

How to Do Historical Research and Analysis: The Indian Removal Act and Westward Expansion in the Nineteenth Century

Time: 45 mins

Grade Level: 9-12

Description: Brief introduction to doing historical research and reading primary and secondary sources, centered around the process of Native American removal from Georgia specifically and the Southern states in general. Analyze sources for information and perspective. Consider how these perspectives influenced US and state policies and laws affecting Native American lands. Identify key figures relating to these policies and processes.

Standards: SSUSH7a, SSUSH7d, L9-10WHST7, L9-10WHST8, L9-10WHST9, L11-12WHST8, L11-12WHST7, L11-12WHST8, L11-12WHST9

Objectives: Participants learn the intentional planning and process of the federal and state removal of Native Americans east of the Mississippi River to lands in the western United States. Participants learn the various perspectives surrounding the issue of Native American removal. Participants learn to critically analyze primary and secondary sources related to this topic. Participants learn the role of slavery and geographical expansion in the state-sponsored expulsion of Native Americans from their lands.

Supplies: Paper and/or slideshow.

Bibliography: See appendix.

Essential Questions:

1. What and who were the driving forces behind the removal of Native Americans from their lands?
2. Why did people advocate for the expulsion of Native Americans?
3. How did Native Americans respond to forced expulsion?
4. How did the system of slavery impact US policy regarding Native Americans and their lands?
5. What legal methods and processes were used to dispossess Natives of their lands?
6. How do the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the forced expulsion of Native Americans impact the United States today?

Sample Script

Today, we will be learning about the policies and processes related to the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which was signed by President Andrew Jackson and enacted by President Martin van Buren in the latter half of the decade. We will use both primary and secondary sources to analyze the perspectives and motivations of those involved with Native American expulsion, particularly in the southern region of the United States with special focus on Georgia. We will also examine the consequences of the state-sponsored expulsion of Native Americans, specifically the Muscogee-Creek and Cherokee nations.

Intro Discussion:

What is a primary source? What are some examples of primary sources?

- A primary source is any first-hand account of an event or topic from someone who had a direct connection with it or that was created at the time of the event.
- Some examples include diaries, legal documents, photographs, drawings, maps, census data, contemporary newspaper articles (written at the time), and letters.

What is a secondary source? What are some examples of secondary sources?

- A secondary source uses primary sources to analyze or interpret historical data or events. It is not a source written by someone with a direct connection to a topic or event.
- Some examples include books about historical events and processes, scholarly journal articles that are peer-reviewed, documentaries, and encyclopedia entries.

How can you access a primary or secondary source?

- Via the Internet (websites such as the Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, and the Digital Public Library of America for primary sources; databases like

JSTOR and Project Muse for scholarly articles and book reviews; online encyclopedias like the New Georgia Encyclopedia for a mix of both sources.)

- Visits to archives in person (ex. The Georgia Archives in Morrow or the University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries)

What are archives, and why do they exist? How can we access and use them as researchers?

- An archive is a collection of historical documents or records that provide information about a place, person, event, institution, group of people, or historical process. The place where one can access these collections is also called an archive. Some examples of archival institutions in Georgia are the state archive in Morrow and the University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries in Athens.
- Archives exist to gather and organize historical documents and data so researchers can interpret the past. Historical documents and records are often used as evidence to support a researcher's argument and analysis.
- Each archive has different policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of researchers, staff, and the collections. Always visit the archival institution's website or contact them directly before requesting research materials.
- Archives are used by a variety of patrons for many different reasons. Many utilize archival materials for family histories and genealogical research. Scholars, such as historians, use archival primary sources as evidence for articles and books. Other patrons include lobbyists, lawyers, and activists, just to name a few.

How can we evaluate sources for historical evidence while also considering perspectives and motivations of the sources' authors?

Activity 1: Primary Source Analysis

Here, I have several primary sources about the forced expulsion of Native Americans from their Georgia homelands. Get into small groups and use the provided worksheet to identify the source, its author, and the author's point-of-view. Please analyze the information included in the

source. Pay close attention to who is writing the source and what their motivations might be for writing it. After [x amount of time], we will come back together as a class and discuss your answers.

