

U.S. INDIAN POLICY, 1815–1860:  
REMOVAL TO RESERVATIONS

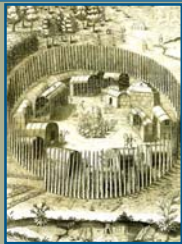
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# U.S. INDIAN POLICY, 1815–1860: REMOVAL TO RESERVATIONS

A Unit of Study for Grades 8–12

DAVID L. GHERE  
JAN F. SPREEMAN



Series:  
Native  
Americans

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ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS  
AND THE  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY  
IN THE SCHOOLS, UCLA

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is the result of a collaborative effort between the National Center for History in the Schools, the University of California, Los Angeles and the Organization of American Historians to develop teaching units based on primary documents for United States History education at the pre-collegiate level.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.U Approach and Rationale . . . . .	.U	1U
II.UContent and Organization . . . . .	.U	1U

### Teacher Background Materialsa

I. Unit Overview . . . . .	.U	3U
II. Unit Context . . . . .	.U	3U
III.UCorrelation to National History Standards . . . . .	.U	4U
IV. Unit Objectives . . . . .	.U	5U
V.UHistorical Background . . . . .	.U	6U

<b>Dramatic Moment . . . . .</b>	<b>.U</b>	<b>9U</b>
----------------------------------	-----------	-----------

### Lessonsa

Lesson One: The Role of Education . . . . .	.a	10U
Lesson Two: Euro-American Justifications and Indian Responses . . . . .	.a	24U
Lesson Three: Indian Removal Policy . . . . .	.a	37
Lesson Four: The Case of the Cherokee . . . . .	.a	56U
Lesson Five: The Shift to Reservation Policy . . . . .	.a	71U

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. APPROACH AND RATIONALE

This teaching unit, *U.S. Indian Policy, 1815–1860: Removal to Reservations* is one of several such units co-published by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and the National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS). The fruits of collaborations between history professors and experienced teachers of both United States and World History, the units represent specific issues and “dramatic episodes” in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying crucial turningpoints in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow’s history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, magazines, newspapers, films, private correspondence, literature, contemporary photographs, and paintings from the period under study. What we hope you achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to have your students connect more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of “being there,” a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian’s craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

### II. CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: Teaching Background Materials, including Unit Overview, Unit Context, Correlation to the National Standards for History, Unit Objectives, and Historical Background; A Dramatic Moment; and Lesson Plans with Documents. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for use by grades 8–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

The Teacher Background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link the specific Dramatic Moment to the larger historical narrative. You may consult

it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, any handouts or student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.



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## 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.a CORRELATION TO NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS<sub>a</sub>**

*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 policies 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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## DRAMATIC MOMENT

### **Speckled Snake, a very old Creek elder, 1829**

Brothers: We have heard the talk of our Great Father [President Andrew Jackson]; it is very kind. He says he loves his red children. . . .

When the first white man came over the wide waters, he was but a little man. . . . His legs were cramped by sitting long in his big boat, and he begged for a little land. . . . But when the white man had warmed himself at the Indians' fire and had filled himself with the Indian's hominy, he became very large. He stopped not at the mountain tops and his foot covered the plains and the valleys. His hands grasped the eastern and the western sea. Then he became our Great Father. He loved his red children, but he said: "You must move a little farther, lest by accident I tread on you."

With one foot he pushed the red men across the Oconee and with the other he trampled down the graves of our fathers. . . . On another occasion he said, "Get a little farther; go beyond the Oconee and the Ocmulgee [Indian settlements in South Carolina and Georgia]—there is a pleasant country." He also said, "It shall be yours forever."

Now he says, "The land you live upon is not yours. Go beyond the Mississippi; there is game; there you may remain while the grass grows and the rivers run." Will not our Great Father come there also? He loves his red children and his tongue is not forked.

Brothers! I have listened to a great many talks from our Great Father. But they always began and ended in this—"Get a little further; you are too near me."

Source: Frederick W. Turner III, ed., *The Portable North American Indian Reader* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), pp. 249–50.

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## LESSON ONE

### THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

#### A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To identify Eurocentric biases passed on in educational texts used in American schools during the early nineteenth century and assess their effects on forming public opinion and attitudes concerning Native Americans.
- ◆ To understand the role of ethnocentrism in creating the roots of prejudice and the subsequent institutionalization of prejudice in public education.
- ◆ To analyze primary documents to discover prevailing attitudes and assumptions.

