

## The Five “Civilized” Tribes Are Moved West

Native Americans in the United States were coming under increasing pressure in the 1820s. The small northern tribes were forced to leave valuable lands and were relocated to lands considered worthless. Meaningless treaties were signed by chiefs, and all tribal members were expelled. The southern tribes were larger and more organized, however. They were known as the Five “Civilized” Tribes because they had adopted many of the white settlers’ customs: religion, houses, clothing, and even slaveholding. They included Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Seminoles. The largest was the Cherokee nation. A Cherokee named Sequoyah was so impressed with the “talking leaves” (written words) of the settlers that he developed a written alphabet using the 85 syllables in his language.

### Creation of Arkansas Territory and Indian Territory

White settlers wanted the Native Americans’ valuable cotton lands for themselves. President James Monroe felt Native Americans should exchange their lands for lands west of the Mississippi River. In 1824, he approved the first plan for native removal. On January 27, 1825, in a special message to the Senate, he requested the creation of the Arkansas Territory and Indian Territory. President John Quincy Adams was pressured by Georgia’s governor and politicians to remove the Cherokee and Creek nations. In 1825, Chief William McIntosh, a Creek leader, signed a treaty giving up tribal lands to the state of Georgia. The treaty was very unpopular with most tribal members. In April 1825, Chief Menewa and his soldiers killed McIntosh for signing the treaty. In 1826, Chief Menewa, a member of the Creek National Council delegation, went to Washington, D.C., to protest the treaty. President Adams negotiated a new clause that would cede less tribal lands to Georgia. Governor George Troup of Georgia was furious with this decision and began pressuring the Native Americans to leave, regardless of what President Adams thought. In 1836, Chief Menewa would join the long line of Creeks heading for Indian Territory.

### Indian Removal Act

In 1829, gold prospectors flooded into the Cherokee lands in northern Georgia. The Cherokee tried to remove the settlers from their lands. In 1830, President Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. This law forced the Cherokee and other nations to leave their lands and relocate to an area known as the Indian Territory. This new homeland is now known as eastern Oklahoma. Choctaw removal in 1831 was slowed by ice on the Mississippi River and heavy snows in the Arkansas swamps through which they passed. Desperately short on food, many starved while the man who was supposed to supply them stayed at home in Nashville because it was too cold to travel. The devastating journey became known as the “Trail of Tears.”

### Cherokee and Seminoles Fight Removal

The Cherokees fought removal in the courts, and the Supreme Court agreed that their treaty rights had been violated, but Jackson refused to support the verdict of the Court. He was said to have remarked, “John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it.” In 1836, Cherokees began relocating to the Indian Territory. The remaining Cherokees were forced to leave in 1838, but some escaped to the mountains of North Carolina, where their descendants still live. The rest walked the “Trail of Tears,” and many of them died on their way to Indian Territory.

Seminoles hid in Florida’s swamps. Led by Chief Osceola, they stubbornly refused to move out. Assisted by runaway slaves, the Seminoles were at war with the U.S. government. Osceola was captured in October 1837 and died on January 30, 1838. After his death, most of his followers surrendered and relocated west. A few stayed behind in Florida.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Five “Civilized” Tribes Are Moved West: Activity

**Directions:** Use the information in the reading selection to develop a time line (from earliest to latest event) showing the history of Native American removal from tribal lands. The first one is done for you.

Monroe approves first plan for Native removal	1824	JAN 1825	
	1825	April 1825	
	1826	1826	
	1829	1830	
	1831	1836	
	1836	Oct. 1837	
	JAN 1838	1838	