

Writing Across the Curriculum

PSSA Performance Task – Compare and Contrast

Overview: During the winter of 1838-1839, the Cherokee tribe was forcefully removed from their land in a journey that is infamously known as the “Trail of Tears.” A Confederate soldier, who had the misfortune of witnessing both the “Trail of Tears” and the American Civil War, once stated, “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.”

Instructions: Read the poem and the primary source dealing with the “Trail of Tears.” Compare and contrast the styles of the two pieces of writing **AND** distinguish which piece is more effective in generating emotional imagery of the event. Be sure to list specific examples from both pieces of writing.

Purpose:

- Create a cohesive argument supported by facts
- Enhance reading comprehension and written communication
- Prepare for the PSSA writing exam

Writer’s Checklist:

PLAN before you write

- Read carefully
- Read ALL the sources
- How does the information relate to/help you answer the question

FOCUS while you write

- Make sure you use evidence from the passages to support your answer
- Use precise language (quotes, vocabulary from the passages), a variety of sentence types, and transitions in your essay
- Organize your paper with an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion

Gradesheet for PSSA Social Studies Writing Prompt

-Effectively addresses **ALL** parts of the question and demonstrates an in-depth analytic understanding of both texts (**4 points**).

-Uses multiple pieces of evidence from both sources (**4 points**).

-Contains an effective introduction, body, and conclusion (**4 points**)

-Spelling, grammar, usage, and capitalization (**3 points**).

Total = 15 points

The Neverending Trail

by Abe "Del" Jones

We whites honor the "Hermitage"
And the man who once lived there -
But, that leader of our Nation
Was cruel, unjust, unfair -

He ordered the removal
Of the Cherokee from their land
And forced them on a trek
That the Devil must have planned -

One thousand miles of misery -
Of pain and suffering -
Because greed of the white man
Could not even wait till spring -

We should bow our heads in shame
Even unto this day
About "The Trail of Tears"
And those who died along the way.

It was October, eighteen thirty-eight
When seven thousand troops in blue
Began the story of the "Trail"
Which, so sadly, is so true -

Jackson ordered General Scott
To rout the Indian from their home -
The "Center Of The World" they loved -
The only one they'd known -

The Braves working in the fields
Arrested, placed in a stockade -
Women and Children dragged from home
In the bluecoats shameful raid -

Some were prodded with bayonets
When they were deemed to move too slow
To where the Sky was their blanket
And the cold Earth, their pillow -

In one home a Babe had died
Sometime in the night before -
And women mourning, planning burial
Were cruelly herded out the door -

In another, a frail Mother -
Papoose on back and two in tow

For, at the battle of horse Shoe
With five hundred Warriors, his best -
Helped Andrew Jackson win the battle
And lay thirty-three Braves to rest -

And the Chief drove his tomahawk
Through a Creek Warrior 's head
Who was about to kill Jackson -
But whose life was saved, instead -

Chief John Ross knew this story
And once sent Junaluska to plead -
Thinking Jackson would listen to
This Chief who did that deed -

But, Jackson was cold, indifferent
To the one he owed his life to
Said "the Cherokee's fate is sealed -
There's nothing, I can do."

Washington D.C. had decreed
They must be moved westward -
And all their pleas and protests
To this day still go unheard.

On November, the seventeenth
Old Man Winter reared his head -
And freezing cold, sleet and snow
Littered that trail with the dead

On one night, at least twenty-two
Were released from their torment
To join that Great Spirit in the Sky
Where all good souls are sent -

It seems one noble woman
It was Chief Ross' wife -
Gave her blanket to a sick child
And in so doing, gave her life -

She is buried in an unmarked grave -
Dug shallow near the "Trail" -
Just one more tragic ending
In this tragic, shameful tale -

Mother nature showed no mercy
Till they reached the end of the line

When that fateful journey ended
On March twenty six, eighteen thirty-nine.

Each mile of this infamous "Trail"
marks the graves of those who died –
four thousand poor souls in all
marks the shame we tried to hide –

You still can hear them crying
Along "The Trail of Tears"
If you listen with your heart
And not with just your ears.

Was told she must leave her home
Was told that she must go –

She uttered a quiet prayer –
Told the old family dog good-bye –
Then, her broken heart gave out
And she sank slowly down to die –

Chief Junaluska witnessed this –
Tears streaming down his face –
Said if he could have known this
It would have never taken place –

John G. Burnett witnessed the “Trail of Tears” as a member of the mounted infantry ordered to remove the Cherokee from their land. Years later, he recounted the events of that journey:

“Men working in the fields were arrested and driven to the stockades. Women were dragged from their homes by soldiers whose language they could not understand. Children were often separated from their parents and driven into the stockades with the sky for a blanket and the earth for a pillow. And often the old and infirm were prodded with bayonets to hasten them to the stockades. In one home death had come during the night, a little sad faced child had died and was lying on a bear skin couch and some women were preparing the little body for burial. All were arrested and driven out leaving the child in the cabin. I don't know who buried the body. In another home was a frail Mother, apparently a widow and three small children, one just a baby. When told that she must go the Mother gathered the children at her feet, prayed an humble prayer in her native tongue, patted the old family dog on the head, told the faithful creature good-bye, with a baby strapped on her back and leading a child with each hand started on her exile. But the task was too great for that frail Mother. A stroke of heart failure relieved her sufferings. She sunk and died with her baby on her back, and her other two children clinging to her hands.”