#### B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Public schools of the early nineteenth century were instruments for educating the citizenry of the growing republic and for promoting a shared American identity that included common attitudes and perspectives on important issues. The resulting attitudes towards western expansion and frontier relations, which would eventually become incorporated into the concept of Manifest Destiny, provided a context which allowed the conquest of Native Americans and expropriation of their land to be interpreted as moral, just and inevitable. Dictionaries published during the period provide the connotative and denotative meanings of certain terms used to describe or distinguish Native Americans. The pejorative nature of the terms used to describe American Indians established the context in which that group was perceived. Likewise, textbooks used in the educational system were both the repositories for and the purveyors of the collected lore as interpreted from a Euro-American perspective. Their accounts of Indian history, culture and government as well as their assessment of the physical and personal traits of Native Americans crystallized the social paradigm through which each individual Native American became viewed as a caricature that in turn provided evidence to support the stereotype.

#### C. LESSON ACTIVITIES

Inform the class that they will be examining several nineteenth-century textbooks to determine what students of the period were learning about Native Americans. Distribute copies of a vocabulary list from Webster's 1806 dictionary (**Student Handout 1**) and review the words and definitions with students.

Divide the class into three groups and assign each a different document (**Documents 1-3**). Have students use Webster's definitions as they read the excerpts from these nineteenth-century textbooks. Questions are



provided with each document as a guide for student discussion of the documents in the set. Each document also includes one or more activities that may be assigned to help students engage these readings.

After groups have examined and analyzed the short readings, each will report its finding to the class. Discuss the differences and similarities in these passages and speculate about what is revealed concerning the attitudes and beliefs inherent in educational materials during the early nineteenth century. You may wish to have students analyze sections from current texts for evidence of ethnocentric perspectives.

In 1822 William Channing Woodbridge wrote *Rudiments of Geography*, in which he described the five states of society in the world. Woodbridge's definition became widely accepted. Distribute Woodbridge's Five States of Civilization and excerpted notes on government and religion (**Document 4**) to the class. Use the questions as a guide for discussion of the document. According to the readings previously discussed, where would you place Native American peoples in Woodbridge's five states of society?

Conclude the lesson by having students write a paragraph describing attitudes that early nineteenth century students would develop toward Native Americans if their knowledge of native cultures was based upon information imparted by texts of that time.

This assignment and the earlier discussion about racial attitudes should provide a number of "teachable moments" but the teacher must guide discussion of this emotional issue in productive directions while being sensitive to all points of view.

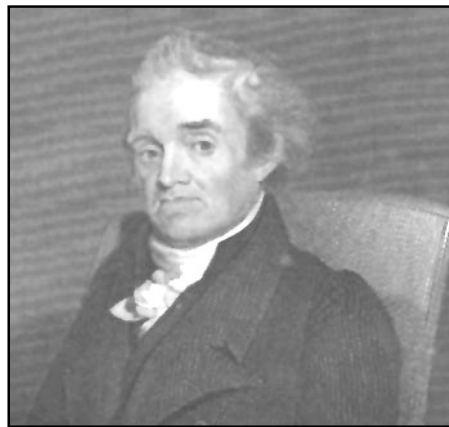
#### **D. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

1. Native Americans are usually portrayed in early American literature as one of two stereotypes, the "Bloodthirsty Savage" or the "Noble Savage." Reexamine all of the excerpts in this lesson, identifying evidence that would support one stereotype or the other. Students could write newspaper editorials using one of these images and the supporting evidence to argue for a particular policy between Indians and the government. Students could also engage in a debate over these policies, based on this evidence.
2. Assume the role of a textbook writer in early nineteenth century America. Write a paragraph about the character and nature of Native American peoples for a history text that will be used in a public school to educate middle elementary level students.
3. Create a statement for release to a newspaper in 1822 justifying the procurement of western lands by the United States government.

**Student Handout 1**

The following is a list of words taken from Noah Webster's *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* published in 1806.

