



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Teaching Young Children About the Cherokee Trail Of Tears

Curriculum Unit 15.01.03
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Introduction

All I ask in this creation

Is a pretty little wife and a big plantation

Way up yonder in the Cherokee nation

This refrain from a song that was very popular in Georgia in the 1800s may encapsulate the justification for the passing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830 and its subsequent enforcement, leading to such horrific events as the Cherokee Trail of Tears, one of the most brutal stories in American History. The message sent was clear: when settlers wanted Indian lands, the United States would find a way to remove the Native Americans. This story needs to be told to help children develop compassion for others and to help them see how people often convince themselves to do the wrong thing—to harm others—just because the government and the people in power say it's okay. Studying about such tragic events can help “stir a sense of humanity” within the students as William H. McNeill, a celebrated historian, so aptly puts it in his article, ‘Why Study History (1985)’. The challenge of an early-elementary education teacher is how to convey this terrible page in our nation’s history to young learners. The purpose of this unit is not just to reconstruct this event but also to have students explore why it occurred and what the conditions and forces were that brought it about. This historical event reflects and may be considered to symbolically represent the majority culture’s attitude toward and treatment of all Native Americans during our country’s westward expansion.

This curriculum unit utilizes carefully chosen children’s books to present core ideas to young learners because the modified text and vivid illustrations effectively convey the ideas and engage their interest.

To record, organize and process the new information they learn, the students will use an interactive history notebook, a project that will be ‘a work in progress’ throughout their participation in this unit. It will allow all activities to be kept together in one place and in logical order. As a place to explore and share ideas, they will inherently be personal, creative notebooks and a record of each student’s growth. Typically this interactive notebook has a left (output) and a right (input) side orientation. On the left side students will review what they have learned and express their feelings and reactions to activities they do in class. Content can include

historical journal entries, forms of poetry, maps, and 'what if' statements to name a few. On the right side students will 'post' handouts, graphic organizers and photos that the teacher distributes to help them to think graphically about the subject matter.

The experience of most who actually made this 800-mile journey west remains untold. However, there are historical documents, eye-witness accounts, Cherokee family stories (taken from the Indian-Pioneer History collection) paintings, poetry, songs, 'youtube' videos as well as children's historical fiction books and informational texts that have been made great use of in this unit in an effort to present an engaging, accurate account of the forced removal of sixteen thousand Cherokee Indians from their homes in Georgia to their new "home" in 'Indian Territory' (now Oklahoma) in 1838. The intention is to help young students better 'connect' with the people who endured this 'trial of tears' as they participate in a variety of hands-on experiences that will bring them closer to what happened during this time.

I am a first-grade teacher at Davis Street Arts & Academics Interdistrict Magnet School. The self-contained class of 26 students to which I will be teaching this curriculum unit are a heterogeneous group with varying abilities within the 6-to-7-year-old age range. Although this unit was designed with them in mind, it could easily be adapted for use by teachers in other primary and intermediate grades as well.

This unit is interdisciplinary in scope, incorporating reading, writing, art, history and social studies. Tapping into a variety of literary sources, it will include familiarization with such genres as myths, nonfiction, historical fiction and poetry. The students will work in small and large group settings on the unit's activities. The unit lessons will be taught 5 times a week for a period of 40 minutes over a one-month period.

Beginning with a Simulation Activity

To pique student interest in this historical event the teacher will begin with a simulation activity. Shortly after they arrive in class, the teacher will read an announcement to the class telling them to line up immediately because some other students want to take over their classroom. They will not be allowed to take anything with them. The teacher and the students will then take a walk all the way up to the third floor searching for an empty classroom to settle in. Alas, they will soon notice that there are no empty classrooms available. Briefly the teacher will have them all sit in the hallway where he/she will bemoan the fact that there seems to be no place to go. Together they will discuss what they might do. As the minutes pass, this activity will have had its intended effect of creating in their minds a sense of injustice and everyone will then go back to their classroom where they will discuss what just happened. The teacher will ask: What feelings did you have during this forced walk? How did it feel to be told to leave without taking anything with you? What were your thoughts as we walked throughout the school with no place to go?

The teacher will then write the phrase, 'Trail of Tears' on the whiteboard and explain that the Cherokee Indians, about 177 years ago, were forced to leave their homes so that other people could have their land to build their own farms on. They were forced to march over 800 miles to a new place that they knew nothing about. It took them between four to six months to get there and they endured many hardships during this involuntary march. The Cherokees called it Nu-No-Du-Na-Tlo-Hi-Lu, 'The Trail Where We Cried' or 'The Trail of Tears' because it was so hard for them. The teacher will ask: What do you think you would have done if this happened to you?

In an effort to record and compare their experience with the actual historical event that the students will be learning about, the teacher will chart the following ideas:

Classroom Simulation Activity

Students were told to leave their classroom immediately, taking nothing with them.

Students walked from floor to floor in the school searching for a new place to settle in.

Students ended up having class in the hallway.

Students felt feelings of fear, worry and sadness over being treated unfairly.

Historical Event

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 made it legal that the Indians had to leave their homeland.

Indians walked the Trail of Tears.

Indians had to resettle in a new place 800 miles away.

The Indians suffered in many ways from this ordeal.

