

Response Group: Indian Removal

Focal Question: Did Andrew Jackson act appropriately in the three majors crises of his presidency?

Decision point question 1: Would you vote for or against Indian Removal? Why?

Speech to Congress in Support of Indian Removal, 1830

Section One:

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States and to the Indians themselves. The [economic] advantages which it promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. It will enable 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; it will perhaps cause them 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?

Section Two:

The tribes which occupied the countries [of] the Eastern States were [destroyed] or have melted away to make room for the whites. White men are now [trying] 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 [never-ending]. Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but our ancestors did the same thing. To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear to them. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions.

...Is this Government cruel when, by events which it cannot 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 home? How many thousands of white people would gladly accept the opportunity of moving West under such conditions!

Section Three:

...Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is generous. He is unwilling to obey the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter destruction, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.

1. After reading section one, how do you think the author of this speech feels about Indians and their culture?
2. After reading section two, what do you think supporters of Indian Removal meant when they used the term "land exchange?"

Response Group: Indian Removal

Focal Question: Did Andrew Jackson act appropriately in the three majors crises of his presidency?

Decision point question 1: Would you vote for or against Indian Removal? Why?

Document 2:

Petition Against Indian Removal by the Ladies of Steubenville, Ohio¹

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

The memorial of the undersigned, residents of the state of Ohio, and town of Steubenville,
RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH [SAY]:

That your memorialists [*people who believe in always doing the right thing*] are deeply impressed with the belief, that the present crisis in the affairs of the Indian nations, calls loudly on *all* who can feel for the woes of humanity, to plead, with earnestness, your honorable body to give this subject the immediate consideration demanded by its interesting nature and pressing importance, because it involves the prosperity and happiness of more than fifty thousand of our fellow Christians.

When, therefore, injury and oppression threaten to crush a hapless people within our borders, we appeal with confidence to those who should be representatives of national virtues, and implore [*ask*] them to protect the weak and unfortunate. Despite the *undoubted national right* which the Indians have to the land of their forefathers, and in the face of treaties, pledging the faith of the nation for their secure possession of those lands, some people are trying to force them from their native soil, to force them to seek new homes in a distant and dreary wilderness. **To you, then, as the constitutional protectors of the Indians within our territory, and as the guardians of our national character, we solemnly and honestly appeal, to save this remnant of a much injured people from annihilation, to shield our country from the curses denounced on the cruel and ungrateful, and to shelter the American character from lasting dishonor.**

And your petitioners will ever pray.

1. According to the “Ladies of Steubenville,” is America’s decision on the Indian Removal issue a legal question or a moral question?
2. Read the bold section at the end of the petition. What to the “ladies” think the consequences of forcing the Indians to move will be?
3. Do you agree with their position? Why?

¹ Some words changed for simplicity.

Response Group: Indian Removal

Focal Question: Did Andrew Jackson act appropriately in the three majors crises of his presidency?

Decision point question 1: Would you vote for or against Indian Removal? Why?