

# Seventh Annual Message to Congress

## *Indian Removal*

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### ANDREW JACKSON

Andrew Jackson was president of the United States from 1829 to 1837, and he is well-known for his role in the House of Representatives, his brief stay in the Senate, and, most particularly, his role as general in the War of 1812, in which he defeated the British in New Orleans. Jackson is less well-known for his now very controversial role in the removal of the Native Americans from their lands, especially the forced relocation of the Cherokee nation from its southern homelands. In the following extract from Jackson's "Seventh Annual Message to Congress" (December 7, 1835), he explains that the Indians cannot be "civilized" and thus must be removed from their lands and placed in protected reservations.

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The plan of removing the aboriginal people who yet remain within the settled portions of the United States to the country west of the Mississippi River approaches its consummation. It was adopted on the most mature consideration of the condition of this race, and ought to be persisted in till the object is accomplished, and prosecuted with as much vigor as a just regard to their circumstances will permit, and as fast as their consent can be obtained. All preceding experiments for the improvement of the Indians have failed. It seems now to be an established fact they can not live in contact with a civilized community and prosper. Ages of fruitless endeavors have at length brought us to a knowledge of this principle of intercommunication with them. The past we can not recall, but the future we can provide for. Independently of the treaty stipulations into which we have entered with the various tribes for the usufructuary rights they have ceded to us, no one can doubt the moral duty of the Government of the United States to protect and if possible to preserve and perpetuate the scattered remnants of this race which are left within our borders. In the discharge of this duty an extensive region in the West has been assigned for their permanent residence. It has been divided into districts and allotted among them. Many have already removed and others are preparing to go, and with the exception of two small bands living in Ohio and Indiana, not exceeding 1,500 persons, and of the Cherokees, all the tribes on the east side of the Mississippi, and extending from Lake Michigan to Florida, have entered into engagements which will lead to their transplantation.

The plan for their removal and reestablishment is founded upon the knowledge we have gained of their character and habits, and has been dictated

by a spirit of enlarged liberality. A territory exceeding in extent that relinquished has been granted to each tribe. Of its climate, fertility, and capacity to support an Indian population the representations are highly favorable. To these districts the Indians are removed at the expense of the United States, and with certain supplies of clothing, arms, ammunition, and other indispensable articles; they are also furnished gratuitously with provisions for the period of a year after their arrival at their new homes. In that time, from the nature of the country and of the products raised by them, they can subsist themselves by agricultural labor, if they choose to resort to that mode of life; if they do not they are upon the skirts of the great prairies, where countless herds of buffalo roam, and a short time suffices to adapt their own habits to the changes which a change of the animals destined for their food may require. Ample arrangements have also been made for the support of schools; in some instances council houses and churches are to be erected, dwellings constructed for the chiefs, and mills for common use. Funds have been set apart for the maintenance of the poor; the most necessary mechanical arts have been introduced, and blacksmiths, gunsmiths, wheelwrights, millwrights, etc., are supported among them. Steel and iron, and sometimes salt, are purchased for them, and plows and other farming utensils, domestic animals, looms, spinning wheels, cards, etc., are presented to them. And besides these beneficial arrangements, annuities are in all cases paid, amounting in some instances to more than \$30 for each individual of the tribe, and in all cases sufficiently great, if justly divided and prudently expended, to enable them, in addition to their own exertions, to live comfortably. And as a stimulus for exertion, it is now provided by law that "in all cases of the appointment of interpreters or other persons employed for the benefit of the Indians a preference shall be given to persons of Indian descent, if such can be found who are properly qualified for the discharge of the duties."

Such are the arrangements for the physical comfort and for the moral improvement of the Indians. The necessary measures for their political advancement and for their separation from our citizens have not been neglected. The pledge of the United States has been given by Congress that the country destined for the residence of this people shall be forever "secured and guaranteed to them." A country west of Missouri and Arkansas has been assigned to them, into which the white settlements are not to be pushed. No political communities can be formed in that extensive region, except those which are established by the Indians themselves or by the United States for them and with their concurrence. A barrier has thus been raised for their protection against the encroachment of our citizens, and guarding the Indians as far as possible from those evils which have brought them to their present condition. Summary authority has been given by law to destroy all ardent spirits found in their country, without waiting the doubtful result and slow process of a legal seizure. I consider the absolute and unconditional interdiction of this article among these people as the first and great step in their melioration.

Halfway measures will answer no purpose against the cupidity of the seller and buyer. And the destructive effects of the history of our Indian intercourse. . . .

### Discussion Questions

1. What justifications does Jackson give for his assertions about the character of the Indians? What evidence do you have to support his evidence. Do you think he argued his case effectively?
2. Now, compare his logic with that of "Manifest Destiny" and "Assimilation." What strategies do they have in common? What justifications do they present?

### Writing Suggestions

1. Jackson states in his speech that "the country destined for the residence of the Indians is secured and guaranteed to them." Research Jackson's presidency. Use a variety of perspectives, neutral scholarly history, and the promises Andrew Jackson made to the Indians. Then research what actually happened.
2. On the Internet, go to the home page of the Andrew Jackson Hermitage (<http://www.thehermitage.com/>) and follow all the links. Then, write an analysis of the information about Jackson and the Indians below as you assess the worth of the site.

Who produced the Web site?

What did you learn from the site that you did not know before?

What kind of links does this site offer?

What kinds of sources are cited?

What aspects of Jackson's presidency and of Jackson's life are highlighted?

What information does the site offer about the Indians? What information does it offer about slavery?

Overall, how would you rate the site?

Halfway measures will answer no purpose. These can not successfully contend against the cupidity of the seller and the overpowering appetite of the buyer. And the destructive effects of the traffic are marked in every page of the history of our Indian intercourse. . . .

### Discussion Questions

1. What justifications does Jackson give for Indian removal? Make a list of his assertions about the character of the Indians, such as "All preceding experiments for the improvement of the Indians have failed." Analyze his evidence. Do you think he argues logically?
2. Now, compare his logic with that of Jefferson in his "Policy of Civilization and Assimilation." What strategies of argument do the two presidents have in common? What justifications do they both use? What kinds of evidence do they present?

### Writing Suggestions

1. Jackson states in his speech that the Congress has promised "that the country destined for the residence of this people shall be forever secured and guaranteed to them." Research the fate of the Native Americans under Jackson's presidency. Use a variety of sources, including Native American perspectives, neutral scholarly historical sources, and primary sources such as Chief Black Hawk's "Surrender Speech." In your paper, consider the promises Andrew Jackson made about the fate of the Indians, and then research what actually happened in light of these promises.
2. On the Internet, go to the home page of The Hermitage, Andrew Jackson's family plantation in Tennessee, now open to the public: <<http://www.thehermitage.com/>>. Look closely at this site, and follow all the links. Then, write an analysis of this site as a source for historical information about Jackson and his life. Answer some of the questions below as you assess the worth of this site as a research tool:

Who produced the Web site?

What did you learn from the site that you had not read elsewhere?

What kind of links does this site offer? Do they offer historical background?

What kinds of sources are cited?

What aspects of Jackson's presidency are missing from the site? What areas of Jackson's life are highlighted?

What information does the site offer about Native Americans? What information does it offer about slavery?

Overall, how would you rate the site as a historical source?