This curriculum unit is divided into 4 main sections:

Section 1: Examine A Myth and Begin To Get To Know A People

Section 2: Two Influential Figures in Cherokee History

Section 3: Three Events Shaping the Destiny of the Cherokee Nation

Section 4: The Trail of Tears: Voices from the Past And Present

Content Objectives

To learn about the culture and traditions of the Cherokee

To learn about the historical event called the Trail of Tears, its causes and effects

To learn how Andrew Jackson and Sequoyah affected the Cherokee nation

To become familiar with the elements found in the myth, biography, historical fiction, nonfiction and poetry genres

To identify character traits of story characters and historical figures by examining their words and actions

To use essential questions to explore core historical concepts

Teaching Strategies

To systematically organize ideas as you learn by using an interactive history notebook

To practice the art of storytelling by retelling the Cherokee Creation Myth to other students

To read a timeline to review the sequential order of events and their significance

To use graphic organizers to help organize the information you have learned, compare historical figures and draw conclusions

To express your ideas using a variety of written response formats (i.e., persuasive letters, journal entries)

To analyze the purpose and intent of content-level paintings and poetry placed side by side

Section 1: Examine A Myth And Begin To Get To Know A People

It is essential to provide some needed context to help young learners become more familiar with the Cherokee people before they begin their exploration of the Trail of Tears. Myths are fictional stories that explain seemingly unexplainable phenomena and reflect what the people in a particular culture value and believe. They were intended to be passed down from one generation to the next. Long ago, before the Cherokee syllabary was invented, the communication of mythical stories was done through the ancient oral tradition of storytelling. Before telling the Cherokee story of creation to the class, the teacher will create an anchor chart detailing common elements found in Native American myths. These elements include:

- were old stories
- showed what the people thought were important ideas
- passed down orally from generation to generation
- often explained natural events
- often had animal characters
- often taught a lesson

The creation myth, which tells the story of how animals and insects cooperated to create Earth, will help to convey the deep love that the Cherokee people held for the land they lived on and owned for over a thousand years. One of the important lessons taught in this story is that when one works with determination and perseverance, he/she is rewarded. Throughout their history, the Cherokee have kept these two values close to their hearts.

The teacher will begin with a dramatic telling of the story, using as a guide the detailed version entitled 'Earth Making' found on pages 105-107 in the book, *American Indian Myths and Legends* edited by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz. Through word and dramatic gesture he/she will recount the story to the class as they sit in a circle. Following this, the teacher will read aloud a picture-book version of this tale adapted by Anita Yasuda entitled *How the World was Made: A Cherokee Creation Myth*. Thirdly, the teacher will show a visual and musical presentation of this same story on the classroom interactive whiteboard. This video is available on the 'youtube' website entitled 'Cherokee Creation story Video.wmv' created by Libby Baxter. From previous explorations done earlier in the school year of such genres as fables and fairy tales, the class will have already developed an appreciation of how different versions of a tale often exist as will be apparent in the presentation of the Cherokee creation myth using three different formats.

The teacher will use two activities that correlate nicely with this study of a creation myth and that will enhance students' understanding of it. In the first one the teacher will use a 2-columned graphic organizer asking the class to envision and describe what the land looked like initially and then later.

Directions: Draw what the Cherokee land looked like in the beginning of the story and then later.

Before After

In the second activity the teacher will pair up the students with the direction that they retell the myth to each other. For greater ease the teacher will provide them with a few picture prompts copied from Yasuda's book. Once they have polished their storytelling of the myth, they will visit another first-grade class where they will pick a partner to tell the story to. In this way the students will gain experience as storytellers and better appreciate the power inherent in such a means of communication.

Section 2: Two Influential Figures In Cherokee History

This section involves the study of the lives of Andrew Jackson and Sequoyah and through the use of the biography genre the class will develop some background knowledge about the historical factors leading up to the forced exodus of the Cherokee people. First, the teacher will review the basic elements of biography on an anchor chart.

- are true stories about real people
- have settings that take place in a real historical time period
- are written about people who make the world different for others

The focus in studying these two men will be on how they affected the lives of the Cherokee people in the 19th century. Jackson and Sequoyah can easily be called contemporaries although they came from two very different worlds. Interestingly, their careers did converge, at least momentarily, when Sequoyah, as a member of the Mounted and Foot Cherokees, joined forces with Andrew Jackson to fight the British troops and the Creek Indians (the Red Sticks) in the War of 1812. By studying these two historical figures students will gain perspective on Westward Expansion from two wholly different points of view: one, from the engineer of a systematic forced removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands and the other, from a Cherokee traditionalist who strongly believed that the Cherokee people should remain united, not give up their traditional ways, and preserve their history and identity.

Andrew Jackson

Before becoming the seventh president of the United States in 1828, Jackson served as a lawyer, a scout, an Indian-fighter, a politician, a judge, a soldier and a tough treaty negotiator, to name a few. It is significant to note that he negotiated nine of the eleven major treaties signed between 1814 and 1824, all of which transformed all Indian-owned territories into government land. In fact, there is no other American who was so instrumental to Indian removal. By the 1840s Jackson's policy was completed and there were no Indian nations existing in the American South.

