

Lesson Plan

Reasons and Results

Book: *The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears*

Series: Expansion of Our Nation

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students explore how leaders' motives shape their actions and decisions, which in turn shape historical events.

Supplies

- *The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears* book

Before the Activity

Read *The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears*, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears tells the stories of five American Indian nations in the Southeastern United States who were forced to give up their homelands and move west. In the following activity, students will focus on the Cherokee Nation.

Read the last paragraph on page 20 and the paragraph on page 21 out loud to students. Then ask the following questions. After each question, give students 30 seconds to think about their answer. Then have them discuss their answer briefly with two or three other students.

- Why do you think President Jackson refused to meet with the Cherokee leaders? Would you have made the same choice? Why or why not? If not, what would you have done instead?
- Why do you think some Cherokee leaders chose to sign the Treaty of New Echota? Would you have made the same choice? Why or why not? If not, what would you have done instead?

Call on a few volunteers to share their answers with the rest of the class. Then have students turn to pages 22 and 23 and read the “Voices from the Past” feature about John Ross. After students have read this feature, ask the following question. Once again, give students 30 seconds to think about their answer before discussing it briefly with their small groups.

- Why do you think the US government approved the Treaty of New Echota, despite John Ross's petition? Would you have made the same choice? Why or why not? If not, what would you have done instead?

Once again, call on a few volunteers to share their answers with the rest of the class. Ask students to think about one of the alternate solutions a classmate suggests. Ask students to take 30 seconds to imagine what might have happened in the 1800s if the US government had done that instead. Explain that we can never know for sure what would happen, but what we *do* know is that leaders' actions play a big part in historic events. These actions are often shaped by the leaders' motives and values. So, understanding their motives and values helps us understand the historic event. This idea is one of the reasons we study the biographies of people from history.

Evaluation

Could students use the information from the book to infer reasons for the different leaders' actions? Could they make reasonable guesses about what might have happened instead?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' speaking and listening standards, grade 5 (SL 5.1) and the National Council for Social Studies Standards content standard 6.