

The Seminole Wars: A Last Stand Against White Tyranny

A Lesson Plan

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A More Perfect Union
South Shore Educational Collaborative
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The Seminole Wars (1817-1858)

Enduring Understandings

Students should understand:

- How to empathize with a race of people who refused to be peacefully subjected to a forceful removal from their homes
- How the Seminole's ethnic makeup made them particular targets of the White American government
- How the Seminole situation fits into the greater and more notorious incidents relating to the Indian Removal Act of the 1830's
- To acknowledge the importance of the fact the Seminoles were among the last of the Eastern Indian tribes to persist in their resistance to the machinations of the Federal Government

Historical Habits of Mind

Students will be encouraged and expected to:

- Understand the significance of the past to their own lives, both private and public, and to their society
- Perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by people at the time, to develop historical empathy as opposed to present mindedness.
- Acquire at one and the same time a comprehension of diverse cultures and of a shared humanity
- Appreciate the often tentative nature of judgments about the past and thereby avoid the temptation to seize upon particular "lessons" of history as cures for present ills
- Recognize the importance of individuals who have made a difference in history and the significance of personal character for good and ill.

Essential questions

Overarching

- What were the limits of Jacksonian Democracy?
- What is the nature and importance of democracy and to what possible reasons could a people not be under its protections?

Topical

- Why did Jackson want to remove the Indians from the Southeast?
- Why did the Seminoles have such a strong determination to fight against the injustices of Indian Removal?
- What advantages did Seminoles possess that allowed them to resist as long as they did?
- What made Osceola such a strong leader and what was his added incentive to fight against the removal?

Massachusetts Curriculum Standards

This topic will address the follow MA Frameworks:

USI.26 Describe the causes, course, and consequences of America's westward expansion and its growing diplomatic assertiveness. Use a map of North America to trace America's expansion to the Civil War, including the location of the Santa Fe and Oregon trails. (H, E, G)

- a) the War of 1812
- b) the purchase of Florida in 1819
- c) the 1823 Monroe Doctrine
- d) the Cherokees' Trail of Tears**
- e) the annexation of Texas in 1845
- f) the concept of Manifest Destiny and its relationship to westward expansion**
- g) the acquisition of the Oregon Territory in 1846
- h) the territorial acquisitions resulting from the Mexican War
- i) the search for gold in California
- j) the Gadsden Purchase of 1854

Background

- Ethnically a mixture of Creek Indians, various Florida tribes and the descendants of escaped African slaves
- Seminoles part of the Indian Removal Act implemented by President Andrew Jackson in 1830.
- Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Cherokee and Seminole Tribes all were impacted and forced by the federal government to move west of the Mississippi River.
- Move was made to accommodate the rapid growth of the Nation as white settlers continued to take all available land.
- Jackson had intervened in the Creek Civil War in 1812 due to the fact that Upper Creeks had joined with Tecumseh.
- The Lower Creeks brought the Upper Creek murderers of two white settle families to justice but incurred the wrath of the Upper Creeks hence the war. Jackson's Tennessee Army was aided by the White Stick Creeks and the Cherokee.
- Treaty was signed after the decisive Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814) which both sides of the Creek lost ground to white settlement
- After Horseshoe Bend, Jackson felt that Indian tribes were not sovereign states but subject to US laws which would settle them down to adapting white ways –
- Jackson invaded Spanish Florida in took part in the First Seminole War of 1817-1818 to recover escaped black slaves. Osceola may have fought as a teenager during this first series of wars.
- Later as president, Jackson took over existing policies removing Indians as a way for culture to survive, avoid white invasions and federal and state jurisdiction – save them from the bad influences of white civilization
- Seminole Indians were in effect related to the Lower Creeks and had intermarried with fugitive black slaves and proved to be the most difficult to remove.
- In their history they had also included the descendants of many tribes who had formally fought Europeans – Hichite, Apalachee and Yamasee

- 1832 and 1833 Treaties of Payne’s Landing and Fort Gibson respectively were signed after Seminole scouts had approved of lands in Oklahoma before the nation had agreed to move.
- Americans were also appalled at the number of fugitive slaves that had escaped to Seminole lands. Both Seminole land and escaped slaves were demanded by the Federal government.
- Osceola had his half black wife taken away from him in chains which legend has it caused him to put a knife through a submission document demanding his signature
- Led by Osceola’s guerrilla attacks, angry Seminoles fought the Second Seminole War between 1836 – 1842 costing 1,500 American lives and \$20 Million.
- Osceola himself had been captured in 1836 under a false flag of truce and he died a year later in prison.
- Eventually 4,000 Seminole were relocated to New Orleans along the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers.
- Around 500 remained in Florida in Big Cypress Swamp and the Everglades until another war erupted between 1855 and 1858 (Third Seminole War) where 200 Seminoles were removed while the rest stayed

Lesson Plan Day One

Title of Lesson: The Seminole Wars, an Outcome of Indian Removal

Brief Overview:

Students will discuss the nature of democracy and what it means to live in a “free” society. Did the founding fathers create something that would eventually include Natives as well? What was the great fear of incomplete Indian assimilation? What was the concentration of federal force on the Seminoles just policy or was there an inherent racism involved?

Essential Questions Addressed:

Overarching: What is the nature and importance of democracy and to what possible reasons could a people not be under its protections?

Topical: Why did the Seminoles have such a strong determination to fight against the injustices of Indian Removal and what advantages did Seminoles possess that allowed them to resist as long as they did?

