***Simulated Research Task Practice Essay***

The following three items all relate to the infamous “Trail of Tears”--the forced emigration of thousands of Native Americans from their homes in the Southeastern US to Indian Territory (modern-day Oklahoma).  The event is widely regarded as one of the cruelest acts ever imposed by the US government.  Item #1, from History.com, provides an overview of the event.  Item #2 was read by President Andrew Jackson to Congress in regards to the progress of the Indian Removal Act.  Item #3 was sent to leaders of the Cherokee tribes before their forced removal.

**After reading the items, respond to the following prompt:**

**Though some objected to the removal of the Native Americans from their lands in the Southeast, most Americans supported it.  Write an essay explaining a few of the arguments used to justify this inhumane act .  Incorporate quotations from and references to all three items to support your answer.**

***Item #1***

”Trail of Tears.” *History.* [http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history](http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears)

[/trail-of-tears](http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears)  Accessed 17 Mar. 2017.

At the beginning of the 1830s, nearly 125,000 Native Americans lived on millions of acres of land in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida–land their ancestors had occupied and cultivated for generations. By the end of the decade, very few natives remained anywhere in the southeastern United States. Working on behalf of white settlers who wanted to grow cotton on the Indians’ land, the federal government forced them to leave their homelands and walk thousands of miles to a specially designated “Indian territory” across the Mississippi River. This difficult and sometimes deadly journey is known as the Trail of Tears.

**THE “INDIAN PROBLEM”**

White Americans, particularly those who lived on the western frontier, often feared and resented the Native Americans they encountered: To them, American Indians seemed to be an unfamiliar, alien people who occupied land that white settlers wanted (and believed they deserved). Some officials in the early years of the American republic, such as President [George Washington](http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/george-washington), believed that the best way to solve this “Indian problem” was simply to “civilize” the Native Americans. The goal of this civilization campaign was to make Native Americans as much like white Americans as possible by encouraging them convert to Christianity, learn to speak and read English, and adopt European-style economic practices such as the individual ownership of land and other property (including, in some instances in the South, African slaves). In the southeastern United States, many Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek and Cherokee people embraced these customs and became known as the “Five Civilized Tribes.”

But their land, located in parts of [Georgia](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/georgia), [Alabama](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/alabama), [North Carolina](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/north-carolina), [Florida](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/florida) and [Tennessee](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/tennessee), was valuable, and it grew to be more coveted as white settlers flooded the region. Many of these whites yearned to make their fortunes by growing cotton, and they did not care how “civilized” their native neighbors were: They wanted that land and they would do almost anything to get it. They stole livestock; burned and looted houses and towns;, and squatted on land that did not belong to them.

State governments joined in this effort to drive Native Americans out of the South. Several states passed laws limiting Native American sovereignty and rights and encroaching on their territory. In a few cases, such as Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831) and Worcester v. Georgia (1832), the U.S. Supreme Court objected to these practices and affirmed that native nations were sovereign nations “in which the laws of Georgia [and other states] can have no force.” Even so, the maltreatment continued. As President [Andrew Jackson](http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/andrew-jackson) noted in 1832, if no one intended to enforce the Supreme Court’s rulings (which he certainly did not), then the decisions would “[fall]…still born.” Southern states were determined to take ownership of Indian lands and would go to great lengths to secure this territory.

**INDIAN REMOVAL**

Andrew Jackson had long been an advocate of what he called “Indian removal.” As an Army general, he had spent years leading brutal campaigns against the Creeks in Georgia and Alabama and the Seminoles in Florida–campaigns that resulted in the transfer of hundreds of thousands of acres of land from Indian nations to white farmers. As president, he continued this crusade. In 1830, he signed the Indian Removal Act, which gave the federal government the power to exchange Native-held land in the cotton kingdom east of the [Mississippi](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/mississippi) for land to the west, in the “Indian colonization zone” that the United States had acquired as part of the [Louisiana](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/louisiana) Purchase. (This “Indian territory” was located in present-day [Oklahoma](http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/oklahoma).) The law required the government to negotiate removal treaties fairly, voluntarily and peacefully: It did not permit the president or anyone else to coerce Native nations into giving up their land. However, President Jackson and his government frequently ignored the letter of the law and forced Native Americans to vacate lands they had lived on for generations. In the winter of 1831, under threat of invasion by the U.S. Army, the Choctaw became the first nation to be expelled from its land altogether. They made the journey to Indian territory on foot (some “bound in chains and marched double file,” one historian writes) and without any food, supplies or other help from the government. Thousands of people died along the way. It was, one Choctaw leader told an Alabama newspaper, a “trail of tears and death.”

**THE TRAIL OF TEARS**

The Indian-removal process continued. In 1836, the federal government drove the Creeks from their land for the last time: 3,500 of the 15,000 Creeks who set out for Oklahoma did not survive the trip.

