

Jackson, the Cherokee, and the Trail of Tears DBQ

Directions: Read the following excerpts, and (1) circle whether or not it is a primary or secondary source (P for primary, S for secondary). Then (2), answer the question that follows:

1. P or S - Indian Removal constituted the major substantive issue the Jackson administration addressed in a first year otherwise largely preoccupied patronage and personalities. Although Jackson had avoided committing himself on the tariff or internal improvements, his strong stand in favor rapid Removal was well known and accounted for much of his popularity in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The issue involved Indian tribes over the country, but the ones with the most at stake were the Five Civilized Tribes of Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole. These peoples practiced agriculture and animal husbandry much as their white neighbors did and still possessed substantial domains in the Southern states plus Tennessee, North Carolina, and Florida Territory. The eminent geographer Jedidiah Morse had been commissioned by the federal government to prepare a comprehensive report on the nation's Indian tribes. His report, issued in 1822, waxed eloquent about the economic and educational progress of the five tribes and advised that they be left peace to continue it. Morse's advice was not taken. White settlers bitterly resented the Natives' presence; besides occupying good cotton land traded with free blacks and sometimes provided a haven for runaway slaves. State and federal governments responded to the wishes of the settlers, not to the advice of experts. Among the numerous racial conflicts that ensued, the one between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation attracted the most national attention and led to a dramatic confrontation with serious constitutional implications. (Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 342).

What elements went into white resentment of the Cherokee, and how did issues like slavery and racism impact white/Indian relations?

2. P or S - At noon all was in readiness for moving; the teams were stretched out in a line along the road through a heavy forest, groups of persons formed about each wagon, others shaking the hand of some sick friend or relative who would be left behind. The temporary camp covered with boards and some of bark that for three summer months had been their only shelter and home, were crackling and falling under a blazing flame; the day was bright and beautiful, but a gloomy thoughtfulness was depicted in the lineaments of every face. In all the bustle of preparation there was a silence and stillness of the voice that betrayed the sadness of the heart.

At length the word was given to "move on." I glanced along the line and the form of Going Snake, an aged and respected chief whose head eighty winters had whitened, mounted on his favorite pony passed before me and led the way in advance, followed by a number of young men on horseback.

At this very moment a low sound of distant thunder fell on my ear. In almost an exact western direction a dark spiral cloud was rising above the horizon and sent forth a murmur I almost fancied a voice of divine indignation for the wrongs of my poor and unhappy countrymen, driven by brutal power from all they loved and cherished in the land of their fathers, to gratify the cravings of avarice. The sun was unclouded - no rain fell - the thunder rolled away and sounds hushed in the distance. The scene around and before me, and in the elements above, were peculiarly impressive & singular. It was at once spoken of by several persons near me, and looked upon as omens of some future event in the west. (William Shorey Coodey, *Letter to a Friend Describing the Beginning of the Trail of Tears*, 1838.)

How might a superstitious person have interpreted the "dark spiral cloud" (most likely a tornado) that formed in an otherwise cloudless sky?

What about Coodey's description gives hints as to the mood of the Cherokee about to set out on their long march to Oklahoma?

3. P or S - The condition and ulterior destiny of the Indian tribes within the limits of some of our States have become objects of much interest and importance. It has long been the policy of Government to introduce among them the arts of civilization, in the hope of gradually reclaiming them from a wandering life. This policy has, however, been coupled with another wholly incompatible with its success. Professing a desire to civilize and settle them, we have at the same time lost no opportunity to purchase their lands and thrust them farther into the wilderness. By this means they have not only been kept in a wandering state, but been led to look upon us as unjust and indifferent to their fate. Thus, though lavish in its expenditures upon the subject, Government has constantly defeated its own policy, and the Indians in general, receding farther and farther to the west, have retained their savage habits. A portion, however, of the Southern tribes, having mingled much with the whites and made some progress in the arts of civilized life, have lately attempted to erect an independent government within the limits of Georgia and Alabama. These States, claiming to be the only sovereigns within their territories, extended their laws over the Indians, which induced the latter to call upon the United States for protection. Under these circumstances the question presented was whether the General Government had a right to sustain those people in their pretensions. The Constitution declares that "no new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdiction of any other State" without the consent of its legislature. If the General Government is not permitted to tolerate the erection of a confederate State within the territory of one of the members of this Union against her consent, much less could it allow a foreign and independent government to establish itself there - Georgia became a member of the Confederacy which eventuated in our Federal Union as a sovereign State, always asserting her claim to certain limits, which, having been originally defined in her colonial charter and subsequently recognized in the treaty of peace, she has ever since continued to enjoy, except as they have been circumscribed by her own voluntary transfer of a portion of her territory to the United States in the articles of cession of 1802. Alabama was admitted into the Union on the same footing with the original States, with boundaries which were prescribed by Congress. There is no constitutional, conventional, or legal provision which allows them less power over the Indians within their borders than is possessed by Maine or New York. Would the people of Maine permit the Penobscot tribe to erect an independent government within their State? And unless they did would it not be the duty of the General Government to support them in resisting such a measure? Would the people of New York permit each remnant of the Six Nations within her borders to declare itself an independent people under the protection of the United States? Could the Indians establish a separate republic on each of their reservations in Ohio? And if they were so disposed would it be the duty of this Government to protect them in the attempt? If the principle involved in the obvious answer to these questions be abandoned, it will follow that the objects of this Government are reversed, and that it has become a part of its duty to aid in destroying the States which it was established to protect. (Andrew Jackson, 1830)