Some Primary Sources for Activity:

- “Orders No. [25] Head Quarters, Eastern Division Cherokee Agency, Ten. May 17, 1838. [n. p. 1838].” *Library of Congress*. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.1740400a/>.
- “President Andrew Jackson's Message to Congress 'On Indian Removal' (1830).” *National Archives and Records Administration*. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/jacksons-message-to-congress-on-indian-removal>.
- “Treaty of New Echota (1835).” *National Museum of the American Indian*. <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-New-Echota-1835.pdf>.
- “Communications.” *The Cherokee Phoenix*. Georgia Historic Newspapers. March 13, 1828. Page 2. <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn83020866/1828-03-13/ed-1/seq-2/>.
- “The Creek War: Westward Ho!” *The Southern Banner*. Georgia Historic Newspapers. July 16, 1836. Page 2. <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn82014069/1836-07-16/ed-1/seq-2/>.

Questions:

- Who is the author?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the author’s argument and motivation?
- Is the author misrepresenting the historical facts? If so, why do you think the author did this?
- Compare this text to the other primary sources. What are the differences, and how might those differences show a more complete or “fuller” history of these events?

Native Expulsion Timeline:

<https://www.okhistory.org/research/airemoval>

Year	Event	Meaning
1802	Georgia Compact or Compact of 1802: President Thomas Jefferson promised to relinquish Native land title in the State of Georgia.	Prior to this, if Native Americans left their land in what now makes up all of Georgia, the land would have become property of the federal government. After the Georgia Compact, this land became part of the State of Georgia. The Georgia Compact also created the states of Alabama and Mississippi.
1803	Louisiana Purchase	The United States acquired 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River from France.
1812	Approximately one-fourth of the Cherokee Nation voluntarily migrated to Arkansas Territory. Later that year, Congress organized the Territory of Missouri.	It is important to note the diversity of opinions in response to the idea of leaving ancestral lands among not only the Cherokee, but also other native nations. While many Native Americans resisted expulsion, some chose to voluntarily leave their homelands before forced removal. Learn more about the Cherokee Nation's history here: https://www.cherokee.org/about-the-nation/history/ .
1817	Sixty-seven Cherokee chiefs signed the Turkeytown Treaty with representatives of the United States. Most of the	Here again, it is necessary to note that there were differing opinions within native tribes, just as there were differing opinions about expulsion among white settlers.

	Cherokee tribe, however, opposed this treaty.	
1820	After a coalition of Choctaw chiefs and warriors ¹ signed Treaty of Doak's Stand, a portion of the Choctaw Nation (Mississippi) was removed to southwest Arkansas Territory. This was the first of the removal treaties involving the Choctaw.	The Treaty of Doak's Stand "swapped" a portion of Choctaw land for a portion of land west of the Mississippi River. The language of the treaty is steeped in paternalism and should be supplemented with other sources regarding the matter to get the full picture of this event from multiple perspectives. Read the treaty here: https://www.choctawnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/1820treaty-of-doaks-stand.pdf .
1821, 1825	The first Treaty of Indian Springs was signed, ceding most of the Muscogee-Creek land to the State of Georgia. This 1821 treaty was invalidated. A similar treaty was signed in 1825 and ceded all other Muscogee land to the State of Georgia.	This treaty ceded all Muscogee land east of the Flint River to the State of Georgia. These treaties were very controversial among the Muscogee-Creek Nation at the time. The treaties were signed by Chief William McIntosh and other Creek representatives against the wishes of most of the nation. William McIntosh was also a cousin of George McIntosh Troup, the governor of Georgia from 1823 to 1827. Because William McIntosh signed the 1825 treaty against the opposition of much of the Muscogee Nation, the Creek National Council ordered his execution in 1825. 1821 Treaty:

¹ See linked treaty for a complete list: <https://www.choctawnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/1820treaty-of-doaks-stand.pdf>.

