Table of Contents

I. Approach and Rationale 1
II. Content and Organization 1

Teacher Background Materials

I. Unit Overview 3
II. Unit Context 3
III. Correlation to National History Standards 4
IV. Unit Objectives 5
V. Historical Background 6

Dramatic Moment 9

Lessons

Lesson One: The Role of Education 10

Lesson Two: Euro-American Justifications and Indian Responses 24

Lesson Three: Indian Removal Policy 37

Lesson Four: The Case of the Cherokee 56

Lesson Five: The Shift to Reservation Policy 71

TEACHER BACKGROUND MATERIALS

I. UNIT OVERVIEW

The circumstances in which a nation finds itself are less significant than the context in which those circumstances are perceived, and the ultimate decisions informed by those perceptions define the character of the nation. The cultural interaction between Euro-Americans and the original inhabitants constitute one of the most compelling and defining conundrums in American History. This teaching unit, *U. S. Indian Policy, 1815–1860: Removal to Reservations*, plumbs the depths of nineteenth-century ideology as it manifested itself in prevailing public attitudes, justifications for actions, and the formation of government policy. Opposing viewpoints are presented on the policy of Indian Removal as well as a variety of Native American responses providing substance for discussion and debate. Specific attention is paid to shifting attitudes among the Cherokees as their circumstances changed. The teaching unit concludes with an examination of the transition in U. S. policy from Indian Removal to concentrating the remaining eastern Indians on reservations.

Lessons One and **Two** present two different cultural perspectives and the circumstances and decisions that defined the nature of the relationship between those cultures. The roots of Euro-American ideology and prejudice are examined as well as the establishment and perpetuation of those biases in the institutions of a young democracy and their influence in directing federal and state policies toward Native Americans during the early nineteenth century.

Lessons Three, **Four** and **Five** concentrate on the establishment and implementation of U. S. Indian Policy between 1815 and 1860. These lessons provide primary documents that present multiple perspectives on the policy of Indian Removal and reveals the transition to a policy of confinement on reservations while illustrating throughout the variety of attitudes towards the Indians' adoption of and assimilation into Euro-American culture. Discussion questions and activities are provided to guide students through an analysis of the historical documents and to engage them in the arguments and ideology of these issues in this time period. The current relevance of these issues can be highlighted by a comparison of Indian Removal with ethnic cleansing or an examination of recent disputes over treaty rights in Wisconsin and Minnesota based on the 1837 and 1854 treaties contained in this unit.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

In the typical United States History survey course, this unit would be most appropriate following class topics on the War of 1812 and the diplomatic boundary agreements during the next decade. It could also be the concluding issue in the Jacksonian period while providing a springboard into the topic of western expansion and the overland trails. A discussion of the antebellum Age of Reform could either precede or follow this unit to enable comparisons and contrasts.

This unit is designed for a two to three week time period but is structured to be easily modified for use in a variety of secondary and post-secondary classroom situations and to provide great flexibility in the use of class time. The unit can be used as a whole, independently in separate sections, or by extracting selected documents to enhance other classroom strategies. Should the unit be used in its entirety, class time can be conserved by assigning specific documents to different student groups that would examine them and then report their findings to the rest of the class. Student activities could include analyzing documents, negotiating treaties, engaging in debates, writing mock newspaper articles about specific events, producing posters, staging demonstrations, and role playing. Students will be encouraged to examine issues and events from a variety of Euro-American and Native American perspectives.

III. CORRELATION TO NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

U.S. Indian Policy, 1815–1860: Removal to Reservations presents students with opportunities not only to examine Euro-American—Native American relations during the early nineteenth century from multiple perspectives using primary documents, but the European ideology which pervaded and in turn was perpetuated by the institutions of American Democracy. The unit provides documentary materials and learning activities relating to the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), **Era 4**, **Standard 1B**: *Demonstrate an understanding of federal and state Indian policy and the strategies for survival forged by Native Americans*. Exercises designed to address Euro-American attitudes and ideas that contributed to the myth of Manifest Destiny are incorporated into the unit, satisfying **Standard 1C**. The unit also addresses the five Historical Thinking Standards outlined in Part 1, Chapter 2 of the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition*. Lessons provide primary source materials which challenge students to distinguish between fact and fiction, compare different stories about historical events, consider multiple perspectives, explain causes in analyzing historical actions, hypothesize influences of the past, identify causes of a problem, and evaluate the consequences of a decision.

IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze primary documents that reveal attitudes that helped provide a basis for U.S. Indian policy.

2. To compare, contrast and evaluate various arguments concerning the U.S. policy of removing Native Americans west of the Mississippi and to consider differing interpretations of the same historical events.

3. To examine treaties and statements of official policy outlining the shift in U.S. Indian Policy from removal to reservations.