As Ann Graham Gaines recounts in her book, *Andrew Jackson: Our Seventh President*, he was called the "people's president" who championed the problems of ordinary Americans—except, it must be added, it was not all Americans. (p. 27) Jackson believed in the supremacy of white people and did not think the people of other races deserved equal rights. Historians describe Jackson's attitude toward Native Americans as

complicated but not unusual for that historical period. During his early military career he was often allied with Indian tribes but at other times he conducted brutal campaigns against them.

Like the majority of white settlers, Andrew Jackson held the view that Indians were an inferior race. On the one hand, he saw them as savages who were much too violent to live beside white people. On the other hand, he viewed them as children incapable of determining their own fate and undeserving of either property or voting rights. As Nel Yomtov states in his book, *Andrew Jackson: Heroic Leader or Cold-Hearted Ruler*, “Jackson wanted to bring American Indians under government control” (p. 20). Once he became president, he used his power to advocate the desires of white settlers who wanted more land on which to grow cotton and to mine gold.

The common theme of the times, explains Jon Meacham, in his biography of Jackson entitled, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*, was that “as a people Indians were neither autonomous nor independent but were to be manipulated in the context of what most benefited Jackson’s America—white America . . . The white agenda—more land, few Indians, complete control—took precedence in the North and the South (and in the West, too, in the long run)” (p. 96). It was in this atmosphere that Jackson was able to accomplish Indian Removal politically. In order to free up more land, Jackson drew up a policy that would move American Indians westward into Indian Territory and in 1830 he signed the Indian Removal Act. Shockingly, by the year 1837 more than one-fourth of the Cherokee nation had died because of that act.

An Abbreviated Time Line of Andrew Jackson’s Life

The teacher will use a simplified timeline of Andrew Jackson’s life as a visual reference for ongoing review. It will include the following:

1767 born on March 15

1780 at age 13 joined the army and fought in the Revolutionary War

1788-1798 held such jobs as lawyer, senator, congressman, and judge

1812-1814 became a military leader who fought in the War of 1812 and the Creek War

1814-1824 was a treaty negotiator, establishing 9 different treaties with the Cherokee

1821 appointed governor in Florida

1828 elected president of the U.S.; his term ended in 1837

1830 signed the Indian Removal Act

1832 ignored a Supreme Court ruling stating that Native Americans have a right to keep their land; continued his Indian Removal policy

1838-1839 Cherokee Trail of Tears occurred

1845 died on June 8

The essential question during our study of Andrew Jackson will be: How did Jackson change the lives of the Cherokee People? This open-ended question will spark discussion and call upon students to think critically

about the subject. One interactive history notebook activity will be writing a letter to President Jackson expressing your opinion about how he should treat the Cherokee people and handle the problem of land settlement. Lesson Plan I will detail that activity.

Sequoyah

What's appealing about James Rumford's biography of Sequoyah entitled, *Sequoyah: the Cherokee Man Who Gave His People Writing*, is that he presents him as a man great in deed despite his crippled stature. Sequoyah never let such a physical limitation stop him from doing what he had set out to do. For many years he worked as a metal-worker in Tennessee. As Rumford explains, "For much of his life, Sequoyah was nobody famous" (p. 6). The reason that the awesome Giant Sequoia trees in California are named after him, according to the author, is because of his heartfelt desire that the Cherokee people "stand as tall as any people on earth" (p. 7). The way they could do this, he determined, was by having a written language of their own.

And so Sequoyah spent twelve years creating and perfecting the syllabary that Cherokees would use for both reading and writing their language. During this time Sequoyah faced a lot of ridicule from other Cherokee who lived in his village, some who simply thought him crazy and others who suspected his efforts involved some kind of evil magic. He eventually left his village and moved to Arkansas, taking his youngest child, Ah-yoka with him. He approached his friend, Chief John Ross, who agreed to allow him to present his syllabary to the council of Cherokee chiefs. Initially leery of Sequoyah's so-called magic, they demanded numerous tests before they accepted his writing system. In 1822 he went on to teach hundreds of Tennessee Cherokees how to read and write. Amazingly, by using this 85-character syllabary, people could learn to read and write in just a few days!

Sequoyah felt strongly that the Cherokee should keep their traditional ways and not become like white people. His syllabary allowed them to write down and preserve important tribal knowledge. Not only that but it served to bring the tribe together. As Roberta Basel states in her book, *Sequoyah: Inventor of Written Cherokee* "Having a way to write their language transformed and unified the Cherokee Nation" (p. 46). In 1828, the first issue of a newspaper called the *Cherokee Phoenix*, was published using this new writing system.

Sequoyah and his family were directly affected by Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Policy and in 1829 moved from Arkansas out west to Oklahoma and later, in 1839, he helped the Eastern and Western Cherokee to unite and write a constitution.

Sequoyah's continued concern for the welfare of his people and his belief that they remain unified prompted him to set out in 1842 on a journey to Mexico. Hearing of a band of Cherokee who had moved there a number of years earlier, he made it his mission to go out there and persuade them to return to the Indian Territory and live with the rest of the tribe. It was a difficult journey for Sequoyah, being older now and in poor health. After an arduous journey in which he faced many setbacks, he reached Mexico and found the Cherokee living there. Unfortunately, his health worsened and he died there in 1843.

