

The Trail of Tears



In 1838 and 1839, as part of Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policy, the Cherokee nation was forced to give up its lands east of the Mississippi River and to migrate to an area in present-day Oklahoma. The Cherokee people called this journey the "Trail of Tears," because of its devastating effects. The migrants faced hunger, disease, and exhaustion on the forced march. Over 4,000 out of 15,000 of the Cherokees died.

This picture, *The Trail of Tears*, was painted by Robert Lindneux in 1942. It commemorates the suffering of the Cherokee people under forced removal. If any depictions of the "Trail of Tears" were created at the time of the march, they have not survived.

Activity: Imagine you were a Cherokee on the Trail of Tears. Use your senses to describe what you would see, taste, touch, smell, hear and feel (emotion).

THE DAWES ACT

"A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."



In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Act. The act encouraged Native Americans to become farmers. Some tribal lands were divided up and given to individual Native American families. The Dawes Act worked poorly because to Native Americans land was an open place for riding and hunting- not something to divide into small parcels. The act also resulted in movements that required Native Americans to become more "civilized" by wearing more Americanized clothing, living in a permanent structures, and speaking English.

"I cried aloud...I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit."

Activity: Write THREE possible titles for the set of images shown above.

The Indian Removal Act

The Relocation of Native Americans began in 1830 (before the time period we are studying) with the Indian Removal Act under President Andrew Jackson. Below you will find some of the excerpts from the act.

Excerpt 1:

"it [the Indian Removal Act] will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the SW frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power."

Excerpt 2:

"And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement."

Activity: Reword (in 1-2 sentences) each of the excerpts. What is he trying to say?!

Reservations

Reservation- a limited area set aside for Native Americans (although some reservation type areas were set up as early as colonial times, the first reservations in the west appeared in the 1850s; there are more than 300 reservations still in existence today)

"It was good economy, no doubt, for the United States to free our people on the great Sioux and other reservations, instead of keeping a standing army to fight them in case they should take to the warpath. And yet the system is a bad one for our people. It kills energy and begets idleness, the mother of vice. It certainly will prove a fatal blow to our people if long continued."

<p>(2005) Economic realities</p> <p>80 percent of residents are unemployed.</p> <p>49 percent of residents live below the federal poverty line.</p> <p>61 percent of residents below the age of 18 live below the poverty line.</p> <p>The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is located in Shannon County, where its per-capita income makes it the second poorest county in the United States, at \$6,286.</p> <p>If the Oglala Sioux Tribe were to equally disperse revenues from the Prairie Wind Casino to all enrolled tribal members, each resident would receive \$.15 per month.</p>	<p>Health and well-being realities</p> <p>The infant mortality rate is five times higher than the United States national average.</p> <p>Obesity, diabetes, and heart disease occur in epidemic proportions on the Pine Ridge.</p> <p>Unhealthy diets and lack of exercise are two main contributing factors behind the high numbers of Native Americans that die from the above factors despite the fact that in the early history of the Lakota, diabetes was virtually unknown.</p> <p>Life expectancy on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is the lowest anywhere in the western hemisphere, except for Haiti. A recent study found the life expectancy for men to be 48 years, and for women it is 52 years</p>
<p>Residents and facilities. About 70 percent of residents have attained a high school diploma, while 12.1 percent have attained a bachelor's degree.</p> <p>On the reservation, 13 percent of residents lack complete plumbing facilities, while 9.2 percent lack complete kitchen facilities. Also, 22.8 percent lack phone service.</p>	<p>Lakota language.In the early 1990s, about half of the population of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation could speak the Lakota language. Today, that number has fallen to less than one-quarter on the Pine Ridge, and is as low as 4 percent on other Lakota reservations.</p>

Activity: In CRQ format, answer the following question: Does the information in the chart support the sentiment expressed in the quote?

The "Iron Horse" vs. the Buffalo



"The American Indian is of the soil, whether it be the region of forests, plains, pueblos, or mesas. He fits into the landscape, for the hand that fashioned the continent also fashioned the man for his surroundings. He once grew as naturally as the wild sunflowers, he belongs just as the buffalo belonged...." - Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Sioux Chief

Activity: Write a poem that reflects the experience of Native Americans losing the buffalo as the white settlers moved into the west. *In the 1870s nearly 10 million buffalo were killed!