How does Jackson justify his decision to side with the states on the question of whether or not it is appropriate to force Indians to evacuate their traditional homelands?

4. P or S - The last detachment which we passed on the 7th, embraced rising two thousand Indians with horses and mules in proportion. The forward part of the train we found just pitching their tents for the night, and notwithstanding some thirty or forty wagons were already stationed, we found the road literally filled with the procession for about three miles in length. The sick and feeble were carried in wagons - about as comfortable for travelling as a New England ox cart with a covering over it - a great many ride on horseback and multitudes go on foot - even aged females, apparently, nearly ready to drop into the grave - were travelling with heavy burdens attached to the back - on the sometimes frozen ground, and sometimes muddy streets, with no covering for the feet except what nature had given them. We were some hours making our way through the crowd, which brought us in close contact with the wagons and the multitude, so much that we felt fortunate to find ourselves freed from the crowd without leaving any part of our carriage. We learned from the inhabitants on the road where the Indians passed that they buried fourteen to fifteen at every stopping place-and they make a journey of only ten miles per day on an average. . . . One aged Indian, who was commander of the friendly Creeks and Seminoles in a very important engagement in company with General Jackson, was accosted on arriving in a little village in Kentucky by an aged man residing there, and who was one of Jackson's men in the engagement referred to, and asked if he (the Indian) recollected him? The aged Chieftain looked him in the face and recognized him, and with a down-cast look and heavy sigh, referring to the engagement, he said, "Ah! my life and the lives of my people were then at stake for you and your country. I then thought Jackson my best friend. But, ah! Jackson no serve me right. Your country no do me Justice now." (*"A Native of Maine" on the Emigrating Cherokees in Southern Kentucky*, 1838)

Describe the conditions the Cherokee traveled in as related by the author.

What was the old Chieftan likely feeling given his reply to his old comrade in arms from the Seminole Wars?

5. P or S -

CHEROKEE NATION, NEW ECHOTA, Ga. March 22nd, 1837.

CHEROKEES:

It is nearly a year since I first arrived in this country. I then informed you of the objects of my coming among you. I told you that a treaty had been made with your people, and that your country was to be given up to the United States by the 25th May, 1838, a (little more than a year from this time,) when you would all be compelled to remove to the West. I also told you, if you would submit to the terms of the treaty I would protect you in your persons and property, at the same time I would furnish provisions and clothing to the poor and destitute of the Nation. You would not listen, but turned a deaf ear to my advice. You preferred the counsel of those who were opposed to the treaty. They told you, what was not true, that your people had made no treaty with the United States, and that you would be able to retain you lands, and would not be obliged to remove to the West, the place designated for your new homes. Be no longer deceived by such advice! It is not only untrue, but if listened to, may lead to your utter ruin. The President, as well as Congress, have decreed that you should remove from this country. The people of Georgia, of North Carolina, of Tennessee and of Alabama, have decreed it. Your fate is decided; and if you do not voluntarily get ready and go by the time fixed in the treaty, you will then be forced from this country by the soldiers of the United States.... Therefore, take my advice: It is the advice of a friend, who would tell you the truth, and who feels deeply interested in your welfare, and who will do everything in his power to relieve, protect and secure to you the benefits of the treaty. And why not abandon a country no longer yours? Do you not see the white people daily coming into it, driving you from your homes and possessing your houses, your cornfields and your ferries? Hitherto I have been able to some degree, to protect you from their intrusions; in a short time it will no longer be in my power. If, however, I could protect you, you could not live with them. Your habits, your manners and your customs are unlike, and unsuited to theirs. They have no feelings, no sympathies in common with yourselves. Leave then this country, which after the 25th May 1838, can afford you no protection! and remove to the country designated for your new homes, which is secured to you and your children forever; and where you may live under your own laws, and the customs of your fathers, without intrusion or molestation from the white man. (BGen. John E. Wool, *Letter to the Cherokees*, written at New Echota, March 22, 1837)

What warning does Brigadier General Wool have for the Cherokee?

How does Wool try to persuade the Cherokee that staying is not an option, and that their future lay in the West?