An Abbreviated Time Line of Sequoyah's Life

This simplified timeline of Sequoyah's life will include the following:

1778 born in Tuskegee, Tennessee

1809 began his work on a written language for the Cherokee

1813-1814 joined Jackson's forces to fight the Red Stick Creek Indians

1821 finished his syllabary and the Cherokee nation accepted it

1828 his syllabary was used in the first Native American newspaper, The Cherokee Phoenix

1829 forced to move to 'Indian Territory' (Oklahoma)

1839 helped the Eastern and Western Cherokee write a new constitution

1842-43 journeyed to Mexico to find the lost tribe of Cherokees

1843 died near San Fernando, Mexico

The essential question in the study of Sequoyah will be: What did Sequoyah do that changed the lives of the Cherokees?

An interactive history notebook activity appropriate to use in this section is one where students will trace outlines of the heads of both historical figures and then fill them in with thoughts they have or words they might say. In this way students will be called upon to form some conclusions about these two characters and their perspectives on the plight of the Cherokee. A second comparison and contrast activity will employ a Venn diagram where the character traits of the two men will be compared.

Section 3: Three Events Shaping the Destiny of the Cherokee Nation

An excellent resource that will familiarize students with the Cherokee people, their culture and history, is entitled, *If You Lived With The Cherokee* written by Peter and Connie Roop. It covers the time period from 1740-1837 and answers many basic questions that students might have about this tribe. The Cherokee people, Tsalagi, or the Principal People, originally settled and lived on the land that was so carefully created by both Dayuni'si, the water beetle and the great buzzard from Galun'lati. Land was not owned by any one person. Instead it was shared by all—a kind of community ownership. In the winter men hunted and in the summer the women planted. Gender roles were clearly defined.

When the Europeans came, everything changed. The value systems of the two cultures starkly contrasted. Dan Elish states in his book, *The Trail of Tears: The Story of the Cherokee Removal*, "Perhaps it was the lack of importance that the Cherokee attached to money and property that befuddled the Europeans most" (p. 15). The white settlers saw all the unspoiled land that lay before them as land to be exploited for all it was worth. They meant to have the land and all of its resources. In fact, as Elish maintains, "Many whites believed that it had been decreed by God that the vast natural resources of North America should be turned to their advantage" (p. 15). Another name for this philosophy in which white settlers felt entitled to take Native American land is 'Manifest Destiny' and is powerfully portrayed in John Gast's painting entitled *American Progress, 1872*. This visual image is well worth examining in order to gain further insights into the beliefs people held about the land and the forces that were unleashed as a result. Lesson Plan 2 will detail the techniques the teacher will use to help students analyze historical paintings like this one.

The Shrinking of Cherokee Land

The Cherokee people, over a period of time from 1684-1819 had signed 28 different treaties with the government, each time giving up more and more of their land. Students will view a map showing the dimensions of the Cherokee nation prior to the European invasion, the 100,000-square-mile-area in the southeastern part of the United States which included the states of Georgia, North and South Carolina and East Tennessee. This map will be contrasted with another one that shows the dwindling boundaries of the Cherokee Country prior to their removal. Students will learn how the Revolutionary War, and the settlers' insatiable demand for land were the major causes.

Attempts were made during this time to 'civilize' the Cherokee but many showed a lack of real interest in its tenets. Although some wealthy Cherokee tried to assimilate by imitating white southern planters "most Cherokee," according to Julia Coates in her book, *Trail of Tears*, "remained subsistence farmers, producing their own crops, hunting and gathering for supplemental foods, producing their own textiles and clothing, and constructing their own dwellings and almost all of their household items" (p. 35).

Cherokees did make adaptations in their culture, in their society and in their government but the intent was to maintain their sovereignty as a people. "The Cherokees employed the civilization policy as a way of resisting the removal policy" (p. 38, Coates) By the 1820s the Cherokee had returned to a life-style that was both economically sound and prosperous and therefore, threatening to the state of Georgia officials and settlers alike. As Robert V. Remini in his book, *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson*, explains, "White men in general, and the states of Georgia and Alabama in particular, were contemptuous of Indian pretensions to civilization and independence. All they knew was that red men blocked their territorial progress by occupying land they wanted. . ." (p. 109).

Indeed there were stronger forces at work that sought to get rid of the 'Indian Problem' definitively. With the acquisition of new lands west of the Mississippi through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, U.S. government policymakers saw the removal of the Indians from their eastern lands as a much better alternative to attempting to civilize them. There were 3 significant historical events that expedited this policy:

The election of Andrew Jackson to the U.S. presidency in 1828

The discovery of gold in Georgia in 1828

The passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830

It is in this section that the students will witness the powerful nature of cause and effect in historical events. There are numerous informational texts written about this time period available for children. Of particular value for primary-aged children are: *Forced Removal* by Heather E. Schwartz, *The Trail of Tears* by Joseph Bruchac, *The Trail of Tears* by Peter Benoit, *The Trail of Tears* by Michael Burgan, and *Life on the Trail of Tears* by Laura Fischer. As events are highlighted students will mark them on a time-line in their interactive history notebooks to keep track of their sequence. In this notebook they will also use a simple cause-and-effect graphic organizer to show how these 3 events led to the Cherokee removal.

