

What is the trail of  
tears and what  
happened?



**ASSIGN  
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Under the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the federal government forced the Cherokee Indians out of their homeland via a route that would become known as the “ Trail of Tears.” This tragic trail “ The Trail of Tears” took place in our very home, Illinois.

The Cherokee Nation was huge, expanding over several states including the state Georgia which around 20, 000 Cherokees lived here. The name ‘ Tciloki’ is creek, meaning people who speak differently, this is where the name Cherokee came from. They had first made contact with the Spanish Settlers who introduced the Cherokee to guns, alcohol, and new diseases. From 1760 - 1762 the Cherokee people, fought the British, led by Chief Oconostota, because of their unfair trade policies and horrific treatment. They seized one British fort but the British ended up defeating them in the end. They made a peace treaty which forced them to give up a huge majority of their land. Fighting the foreigners and the diseases caused a dramatic decrease in the Cherokee population during that colonial period.”

Around the early 1830s, nearly 125, 000 Native Americans lived on millions of acres of land in Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Carolina. Their ancestors had occupied and lived there for generations. After a while, southeastern white people came to their land and tried to take it. To get the Cherokee off of their property they created the Removal Act. The Removal Act would make them leave their land by force and soldiers would force them on the 1, 000-mile trail called the Trail of Tears. Later on, in late 1939 they finally got through the path and began to make new homes and

continue their culture. Although, they were still very furious about having to give up their land to southeastern white people. Overall, tragedy was the result of the Trail of Tears, especially for those who had to march to Oklahoma. The Indian Removal Act is the catalyst that ends up killing one-quarter of the Cherokee Indians which would be 4, 000 out of 16, 000 Cherokees that marched.

The Indian Americans were shocked and furious. The Trail of Tears refers to the suffering of Native Americans affected by the Indian Removal Act. It is approximated that the five tribes lost 1 in 4 of their population to the cold, exhaustion and the starvation during the move west. Over time when they arrived at their destination, they grew their population back including their culture.

The tribes that were on the Trail of Tears were described as the “ Civilized Tribes” because they had agreed to live peacefully alongside the European settlers, and had adopted and slowly accepted the settler’s culture.

Afterward the government forcibly removed them leading to a lack of trust between the tribes and the United States, including the laws, from the Dawes Act which led to the massive acquisition of native lands by European speculators, and I assure you this can still be argued, that this alienation is still felt today.

In President Andrew Jackson’s first inaugural address in 1829, he emphasized his desire “ to observe toward the Indian tribe within our limits and liberal policy, and to give humane and considerable attention to their rights and their wants which is consistent with the habits of our Government and the

feeling of our people.” Andrew Jackson fourteen months later then prompted Congress to pass the Removal Act. The Removal Act would force Native Americans to leave the United States and settle west of the Mississippi River in the Indian Territory. Most of the tribes would band together as an independent nation and challenge the legislation in the U. S. courts. In 1832 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of them, and some tribes still signed the treaties giving federal governments the legal authorities to assist them in the Indian Territory.

The deadline for the Removal Act was 1838 and thousands of federal soldiers, and Georgia volunteers entered the territory and forcibly relocated the Cherokees.