4. To develop an understanding of how the historical documents in this unit and the attitudes revealed by them are relevant to current social-political issues which continue to guide official government polices towards Native Americans

5. To expose students to the viewpoints and political positions of Native Americans whose voices have been largely ignored in standard texts.

V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ideally, relations between two peoples should be an exchange of ideas and a search for mutually beneficial relationships based upon and promoting respect for each other's cultural differences. In an autocratic or aristocratic government, this ideal can be thwarted by narrow concerns of economic interest or social prejudice that control government policy. However, in a democracy, government policy must be supported by commonly held perceptions, and if that policy is prejudicial towards another people, that prejudice must be institutionalized so that no significant group of constituents questions the basic premises from which the policy emanates. Political discourse then focuses on the choice of the various policy options that are dictated by the unquestioned premises.

The perceptions that were later to shape the beliefs of the early Euro-Americans and guide their policies toward Native Americans were clearly articulated during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The feudal system of Medieval Europe planted the seeds for the belief that property ownership brought greater freedom. The decline of feudalism led to an attendant rise in social status of some peasants to that of landowners. This in turn created within the new propertied class a greater degree of independence. The desire for land and all of its promises were passed on and became a compelling motive for future colonizers. The connection between land and freedom had been firmly established by the end of the Renaissance.

As land was seen as liberating the oppressed, reason was perceived as the means to understand the workings of the world, freeing the mind from the rule of passion. Enlightened thought added moral and scientific weight concerning the superiority of reason over emotion by suggesting that humanity was on a continuum with the men of logic (those who created the concept) at the top and

those enslaved by their passions (those perceived as unenlightened) on the bottom. The creators of the concept, by definition, found themselves on the highest rung. This perception focused on the benevolence of the "superior" culture bringing progress to the "inferior" culture while at the same time dismissing its contributions. To do otherwise would be to contradict the notions of superiority and suggest equality between the cultures that would be anathema to European beliefs and desires.

As European discovery and exploration ultimately led to colonization, the seeds of enlightened thought were scattered with the settlement of new territories. The instruments of exploration and conquest, combined with the moral imperative of Christianizing and civilizing were seen not only as evidence of technological superiority but divine mandate as well. The subjugation of native peoples was justified and even consecrated. By the time the United States had established its new government, enlightened thought was firmly imbedded in the institutions of the new democracy. This provided a justification for the harsh treatment of indigenous peoples while at the same time silencing almost all criticism of the basic assumptions inherent in Indian policy, leaving only the methods of implementation to be disputed.

Prejudicial attitudes concerning Native Americans permeated virtually every institution of the new republic, at once instilling and reinforcing an Euro-American perspective. Education, religion, arts, and science informed one another, each confirming the perceptions of the other and creating a consensus of opinion among the general populace. The education of the citizenry was deemed indispensable to the perpetuation of American democracy, and public schools became the instruments for creating an informed population. Along with reading, writing, and arithmetic, they passed along a version of the world from the Euro-American perspective. Many textbooks used during the early nineteenth century defined Native Americans as "rude," "savage" and "uncivilized," incapable of using the land "productively."

Literature of this period portrayed Native American characters as representatives of two oversimplified and contrasting stereotypes, the "Bloodthirsty Savage" or the "Noble Savage." Images of the former are prevalent in the many captivity narratives popular in the early 1800s as well as in impressive literary works such as James Fenimore Cooper's, *The Last of the Mohicans*, in which Maqua and his followers commit the famous massacre at Fort William Henry. In contrast, Cooper depicted Chingachgook and Uncas as representatives of the "Noble Savage" uncorrupted by the vices of civilized society. This romantic image reached its highest expression in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Hiawatha" but was also prevalent in popular literature. These contrasting images, praising and condemning Native Americans, are both based on the same ethnocentric views of Indian culture and both portray Indians as stereotypical caricatures rather than complex human beings.

Politicians found ample evidence to reinforce their policies in the scientific views of the time while religion added its blessing as it endeavored to Christianize the heathens. Renowned political and public figures such as John C. Calhoun, President James Monroe, Lewis Cass and Horace Greeley relied upon these "proofs"

as irrefutable evidence of the inferiority of Native American cultures. Horace Greeley wrote in 1859 that Indians were ". . . a slave of appetite and sloth . . ." and continued with "God has given this earth to those [Europeans] who will subdue and cultivate it. . . ." Such views can be found in many political documents that outline a course of action regarding the disposition of native peoples.

The institutions of Euro-American culture and the theoretical foundations upon which they were based provided a paradigm of shared perceptions and interlocking assumptions that informed policy makers and shaped Native American policy. Scientifically, Indians had been described, defined, analyzed and evaluated, only to be found wanting. Theologically, they were a pagan culture in need of redemption. Socially, they were enslaved by passion and wandering the earth. Economically, they were inefficient and squandering their abundant resources. Viewing Native Americans in this manner, those who sought political remedies could resort to removal, reservations and assimilation as viable and even benevolent solutions to the "Indian problem."