Cause	Effect
1802 Louisiana Purchase	New territory is now available to force Cherokees to move to.
1828 Election of Jackson as president	Always a champion of the rights of white settlers he has the power now to implement his plan of Indian Removal.

1828 Discovery of gold in Georgia	Thousands of prospectors poured into Cherokee land.
1830 Indian Removal Act is passed	Bill forces the Cherokee off their land and their legal rights to the land are ignored.

States Rights Versus Treaty Rights

In 1828 the Cherokee had sought legal means to secure their right to be a sovereign nation and adopt a constitution. At the same time the state of Georgia declared its right to abolish the Cherokee Nation and incorporate the tribe under its legal system. Andrew Jackson was elected that same year and he sided with Georgia, strongly defending a state's right to supersede treaty rights. This issue came before the Supreme court twice and in 1832, under the direction of Chief Justice John Marshall, the decision was made declaring the unconstitutionality of Georgia's laws and defending the supremacy of the federal authority over states right with regard to Indian treaties. In other words, Georgia had no constitutional right to extend her authority over the Cherokee Nation. Jackson ignored this ruling, claiming that he would not interfere in state issues. It quickly became clear to the Cherokee people and their supporters that, as Amy H. Sturgis concludes in her book *the Trail of Tears and Indian Removal*, "the U.S. executive and legislature, together with the states, had decided that removal was the only acceptable option for the 'Indian problem'" (p. 39). As William G. McLoughlin, in his book *After the Trail of Tears, The Cherokee's Struggle for Sovereignty, 1839-1880* describes, chief John Ross, who had so strongly and eloquently defended his people's right to remain in their homelands, "was thunderstruck by Jackson's denial of Marshall's decision and the treachery of the U.S. Senate" (p. 2).

Who particularly benefitted from the redistribution of Native American territory by the U.S. government in the South? As Sturgis maintains, "certainly many landless voters, or those with only modest properties, stood to gain. . . At no cost to themselves, they could become landholders, when the U.S. government reassigned confiscated Native American land to whites" (p. 39, Sturgis). Sturgis goes on to describe how Indian removal fit in so perfectly with the agenda of Manifest Destiny and that this removal policy "had the active or tacit approval of a majority in the United States" (ibid., p. 39).

Fergus M. Bordewich, in his book, *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the end of the Twentieth Century*, asks us to consider what might have resulted over time if the U.S. government had enforced the Supreme Court decision on behalf of the Cherokee Nation—a very powerful cause-and-effect example to point out to the students. He says, "Had the United States backed up the decision of its own highest court, Indian tribes could have been integrated naturally into the American economy and into the nation's political life either in some form of voluntary democratic association or, conceivably, as full-fledged states... Such a solution might have created a framework for tolerance and ethnic diversity that would have spared the nation of much of the racial conflict that has tarnished its political landscape ever since" (p. 58).

Cherokee Removal Begins

In the end, despite all of their efforts, the Cherokees were still forced to leave their ancestral homeland and journey West to Indian Territory. Some left on their own after the Treaty of New Echota in which members of the Treaty Party, under the leadership of John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, was signed. These members agreed to sell the Cherokee land in return for land in Oklahoma for \$4.5 million. However, the majority of the Cherokee, under the leadership of Chief John Ross and sometimes called the Nationalists, wanted to keep fighting for their land, and voted against it. Ross returned to Washington to try to work out a new deal and he ordered the Cherokee to ignore the treaty. At this same time 7,000 U.S. troops arrived in Georgia to enforce the removal process.

The Round Up

And so the roundup began after General Winfred Scott ordered all Cherokees to leave their homeland within the month. It was a divide-and-conquer military strategy that left the Cherokee Indians who had stayed—hanging onto the hope that John Ross, would be able to legally secure their rights to the land—unprepared. Despite all of his efforts, Ross was not successful. As Daniel Blake Smith describes it in his book, *An American Betrayal: Cherokee Patriots and the Trail of Tears*, “Ross loss the battle over removal, but his unflinching commitment to keeping his people together as a unified and sovereign nation remains a powerful legacy of this defining moment in the Cherokee and American past” (p. 268). Smith describes the round up process in all of its starkness, “The roundup experience revealed deeply affecting moments of emotional upheaval and personal loss. . . Daily life was interrupted with shocking immediacy” as families were interrupted at dinner-time and driven out of their homes, men were taken from their fields, women from their spinning wheels and children from play (ibid., p. 206). “More often than not” says Thurman Wilkins in his book *Cherokee Betrayal* , “the Indians lost all personal property except the clothes on their backs—their cattle, hogs, horses, and all of their household effects” (p. 308). As Cherokee families were removed from their homes, settlers and outlaws on the scene, like vultures, quickly began driving off their cattle and looting their homes.

As Michael Burgan, in his aforementioned book, so aptly concludes, “Many American Indians suffered because of the U.S. government policies. The Trail of Tears remains the most tragic reminder of the violence and broken promises that the U.S. government used to force Indians off their own land” (p. 41).

At this point the teacher will add two more vocabulary items to the whiteboard: policy (defined as a plan followed by a government or organization) and native (the original or first people to live in a place). The teacher will then posit the following question as students prepare to study the Trail of Tears. The United States government used a policy of forced removal against the natives of the new country they had settled in. Do you think this is fair?

