.”
- 1832** Reverend Samuel Worcester, missionary to the Cherokees, brings the Cherokee case back to the Supreme Court this time affirming Cherokee independence. However Jackson ignores the ruling and orders the removal of Native Americans to the west of the Mississippi.
- 1830 – 1839** Hundreds of Cherokee families flee Georgia. During this time Georgia uses a lottery system to give away Cherokee and Creek land to White males, orphans or widows. Georgia was the only state to give away land this way. $\frac{3}{4}$ th of Georgia land was given away in this way.

- 1835** The Treaty of New Echota is signed by Major Ridge and the Treaty Party, a small group of Cherokees who believed that giving into White settlers was the best option. The treaty gives all of the Cherokee land east of the Mississippi River to the U.S. government in exchange for western land and the promise of money, livestock, and tools.
- 1835** The Cherokee Nation Chief, John Ross, and 15,668 Cherokee, petitions against the Treaty of New Echota saying that it was not a legal as the party in the majority did not sign the agreement.
- 1836** Many opposed the removal of the Native Americans including many missionaries, Davey Crockett, and Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote a letter to Martin Van Buren (President in 1837) on behalf of the Cherokee.
- 1831-1837** The Choctaws and Creeks are driven from their homes. The Chickasaws pack their belongings and head west. The Seminoles fight, but lose and are taken by boat to the territory west of the Mississippi.
- 1838** (May-July) Cherokees are forced from their homes and are taken to prison camps. Removal is abandoned due to sickness and a terrible drought. 1,500 die in confinement.
- 1838** (October) The journey begins for most of the Cherokee. The walk from Cherokee land to the territory in what is now Oklahoma becomes known as the “trail where they cried” or “The Trail of Tears.” Thousands of men, women, and children froze to death, and died of starvation and disease. The soldiers forced the Cherokees to abandon their dead at the side of the road.
- 1839** (March) The last group of Cherokees reach Oklahoma territory. They build houses, clear land, and begin rebuilding their nation.
- 1839** (fall) Major Ridge, and other members of the Treaty Party are assassinated. In signing the Treaty of New Echota, they had also signed their own death warrants. The Cherokee Nation had a law that called for the death penalty for anyone who had agreed to give up tribal land.
- 1887** The General Allotment Act is passed which divides the remaining land into parcels for the Native Americans. Each Native of one-half native blood or more was given a parcel of land. After all the land was given, the land once reserved for Native Americans dwindled from 150 million acres to 78 million. The surplus of land was sold to large corporations or was converted into military compounds.
- 1924** U.S. President, Calvin Coolidge signs the Indian Citizenship Act which makes all Native American’s born within U.S. territory citizens.
- 2011** The United States today with Native American Reservation land highlighted.

Resources

Websites:

1) We-Sa (2003). *Cherokee by blood*.

<http://www.cherokeebyblood.com/trailtears.htm>

- Not as bias and violent as it sounds. Cherokee by Blood refers to those who are Cherokee by way of one generation. Although not very professional looking, this website has an **amazing amount of information**.

2) Chieftains Museum (2002). *Trail of Tears*.

http://chieftainstrail.com/stories/trail_of_tears.html

- Leads to **museums** and places to take **field trips** in Georgia relating to the Trail of Tears.

3) The Georgia Trail of Tears: *Sponsored by the GA Dept of Natural Resources*

<http://www.georgiatrailoftears.com/index.html>

- Excellent info on the **detainment forts**

4) Smithsonian Magazine Article: *The Cherokee Vs. Andrew Jackson*

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Cherokees-vs-Andrew-Jackson.html?c=y&page=4>

- Provides an interesting **interactive map** of the Trail of tears

5) Kentucky's National Parks: Trail of tears

<http://www.ket.org/nationalparks/trailoftears/closeup.htm>

- **Lesson plan Ideas** as well as a link to **Rev. Daniel Butrick's journal**

6) The Trail of tears by About North Georgia (1997)

<http://www.ngeorgia.com/history/nghisttt.html>

- Information about the Trail of tears including some **important people and events**

7) SparkNote on Westward Expansion (1807-1912). (2011)

<http://www.sparknotes.com/history/american/westwardexpansion/section4.rhtml>

- **Summary** of Trail of tears along with **study questions and essay topics**

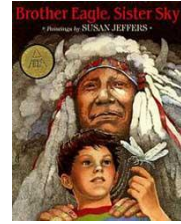
Videos:

PBS.org http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the_films/episode_3_trailer

Children's Literature and books

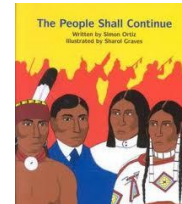
1. Brother Eagle, Sister Sky by Susan Jeffers

Based on a speech by Chief Seattle for treaty negotiations in the 1850s



2. The People Shall Continue by Simon Ortiz

A story depicting Native American history and culture



3. Remember My Name by Sara H. Banks
4. Soft Rain: A story of the Trail of Tears by Cornelia Cornelissen
5. The Journal of Jesse Smoke: A Cherokee Boy, Trail of Tears, 1838 (My Name Is America) by Joseph Bruchac
6. The Trail of Tears (Cornerstones of Freedom, Second Series) by Deborah Kent
7. Cherokee Legends and the Trail of Tears by Tom Underwood
8. First People: An Illustrated History of American Indians by David C. King
9. If You Lived with the Cherokees by Peter and Connie Roop



“If You Lived....” Is a series with information on many Native American tribes.

Primary documents available at:

- 1) ***Cherokee Nation (2011). *Trail of Tears era*.
<http://www.cherokee.org/Culture/126/Page/default.aspx>
- 2) ***LEARN NC (2011). *Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia, 1831*. Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears.
<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newnation/4498>
- 1) National Archives (2011). *Teacher's resources*.
<http://www.archives.gov/education/>
- 2) *University of Arkansas at Little Rock, (2011). Cherokee Trail of Tears primary sources from the National Archives in Washington, DC.*
<http://ualr.edu/sequoyah/index.php/home/research/trail-of-tears-primary-sources-from-the-national-archives-in-washington-dc/>
- 3) West, E. (2009). *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: The Indian Removal Act*.
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/historynow/12_2009/historian5.php

***TOP RESOURCES