

# The Trail of Tears; Its Grief and Loss

## Summary

Students will trace the development and expansion of the U.S. while studying the Trail of Tears. They will look at the political factors and analyze the impact the Indian Removal Act had upon a society. Students will also study the causes of death and grief of the Cherokee Nation.

## Additional Core Ties

Social Studies - 5th Grade

[Standard 4 Objective 1](#)

## Time Frame

6 class periods of 60 minutes each

## Group Size

Large Groups

## Life Skills

Social & Civic Responsibility

## Materials

Overhead and copies of [The Cherokee Trail of Tears Timeline 1838-1839](#) (pdf)

Copy of [Cherokee Messenger](#) (pdf)

Copy for each group of [Statistics of the 13 Detachments](#) (pdf)

Writing journal for each student.

## Background for Teachers

It is important to know the events leading up to the Cherokee resettlement. The Trail of Tears Association website below provides an overview of the events.

Why do epidemics occur? To find out more, go to the link entitled, "Teacher Background on epidemics" below.

## Student Prior Knowledge

Be familiar with the words epidemic, smallpox, cholera, dysentery (a disorder marked by diarrhea with blood and mucus in the feces).

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will have a knowledge of The Trail Of Tears, its hardships and loss.

Students will evaluate and compare the various trails taken by the Cherokee to Oklahoma.

By studying the Jacksonian policy of the Native Americans, students will form opinions of the government's motives for the relocation.

Using different web sites, students will research the feelings and losses of the Cherokee.

Students will discuss and compare the losses on the Trail of Tears to today's world, citing the epidemics, lack of food, clean water, and cold weather that causes deaths.

## Instructional Procedures

## **Day One**

Ask: What is an epidemic? (See Teacher Background)

How do they spread? (Epidemics are outbreaks of disease that affect many people at one time. Many epidemics are from poor sanitation, lack of cleanliness, diseased animals, or are waterborne.) The ancient people knew of epidemics but not where they came from. Typhus fever, dysentery, typhoid fever, and cholera are connected to poor sanitation and water.

Ask: How would poor sanitation aboard ships have an affect on people coming to America? How about the Explorers? What do you suppose the affect on the Indian population was? Ships were filthy and often fever-ridden. One account tells of French explorers who left their fever-ridden blankets and clothing behind and wiped out an entire Indian population.

Discuss epidemics students are aware of in the world today; e.g., HIV, cholera, smallpox, etc. How do we find out if a person is carrying a deadly disease? What do you suppose the chances are of our community being exposed? How do we control the spread of these diseases? Why is personal hygiene so important? What kind of inoculations do we have currently?

## **Day Two**

In 1838-1839 the Cherokee Nation was forced to march across part of the United States to what is now known as Oklahoma (see the Trails of Tears Map attachment).

Pass out a map of the U.S.A. and the Trail Of Tears map. Have the students transpose the Trail of Tears map onto the U.S.A. map.

Discuss the different routes taken.

## **Day Three**

Have students learn more about the Cherokee Indians - either from their textbooks or the Internet. (Utah students can go to [Pioneer Online Library](#) to learn more this topic.)

Using their writing journals, have students respond to the following questions: Why would the Cherokee have an epidemic of smallpox in the early 1700s? How do you think the Cherokee dealt with so many deaths? Have students who want to, share their writings.

Talk about the grief process and coping skills when dealing with the loss of someone either because of death or moving (see UEN Fifth Grade Health lesson entitled, "[Management of Grief and Loss](#)").

## **Day Four**

Using your social studies books, study and discuss the Jacksonian Democracy era. For more information on the political aspect, have students read "Cherokee Messenger" (site listed above).

Have the class compare the Trail Of Tears to other pioneer movements.

## **Day Five**

Hand out the Statistics worksheet (see Materials section above). With partners, have students analyze the average and mode of travel durations, deaths, births, and desertions.

Have students graph the death averages of the 13 parties and compare them.

## **Final Day**

Divide the class into four groups:

Cherokee

U.S. politicians of the 1830s

White landowners

Jury

The teacher should be the Judge.

Have these groups present a case for or against the Indian Removal Act. You will need to allow some time before the case is presented for each group to make a plan. The teacher should use this time to work with the jury to explain some legalities of our court system.

Present the case for the Jury. Have the impartial Jury determine which argument was the most

convincing.

### Extensions

Check with your local college for a Native American group on campus. Ask someone to give a lesson on what a Pow-Wow is.

Assign students to write journal entries on how they would feel if they were walking The Trail of Tears.

With a partner, have students write a persuasive paper for or against the need of the Native American Removal Act.

Students can write an original legend associated with The Trail of Tears. Publish the legends for your school library.

Using the statistics on the 13 bands of Indians find averages, medians, and modes for the length of their journey compared to others, and the number of deaths in each.

Have a lawyer come in and explain the Supreme Court case of "Worcester v. Georgia", and Chief Justice John Marshall's role.

Study the Black Hawk War of 1832, and the revision of the Seminole War in 1835.

### Rubrics

[The Trail Of Tears - Grief and Loss](#)

### Authors

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