Section 4: The Trail of Tears: Voices from the Past And Present

Crammed into Stockades

After being forcibly removed from their home, the Cherokee were herded in May of 1838, into cramped, dirty, makeshift stockades—small enclosed forts used as prisons—to wait amidst much tedium and suffering, until their trek on foot, in wagons or on flatboats began. As Smith tells us in his aforementioned book, “If the roundup was an exercise in humiliation, the camps were a clinic in the dangers of death” (p. 210). Amidst the sweltering heat of the summer, diseases like dysentery, measles and whooping cough spread to epidemic proportions within these holding camps. Between 2,000 and 2,500 Cherokee died in these camps before heading West (ibid., p. 211).

The Trail of Tears Begins

In June of that same year the first Cherokees left these ‘detention camps’ for the Indian Territory and were loaded onto flatboats to cross rivers. The summer heat and disease took a huge toll on the Cherokee and their leaders persuaded General Winfield Scott to delay the rest of the removal until autumn. And so the removal

resumed in October and from then on most Cherokee traveled primarily by land. Thirteen detachments of about 1,000 each plus 645 wagons carrying the sick and aged departed southeastern Tennessee. Winter came quickly and by the time the Cherokee crossed the Mississippi River many had died due to lack of food and warmth. Disease and an unusually harsh winter that year killed many during the march, particularly the very young and the very old. During the march itself for those long months, it is estimated that another 1600 died and once they arrived in Indian Territory, thousands more died as a result of exposure and disease. As Smith contends, “Most scholars estimate that a grand total of at least four thousand died as a direct result of removal—one fourth of the entire Cherokee Nation at the time . . . Such devastating mortality exceeded even the tragic experiences of most other tribes forcibly removed during that era (ibid., p. 236).

It is important to note that during the first half of the 19th century over 100,000 Native Americans were removed to land west of the Mississippi from their homelands in the East. In addition to the Cherokee many were members of the ‘Five Civilized Tribes’: the Chickasaws, the Choctaws, the Creeks and the Seminoles. Vicki Rozema recounts in her book, *Voices From the Trail of Tears*, that as a result of the Indian removal policy, the Choctaws lost 15% of their population, and the Creeks and Seminoles suffered a 50% mortality rate (p. 41).

Introducing the Trail of Tears to the Class

The teacher will read portions of Laura Fischer’s book, ‘Life on the Trail of Tears’ specifically pages 10-23, to the class as their initial introduction to the historical event. The text is simplified but accurate and the photos vividly portray what is being described. During this reading the teacher will regularly pause for questions that the students might have.

Following this, in the days ahead, the teacher will show a number of ‘youtube’ videos of the Trail of Tears to further concretize the students’ understanding of the event and of the inhumane treatment, unforgiving weather conditions and profound sadness that characterize this forced migration. The first video, made by the U.S. Dept. of Interior, called ‘Trail of Tears: National Historic Trail’ is a 26-minute presentation that incorporates reenactments of events leading up to and including the Trail of Tears. To convey authenticity, the Cherokee actors actually speak in their language and subtitles in English are provided.

The second ‘youtube’ video is entitled ‘Trail of Tears-Music for the Native American Flute and features flute music that accompanies the slides of famous paintings portraying this event. There is no commentary or narration employed which makes it ideal as a vehicle to promote thought and appeals to viewers on an emotional level. During this viewing the teacher will regularly pause so that students can examine the paintings in more detail. The analyzing techniques laid out in Lesson Plan 2 will be used with these paintings as well. The third video, entitled ‘Trail of Tears Slideshow’ by Mercedes and Kim, features paintings, photos of historic sites, and book covers on the subject and is accompanied by a beautiful song called the Cherokee morning song.

These videos are very powerful and are certain to evoke emotion and rich discussions in class. During these viewings the teacher will periodically pause the video and read aloud passages from Alex W. Beater’s book entitled *Only the Names Remain*, specifically the last chapter, ‘The Soldiers Come. This reading and other first-person accounts taken from Joseph Bruchac’s book, *On this Long Journey: The Journal of Jesse Smoke, A Cherokee Boy, The Trail of Tears, 1838* will help the students feel that they are real participants in the event. There is a particularly moving account in Stanley Hoig’s book, *Night of the Cruel Moon* reported in the *Daily Oklahoman* on April 7, 1929 from an unidentified source (p. 120) that the teacher will read aloud to the class. I

have abbreviated and simplified this passage for the benefit of young students. It reads:

For a long time we travel on the way to a new land. People feel bad when they leave the Old Nation. Women cry, children cry and men cry. They say nothing and just put their heads down and keep on going west. People sometimes say I look like I never smile, never laugh. No, I used to smile and laugh long ago but no man has any laughter left after he has marched over the long trail from the Old Nation to the new country in the west. For a long time now I live in the hills and many good people live close by but most of the time I am thinking of the Old Nation and wonder how big the mountain looks in the springtime and how the boys and young men used to swim in the big river and go on hunts in the great valley. Then I remember the march on the long trail and my heart feels heavy and sad. Maybe someday we will understand why the Cherokees had to suffer on the trail to the new country.