Background:

Content: The students will have read in the prior night’s reading about the Indian Removal Act as a follow up to the prior day’s lesson. They will have an understanding based on previous classes in the larger Jacksonian Unit of Andrew Jackson’s Indian policies and his histories with the natives of the Southeast. Finally they will have been introduced to the concept of the “Five Civilized Tribes” and that the Seminole Indians constituted one of those tribes

Misconceptions: The students may not understand why the Seminoles may have had more to lose or gain from their repeated standoffs against the federal government or the government's determination to rid the east of Indian tribes

Objectives: The true goal of this lesson is to build the true understanding of what the nature and importance of the Seminoles Wars in Early American History and what it meant to the future development of the American South and also the impact on slavery and future race relations. Also to profile or spotlight some of the heroic actions of certain individuals who stood up to tyranny; even if those individuals have traditionally been on the "other side".

Framing of Learning: (1 Social Studies: approx. 48 minutes)

1. Students will read and analyze the following quote from Jackson "The weapons of warfare will be exchanged for the utensils of husbandry, and the wilderness which now withers in sterility and seems to mourn the desolation which overspreads it, will blossom as the rose, and become the nursery of the arts". Teacher will lead the class in a brainstorm about the true nature of Jackson's Indian policies from an Indian point of view. We will then create a mind map on the possible flurries of emotions and various prospective fates of the natives affected by the seemingly good natured and benevolent attitude stated in quote (10-15 minutes)
2. Students will then think to themselves about the nature of the United States government and its mistreatment of Indians and what could have been that reasoning behind the attitudes of Jackson and his contemporaries (5-10 minutes)
3. Direct instruction will be provided to brief detail the major events of the Seminole Wars not covered in the text (10-15 minutes)
4. For a homework assignment, students will be asked to find five Native American nicknames for sports teams and in a brief paragraph, explain what significance if any does the name have in present day and whether there significant regional protest (5-10 minutes for explanation of homework)

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to appreciate how devastating Indian Removal was, the motivation behind it and the level of desperation a tribe like the Seminoles must have felt to defy against impossible odds a federal mandate

Assessment:

Students will be assessed after the next lesson along with both assignments that have be given at the end of each lesson.

Lesson Plan Day Two

Title of Lesson: The Seminole Wars, an Outcome of Indian Removal (same as day one)

Brief Overview:

Students will discuss the nature of democracy and what it means to live in a “free” society. Did the founding fathers create something that would eventually include Natives as well? What was the great fear of incomplete Indian assimilation? What was the concentration of federal force on the Seminoles just policy or was there an inherent racism involved? (same as day one)

Essential Questions Addressed:

Overarching: What is the nature and importance of democracy and to what possible reasons could a people not be under its protections? (same as day one)

Topical: Why did the Seminoles have such a strong determination to fight against the injustices of Indian Removal and what advantages did Seminoles possess that allowed them to resist as long as they did? (same as day one)

Background: (same as day one)

Content: The students will have read in the prior night’s reading about the Indian Removal Act as a follow up to the prior day’s lesson. They will have an understanding based on previous classes in the larger Jacksonian Unit of Andrew Jackson’s Indian policies and his histories with the natives of the Southeast. Finally they will have been introduced to the concept of the “Five Civilized Tribes” and that the Seminole Indians constituted one of those tribes

Misconceptions: The students may not understand why the Seminoles may have had more to lose or gain from their repeated standoffs against the federal government or the government’s determination to rid the east of Indian tribes

Objectives: The true goal of this lesson is to build the true understanding of what the nature and importance of the Seminole Wars in Early American History and what it meant to the future development of the American South and also the impact on slavery and future race relations. Also to profile or spotlight some of the heroic actions of certain individuals who stood up to tyranny; even if those individuals have traditionally been on the “other side”. (same as day one)

Framing of Learning: (1 Social Studies: approx. 48 minutes)

1. Students will volunteer to read their paragraphs that they were assigned at the conclusion of the prior days lesson (10-15 minutes)
2. Students will then be shown a painting of Osceola and brainstorm their observations about his image and how it is captured in the painting after which the class will share their individual observations (10-15 minutes).
3. Class will split into groups of four and come up with their own definition of heroism along with five examples of real life past and present heroes and explain

what it is about their accomplishments that make them heroic. The groups will then share their definition and examples with the rest of the class in a brief presentation (15-20 minutes)

4. For homework, the students will be asked to respond to the following quote –

“When I was a boy, I saw the white man afar off, and was told he was my enemy. I could not shoot him as I would a wolf or a bear, yet he came upon me.

My horse and fields he took from me. He said he was my friend – he gave me his hand in friendship, I took it, he had a snake in the other, his tongue was forked. I am about to leave Florida forever and have done nothing to disgrace it. It was my home; I loved it, and to leave is like burying my wife and child.”

Coacoochee (Seminole) 1858

What does this quote say about the nature of friendship? About betrayal? Finally what does it say about true nobility? The assignment will be typed and attached to the previous night’s assignment as a refutation of sorts to the stereotypes that have been attached to natives into the present.

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to analyze an historic work (painting) and apply descriptions to the role that the subject of the work played in history. What stereotypes still exist about the Indians that fought back against the government? Does modern day athletics feed into this stereotype?

Assessment:

Students will be assessed after the next lesson along with both assignments that have been given at the end of each lesson. The assessment will consist of both brief writing assignments along with the class definition of heroism and a visual display to be shown in the classroom.

Resources

Ballentine, Betty and Ian Ballentine (Editors). The Native Americans: An Illustrated History. Atlanta, GA: Turner Publishing, Inc., 1993.

Barnes, Ian. The Historical Atlas of Native Americans. Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, Inc., 2009.

Covington, James W. The Seminoles of Florida. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1993.

Mahon, John K. History of the Second Seminole War. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1967

Missall, John and Mary Lou Missall. The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict. . University Press of Florida, 2004