		https://cdm17279.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29461/rec/1 and https://cdm17279.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29460/rec/1 . 1825 Treaty: https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-creeks-1825-0214 .
1828	Andrew Jackson was elected president.	
1830	The Indian Removal Act passed Congress. The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek called for the removal of Choctaws from Mississippi. This removal began in 1831, and the Choctaw became the first of the Five Civilized Tribes ² to be removed by force.	<p>This was the first land treaty carried into action under the Indian Removal Act. This was the last major land cession treaty signed by the Choctaw. Read the treaty here:</p> <p>https://www.choctawnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/1830treaty-of-dancing-rabbit-creek.pdf.</p>
1832	President Andrew Jackson was reelected. The Treaty of Pontotoc Creek stipulated the removal of the Chickasaw from Mississippi.	<p>View the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek here:</p> <p>https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.23102100/?st=text. Learn more about the expulsion of the Chickasaw Nation here:</p> <p>https://www.chickasaw.net/our-nation/history.aspx.</p>
1834	Muscogee Creek Nation began voluntary removal	Here again, we can see that not all members of the Muscogee Nation held the same opinions about

² The term “Five Civilized Tribes” refers to five prominent Native American nations in the US Southeast: the Cherokee, the Muscogee-Creek, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Seminole. The use of the word “civilized” refers to the perception that these five nations were assimilating into white American society. This language is rooted in paternalism and colonialism. Learn more here: <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=FI011>.

	from homelands in Georgia and Alabama.	removal. Some felt that it was better to leave on their own terms rather than be forcibly removed. A larger number, though, did not want to leave at all.
1835	The Treaty of New Echota allowed for the removal of all Cherokees east of the Mississippi River.	View the Treaty of Echota here: https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-New-Echota-1835.pdf .
1836	The U.S. government used the Indian Removal Act to force remaining members of the Muscogee Creek Nation from their homelands.	The State of Georgia and the federal government decided that allowing Native Americans to leave on their own terms took too long and, instead, instituted forced expulsion to seize native land. Although the Trail of Tears is discussed for the Cherokee Nation, it is also necessary to recognize that this event included Native Americans of the other four nations in the Southeastern US, including the Muscogee. Learn more about the forced expulsion of the Muscogee Nation here: https://www.nps.gov/ocmu/learn/historyculture/upload/Accessible-Muscogee-Creek-Removal.pdf .
1838-1839	The Trail of Tears began for the Cherokee Nation.	This forced expulsion involved the removal of 16,000 Cherokee, and approximately 4,000 Cherokee died on the Trail of Tears. Learn more here: https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-trail-of-tears-and-the-forced-relocation-of-the-cherokee-nation-teaching-with-historic-places.htm .

Optional Video: Worcester v. Georgia Case Brief Summary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-iBhamdgdg>

This is a short video explaining an important United States Supreme Court decision. As you are watching, consider the following questions:

- Why is this court case important?
- Did this decision reverse the Supreme Court's holding in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831)?
- How do you think *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) impacted the legality of the Indian Removal Act (1830)?

Optional Take-Home Assignment: Essay

Using primary sources such as the ones we looked at in class today, write a 500 to 1,000-word essay explaining the federal and state governments' motivations for the forced expulsion of Native Americans from Georgia and the consequences of this policy on those Native Americans. Be sure to cite the primary sources used in a bibliography. (Use whichever citation style you prefer. Most historians use Chicago Turabian citations with either footnotes or endnotes.)

Here are a few websites that may have potential primary sources:

- <https://www.loc.gov/>
- <https://www.archives.gov/>
- <https://americanindian.si.edu/>
- <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>
- <https://www.georgiaarchives.org/>
- <https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/learning-research/search-the-collections/>
- <https://www.libs.uga.edu/scl/research/collections>
- <https://digitalarchives.columbusstate.edu/>

- <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/>
- <https://da.mdah.ms.gov/browse-all>
- <https://www.georgiahistory.com/research/search-our-collection/>