It is the documented, eyewitness voices of the people actually walking the Trail of Tears that so effectively place one immediately inside the event, experiencing it as if it were happening in the moment. But there are also the voices of our contemporary lives (whether speaking quietly or shouting in rage) in art, music and poetry, who are attempting to honor and memorialize those figures from the past, that will help to fill out the full picture of the students' experience of the event.

Accounts From Characters in Historical Fiction

Historical fiction presents a story in the past often during a significant time period and is based on real historical events. An anchor chart detailing the elements in this genre will include:

- is a form of fiction
- is based on historical events
- has authentic settings
- has characters who are portrayed in a realistic manner
- has some characters who may be actual people from history but the story is fictional
- has an artistic mix of fiction and historical fact

One of the merits of using historical fiction, as Terry Lindquist, teacher and author of an article entitled 'Why and How I Teach With Historical Fiction' (on the Scholastic website) maintains, is that "it hammers home everyday details...each deposit of information provides a richer understanding of the period." In the next part of this section the teacher will use two historical fiction books that recount life on the Trail of Tears, referring to many events that the students have learned about in previous sections of this unit. These books, *The Trail On Which They Wept: The Story of a Cherokee Girl* by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler and *Soft Rain* by Cornelia Cornelissen feature young, courageous Cherokee girls as main characters. As these stories are read aloud in class, the teacher will use a graphic organizer provided by ReadWorks.org that will aid them in drawing conclusions from historical fiction by using 3 components: background knowledge, information from the text and personal experience in order to draw inferences about the text.

Background Knowledge Information from the text Personal Experience
Conclusion

Response journals are a very effective way for students to reflect on what has been read. While reading and discussing these stories, students will look at the historical events that affect the main characters and try to relate to how they must feel and how they react to the events happening around them. Students will identify character traits they possess by looking at their words and actions. The two main characters are similar in a

number of ways and so we will use a Venn diagram in our interactive history notebooks to compare the challenges they face on the trail. Some additional questions that students can write about in these response journals are:

Predict what you think will have next in the story.

Why did the character behave in the way she did? How would you have behaved?

How did this event in the story make you feel? Does it remind you of anything that happened in your life?

Describe what kind of person the character is. Give an example from the story as evidence to support your ideas.

Artistic Response to the Trail of Tears

In this section students will be looking at artistic expressions of The Trail of Tears in the form of poetry and paintings. As each painting is viewed on the interactive whiteboard, the teacher will read portions of two poems, one entitled *A Trail of Tears* by Debra Robertson and found on the www.firstpeople.us website and the other entitled *Cherokee Trail of Tears* by Barbara LaBarbera and found on the www.spiritisup.com website. The paintings that the students will view include:

The Trail of Tears by Robert Lindneux, 1942

“Forced Move (Trail of Tears)” by Max D. Standley

“Arrival in Indian Territory (Trail of Tears)” by Max D. Standley

“On the Trail of Tears (Trail of Tears)” by Max D. Standley

The Trail of Tears by Max D. Standley

Nightfall on the Trail of Tears (Trail of Tears) by Max D. Standley

The Trail of Tears by Jereme Peabody

Shadow of the Owl by John Guthrie

Morning Tears by John Guthrie

The Trail of Tears by John Pace

The Trail of Tears by Granger

“Tail of Tears” by Jerome Tiger

This tying together of two types of artistic expression will allow students to be drawn in at different levels as they analyze the paintings and poems presented. Poems and paintings allow a more personal inside view much different from the more impersonal view taken by a historian as he/she relays historical events. It is important to present this section of the unit after enough historical context for The Trail Of Tears has been provided for the students. In this way young learners will be able to better appreciate the richness of both the

visual and verbal texts and be able to interpret the intent of the artist and his/her messages about the issues.

After the students have been involved in the analysis of poetry and paintings they have the opportunity to write a poem of their own in response to some aspect of the Trail of Tears. The structure they will use is called an "I Am" Poem and Lesson Plan 3 will offer a step by step account of how to teach it.

Conclusion

Manifest Destiny had by now taken a strong foothold in the country and the westward expansion of the white settlers continued. This unstoppable force, along with the building of railroads, took even more of their land away from the Cherokee Nation. As Remini relays in his aforementioned book, "When the American people were ready to move again, across and beyond the Mississippi the Indians were forced once more to get out of the way" (p. 119).

Against great odds, the Cherokee people built their nation back up from scratch with almost 300,00 members worldwide and 70,000 living in northeastern Oklahoma, and are currently the second largest Native American tribe in the country. There is no happy ending to be found here except in appreciation of the resilience and courage of the Cherokee people as they continue to live in this country of ours. As Gayle Ross, a direct descendant of Chief John Ross, maintains, "It is a story of a people who did everything in their power to assert their rights. And still, it came to nothing, in the face of greed. And that's an important lesson" She continues, "We have survived a lot, as a people. But we are still here. We are still Cherokee. We have kept the flame burning" (quoted in Smith's book, pp. 270-271).

Lesson Plan 1

Materials: chart paper, large black marker, enlarged poster of a letter showing the five parts of a letter, four-square graphic organizer, blank letter-writing template, pencil

Objective: To write a persuasive letter to President Andrew Jackson telling him why he should allow the Cherokee people to live in their ancestral homeland.