The Cherokee people were divided: What was the best way to handle the government’s determination to get its hands on their territory? Some wanted to stay and fight. Others thought it was more pragmatic to agree to leave in exchange for money and other concessions. In 1835, a few self-appointed representatives of the Cherokee nation negotiated the Treaty of New Echota, which traded all Cherokee land east of the Mississippi for $5 million, relocation assistance and compensation for lost property. To the federal government, the treaty was a done deal, but many of the Cherokee felt betrayed: After all, the negotiators did not represent the tribal government or anyone else. “The instrument in question is not the act of our nation,” wrote the nation’s principal chief, John Ross, in a letter to the U.S. Senate protesting the treaty. “We are not parties to its covenants; it has not received the sanction of our people.” Nearly 16,000 Cherokees signed Ross’s petition, but Congress approved the treaty anyway.

By 1838, only about 2,000 Cherokees had left their Georgia homeland for Indian territory. President [Martin Van Buren](http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/martin-van-buren) sent General [Winfield Scott](http://www.history.com/topics/winfield-scott) and 7,000 soldiers to expedite the removal process. Scott and his troops forced the Cherokee into stockades at bayonet point while whites looted their homes and belongings. Then, they marched the Indians more than 1,200 miles to Indian territory. Whooping cough, typhus, dysentery, cholera and starvation were epidemic along the way, and historians estimate that more than 5,000 Cherokee died as a result of the journey.

By 1840, tens of thousands of Native Americans had been driven off of their land in the southeastern states and forced to move across the Mississippi to Indian territory. The federal government promised that their new land would remain unmolested forever, but as the line of white settlement pushed westward, “Indian country” shrank and shrank. In 1907, Oklahoma became a state and Indian territory was gone for good.

***Item #2***

“Transcript of President Andrew Jackson’s Message to Congress on ‘Indian

Removal’ (1830).”  *Our Documents.* <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/>

doc.php?flash=false&doc=25&page=transcript Accessed 17 Mar. 2017.

**Andrew Jackson's Annual Message**

It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages.

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power. It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion?

The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual. Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does Humanity weep at these painful separations from everything, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and facilities of man in their highest perfection. These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this Government when, by events which it can not control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.

And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.

**Item #3**

“Gen. Winfield Scott’s Address to the Cherokee Nation.” *Georgia Info*.

<http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/topics/history/article/antebellum-era-1801-1860>

/gen-winfield-scotts-address-to-the-cherokee-nation  Accessed 17 Mar. 2017.

**Gen. Winfield Scott’s Address to the Cherokee Nation**

“Cherokees! The President of the United States has sent me with a powerful army, to cause you, in obedience to the treaty of 1835 [the Treaty of New Echota], to join that part of your people who have already established in prosperity on the other side of the Mississippi. Unhappily, the two years which were allowed for the purpose, you have suffered to pass away without following, and without making any preparation to follow; and now, or by the time that this solemn address shall reach your distant settlements, the emigration must be commenced in haste, but I hope without disorder. I have no power, by granting a farther delay, to correct the error that you have committed. The full moon of May is already on the wane; and before another shall have passed away, every Cherokee man, woman and child in those states must be in motion to join their brethren in the far West.

My friends! This is no sudden determination on the part of the President, whom you and I must now obey. By the treaty, the emigration was to have been completed on or before the 23rd of this month; and the President has constantly kept you warned, during the two years allowed, through all his officers and agents in this country, that the treaty would be enforced.

I am come to carry out that determination. My troops already occupy many positions in the country that you are to abandon, and thousands and thousands are approaching from every quarter, to render resistance and escape alike hopeless. All those troops, regular and militia, are your friends. Receive them and confide in them as such. Obey them when they tell you that your can remain no longer in this country. Soldiers are as kind-hearted as brave, and the desire of every one of us is to execute our painful duty in mercy. We are commanded by the President to act towards you in that spirit, and much is also the wish of the whole people of America.

Chiefs, head-men and warriors! Will you then, by resistance, compel us to resort to arms? God forbid! Or will you, by flight, seek to hid yourselves in mountains and forests, and thus oblige us to hunt you down? Remember that, in pursuit, it may be impossible to avoid conflicts. The blood of the white man or the blood of the red man may be spilt, and, if spilt, however accidentally, it may be impossible for the discreet and humane among you, or among us, to prevent a general war and carnage. Think of this, my Cherokee brethren! I am an old warrior, and have been present at many a scene of slaughter, but spare me, I beseech you, the horror of witnessing the destruction of the Cherokees.

Do not, I invite you, even wait for the close approach of the troops; but make such preparations for emigration as you can and hasten to this place, to Ross’s Landing or to Gunter’s Landing, where you all will be received in kindness by officers selected for the purpose. You will find food for all and clothing for the destitute at either of those places, and thence at your ease and in comfort be transported to your new homes, according to the terms of the treaty.

This is the address of a warrior to warriors. May his entreaties by kindly received and may the God of both prosper the Americans and Cherokees and preserve them long in peace and friendship with each other!