**President Andrew Jackson’s Speech to Congress Regarding Indian Removal**

“It gives me great pleasure to announce to Congress that the Government’s benevolent policy of Indian removal has almost been achieved.

We have wept over the fate of the natives of this country, as one by one many tribes have disappeared from the earth. However, we must accept this the way we accept when an older generation dies and makes room for the younger.

We would not want to see this continent restored to the condition in which our forefathers found it. What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and occupied by a few thousand savages to our great Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, decorated with art and industry, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?

The United States will pay to send the natives to a land where they may live longer and possibly survive as a people.

Can it be cruel when this Government offers to purchase the

Indian’s land, give him new and extensive territory, pay the expense of his removal, and support him for the first year in his new home? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of moving West under such conditions!

The policy of the Government towards the red man is generous. The Indian is unwilling to follow the laws of the States and mingle with the population. To save him from utter annihilation, the Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.”

**Vocabulary**

Benevolent—kind

Annihilation—destruction

**Private John G. Burnett accompanied the Cherokees on their journey and described what he saw.**

“I saw helpless Cherokees arrested and dragged from their homes, and driven at the bayonet point into the stockades. And in the chill of a drizzling rain on an October morning, I saw them loaded like cattle or sheep into six hundred and forty-five wagons and started toward the west.

One can never forget the sadness and solemnity of that morning. Chief John Ross led in prayer and when the bugle sounded and the wagons started rolling many of the children rose to their feet and waved their little hands good-by to their mountain homes, knowing they were leaving them forever. Many of these helpless people did not have blankets and many of them had been driven from home barefooted.

On the morning of November the 17th we encountered a terrific sleet and snow storm with freezing temperatures and from that day until we reached the end of the fateful journey on March the 26th, 1839, the sufferings of the Cherokees were awful. The trail of the exiles was a trail of death. They had to sleep in the wagons and on the ground without fire. And I have known as many as twenty-two of them to die in one night of pneumonia due to ill treatment, cold, and exposure.”

**Elizabeth Watts**, a Cherokee woman whose mother was born along the Trail of Tears, described the trek westward.

“The soldiers gathered them up, all up, and put them in camps. They hunted them and ran them down until they got all of them. Even before they were loaded in wagons, many of them got sick and died. They were all grief stricken they lost all on earth they had. White men even robbed their dead’s graves to get their jewelry and other little trinkets. They saw to stay was impossible and Cherokees told Gen. Scott they would go without further trouble and the long journey started. They did not all come at once. First one batch and then another. The sick, old, and babies rode on the grub and household wagons. The rest rode a horse, if they had one. Most of them walked. Many of them died along the way. They buried them where they died, in unmarked graves. The road they traveled, history calls the "Trail of Tears". This trail was more than tears. It was death, sorrow, hunger, exposure, and humiliation to a civilized people as were the Cherokees.”

**Andrew Jackson Speech Questions**

1. (Contextualization) Why does Jackson think the United States was better in 1830 than in 1609?

2. (Contextualization) Why does Jackson think that the Cherokee will be better off in Indian Territory?

3. (Close reading) Why does Jackson think his policy is kind and generous?

4. Do you believe Jackson? What parts sound sincere/ believable? What parts sound insincere/unbelievable?

**Private Burnett and Elizabeth Watts Questions**

1. How were the Native Americans forced out of their homes according to Burnett and Watts?

2. What happened along the journey to their new lands?

3. Compare/Contrast the reality of Indian Removal with how Jackson interpreted it.

**Individual Reflection:** In an assertion paragraph answer the following question: Was Andrew Jackson a hypocrite in his Indian Removal Policy?

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Assertion (your Argument): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Three Broad Details (Historical Evidence): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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