The policies of the United States government and the attitudes expressed by political leaders were met by eloquent responses from a number of Native Americans who spoke from a different cultural perspective. While European thought dissected and examined the natural world, Native Americans embraced the belief that all things were connected. The ideal was not to conquer nature, but to live in harmony with it. Land was not property, but a sacred and nurturing spiritual force. While biblical interpretations by European theologians suggested man's domain over the earth, native belief envisioned harmony among all things. While scientific thought gave rise to a "Great Chain of Being," most native belief placed all things in a circle, with all of creation sharing an equal status. When the "Great Chain of Being" collided with the "Great Circle of Life" the conflict over land use became a spiritual struggle for ideological supremacy.

As the United States government adopted Indian Removal as an official policy, those tribes that were most affected responded in various ways according to their circumstances. From the statements of Elias Boudinout embracing assimilation to the pleas to be left alone voiced by George Harkins, district chief of the Choctaw Nation, to Black Hawk's call to arms, Native American leaders sought to preserve their lives and culture despite the encroachments of Euro-American settlement. Often the choices available to Indian leaders were limited to opting for physical existence at the cost of their cultural heritage. Unfortunately, virtually every response to Euro-American incursions, regardless of how measured, was interpreted through the paradigms of a non-receptive culture.

Despite the protestations of Native Americans and Euro-Americans sympathetic to their plight, the government of the United States fashioned Indian policy from the prevailing ideology of the early 19th century that set the stage for removal and concentration. Espousing rationale ranging from benevolence to cultural superiority, politicians such as John C. Calhoun, Andrew Jackson and Lewis Cass created justifications for the removal of Native Americans from their lands. Yet, as these policies were put into action, the Cherokees, with the support of friendly Euro-Americans, sought legal redress in the judicial system. The Supreme Court case, *Worcester v. Georgia* in 1832, eventually defined the relationship

between Indian nations and the federal government in ways that continue to affect their interaction to the present. However, at the time, Euro-American observers focused their concern on the conflict between two branches of the federal government and the issue of state's rights v. federal power. The results of these policies are recorded in such events as the Trail of Tears

Removal alone proved insufficient, as the encroachment of Euro-American settlement on lands set aside for native tribes increased the pressure for new solutions. President Andrew Jackson in his annual message to Congress in 1835 stated the intentions of the government to protect the new lands set aside for Indians west of the Mississippi. Indian Commissioner William McDill's 1848 commentary on the state of Native Americans revealed that the basic premises for removal had changed and indicated the shift towards the reservation policy. By 1858, Indian Commissioner Charles Mix provided a much more candid appraisal of past and future Indian policy. Treaties signed with the Chippewa in 1837 and 1854 reveal this transition in government policy as well as the government's method of first defining tribal territories and then acquiring Indian land. These particular treaties also provide much of the basis for current legal disputes over Indian hunting and fishing rights in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The instances of opposition to U. S. Indian policy are instructive. Most criticism of the policy was based on issues of compassion for an inferior people or an appeal to honor in fulfilling government treaty obligations and promises. Bishop Henry Whipple of Minnesota was perceived by whites as an ardent defender of the Indians. Yet, he only championed their continued life, not the continuation of their culture. His arguments for fair and compassionate treatment of Native Americans, as well as William Seward's two decades earlier, are totally within the accepted context of their total assimilation into white culture. Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen (Whig, New Jersey) provides a rare instance in which Native Americans and their culture are afforded respect and his arguments treat them as any other nation or people.

By the mid-nineteenth century, European philosophies of the Enlightenment were embedded in the Indian policies of the United States government. The institutions of American democracy were predicated upon Eurocentric rationale based on enlightened thought. Those institutions in turn translated that ideology into the context of the American frontier. Public education, thought to be the cornerstone of democracy, promoted a viewpoint of the dominant culture that explained and justified interactions with native cultures. Once the benevolent goal of civilization was firmly ensconced in American ideology and policy, almost any actions were permissible if they furthered that goal. Many Native Americans protested, advocating actions from capitulation to armed resistance, but each action could be interpreted as evidence of the inherent inferiority of native cultures. Some Euro-Americans sympathetic to the Indians circumstances advanced the notion that culture must be sacrificed in order to preserve the lives of Native Americans. On rare occasions when someone, such as Senator Frelinghuysen, presented arguments defending native culture as equal and deserving of respect, they were as those crying in the wilderness. As a civil war threatened to redefine America, the institutionalization of ideas and attitudes that would shape the context of Native American policy for the next century had been firmly established.