Procedure:

1. Tell the class that they are going to pretend that they are living during the time of President Andrew Jackson and that the Indian Removal Act has just been passed. They are friends of the Cherokee who want to defend their right to stay on their homeland. Each one will be writing a letter to the president to try to persuade him to change his mind and allow the Cherokee to stay in their homes in Georgia.
2. Using chart paper, ask the students to brainstorm reasons why the Cherokee should be allowed to stay and record those ideas. Such ideas might include:

Everyone should have a right in America to live where they want

The Cherokee has lived there all their lives

The Cherokee will miss the mountains, forests, farmland and rivers used to hunting, farming and fishing there

They love their land

They have tried hard to live alongside the settlers

They have not done anything wrong to be pushed off their land

1. Then display an enlarged poster that shows a sample letter and where the five parts of a letter (date, greeting, message or body, closing and signature) are labeled. Explain to the class that their letter needs to include all those parts.
2. Display an enlarged 4-square graphic organizer on chart paper that shows linking words

Topic: The Cherokee want;

If the Cherokee had...

I think...

Linking word: because or first
Reason 1

Linking word: and or second
Reason 2

Linking word: another reason or also or third
Reason 3

Conclusion: So please

1. Lead the class through the planning and then writing of a letter to Jackson together as a class first. This modeling will help them see how to plan and organize their reasons on this graphic organizer and then write the letter. Upon completion, have students point out its features.
2. Distribute copies of the 4-square graphic organizer and blank template that displays a letter writing format that will guide them in including all letter parts. Direct them to begin with the graphic organizer where they will jot down their ideas. Young students need direction every step of the way so direct them to conference with you upon completion of the graphic organizer.
3. Students then use their graphic organizer to guide them in the writing of their letter. Direct them to have their 'no excuse' word-wall handout in full view so that they can attempt to spell high frequency words correctly.
4. Remind them that the purpose of this letter is to really persuade Andrew Jackson to change his mind and use his presidential power to protect the Cherokee and allow them to stay on their homeland.
5. Once completed, confer with each student again to help them in the editing and revising process.
6. The culminating activity will be to dramatically read aloud their persuasive letter in a small group or to the rest of the class.

Lesson Plan 2

Materials: interactive whiteboard, digital copy of John Gast's painting, "American Progress", hard copy computer printouts of same painting, painting analysis activity worksheet

Objective: To look at an historical painting, identify and note details and ask questions that will lead to more observations and reflections.

Procedure:

1. Begin by recalling from their study what happened to the Cherokee people whenever the settlers wanted more land. Write the terms, 'manifest destiny' and 'westward expansion' on the whiteboard.
2. Before viewing the painting on the interactive whiteboard, explain to students that they are going to look at a painting where the artist has given his interpretation of manifest destiny and the effects it had on people.
3. While students view the painting, ask the following three questions:

What is going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can you find?

1. As the students respond, paraphrase their comments in a neutral manner, point to the areas being discussed and link and frame students comments to the historical context.
2. After this initial examination distribute the painting analysis activity sheet that might look like this:

People Objects Activities

Ask the students, working in groups of three, to look once again but this time at the computer printout of the same painting and then list and describe the images and actions they see in the painting on this sheet.

1. Instruct the small groups to come back together as a large group and share some of their observations. As they share ask them to make some inferences based on what they have observed.
2. Ask the students to share their questions that have come to mind as a result of this analysis with the larger group. Record them on chart paper and as topics to research further.

Lesson Plan 3

Materials: chart paper, large black marker, notebook paper, pencils

Objective: To imagine that you are a child walking on the Trail of Tears with your family and write an "I Am" poem from that perspective.

Procedure:

1. Begin with a class discussion about what it would be like to walk with your family on the Trail of Tears. Ask students to describe their impressions using their five senses and list some of their ideas on the chart paper.
2. Then dig a little deeper and ask about what their feelings and worries might be during this time. List these ideas on the chart paper.
3. Finally move to the more abstract ideas of dreaming and hoping and ask them to offer some thoughts on these areas and jot them down too.
4. Then introduce the actual format of the "I Am" poem (previously written to display on chart paper. The format is as follows:

1st Stanza

I am (2 special characteristics you have)

I wonder (something of curiosity)

I hear (an imaginary sound)

I see (an imaginary sight)

I want (an actual desire)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

2nd Stanza

I pretend (something you actually pretend to do)

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (something that bothers you)

I cry (something that makes you sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

3rd Stanza

I understand (something that is true)

I say (something you believe in)

I dream (something you dream about)

I try (something you really make an effort about)

I hope (something you actually hope for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

1. It may be helpful with the first writing that students work with a buddy to create a poem, thus giving each other support. Teacher circulates among the students and offers assistance when needed.
2. Teacher later types out the poems and each student reads his/her poem to the class.

Appendix

Implementing District Standards

ELA Common Core Standards for Grade 1

CCSS.ELA.RL.1.2

Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

CCSS.ELA.RL.1.4

Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

CCSS.ELA.RL.1.9

Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

CCSS.ELA.RI.1.3

Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

CCSS.ELA.W.1.1

Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA.SL.1.1

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA.SL.1.3

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

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