- Aboriginals (n) – primitive inhabitants  
American (n) – a native of America  
Barbarian (a) – savage, cruel, wild, rude, uncivilized  
Civilization (v) – act of civilizing,  
Civilization (n) – a civilized state, refinement, improvement, politeness  
Civilized (a) – polished, improved, polite, civil  
Enlighten (v) – to give light; to instruct  
Enlightener (n) – one who illuminates or teaches  
Heathen (n) – a pagan, one destitute of revelation  
Heathenism (n) – paganism, ignorance of the true God  
Indian (n) – a native of the Indies, an aboriginal  
Indian (a) – pertaining to the Indians (of America)  
Pagan – (n) heathen; (a) heathenish, savage, wild  
Primitive (a) – ancient, original, native, formal  
Rude (a) – rough, brutal, harsh, uncivil, ignorant  
Sachem (n) – a prince, the chief of an Indian tribe  
Savage (n) – person uncivilized, a genus of flies  
Savage (v) – to make cruel or barbarous  
Uncivilized (a) – rude, rough, indecent, barbarous



**Noah Webster**

Frontispiece, Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*  
(New York: S. Converse, 1828)

**Document 1**  
**Excerpts from Geography and History Texts**

The following excerpts are taken from geography and history textbooks published in the early 1800s.

“The population of this extensive country; when first visited by Europeans, consisted of numerous wild and rude tribes, in a savage state of society, and who were denominated by the early navigators, Indians, from a mistaken notion that the land they had found, bordered on the East Indies. And, since, also called aboriginals or aborigines. . . . The Indian tribes have governments peculiar to themselves, and differing from each other. They are very simple, and but a little advanced from a state of nature.

“It is melancholy to think that so great a part of mankind are sunk in ignorance, superstition, and barbarism. It should serve to increase our thankfulness that we enjoy such great privileges as we do, and excite us to a diligent improvement of them. We have reason to believe that the time will come, when all mankind will be good Christians, and live together in love and peace. . . .”

—Horatio Gates Spatford, *General Geography* (1809) pp. 64, 66, 132.

“The good and bad qualities of Indians are few, or confined to a few objects. In general, a savage is governed by his passions, without much restraint from the authority of his chiefs. He is remarkably hospitable to strangers, offering them the best accommodations he has, and always serving them first. He never forgets a favor or an injury; but will make a grateful return for a favor, and revenge an injury, whenever an opportunity offers, as long as he lives; and the remembrance is hereditary; for the child and grandchild have the same passions, and will repay a kindness or revenge a wrong done to their ancestor.”

—Noah Webster, *History of the United States* (1833), p. 64.

“The independent Indian nations inhabit the interior parts of North America, . . . dispersed over almost the whole continent.

“There is among the various tribes a general resemblance, though not a perfect similarity. They are of common stature, straight and erect in their gait, and of an olive, or copper complexion. Their hair is long, straight, and black; their motion is generally slow, though they are capable of great speed; their countenance is sedate and thoughtful. They are averse to labour and study, and much addicted to intoxication. They are faithful to their friends, but cruel and implacable to their enemies; are patient of suffering, and seem almost to exult under the tortures, inflicted by their conquerors. They will never forgive an injury, nor rest satisfied, till they have requited a favour.

“The men are mostly engaged in war, hunting, and fishing; the women in more servile employment, imposed on them by the men. They are frequently, especially in warm climates, almost destitute of clothing; and such as they have; is mostly made of the skins of beasts.

“They live in low, miserable huts, called *wigwams*; are fond of ornaments, which are profusely attached to their nose, ears, arms, etc. Many attempts have been made to civilize and instruct those within the territory of the United States; but to little purpose. They retire from the cultivated field and the abode of industry, and delight to range their native woods.”

—Jacob Abbot Cummings, *An Introduction to Ancient and Modern Geography*, (1814), pp. 6–7.

## Understanding the Document

1. What generalizations are made in each excerpt concerning Native Americans?

Are such comments racist from our present day perspective? Explain.

2. In what ways can these generalizations influence Euro American attitudes toward Native Americans and affect future negotiations between the two cultures?
3. Find examples of statements made about Native Americans that are Eurocentric.
4. According to the last excerpt, what are “the good and bad qualities of Indians,” and what accounts for them exhibiting those traits?
5. Are these accounts “hopeful” that Native Americans will adapt to Euro-American ways? Explain.

## Activities

**Activity I:** Assume the role of a teacher using one of these texts. Prepare a lesson that will instruct students about Native Americans. What conclusions do you think that students would draw based upon the text and the lessons?

**Activity II:** Most Native American peoples were primarily agriculturists, yet this aspect of Indian society is ignored in the excerpts. Have students create a list of other aspects of Native American society that are ignored or misrepresented and discuss why this occurred.

## Document 2

### Indian Land and Ancient Civilizations

The following excerpts are taken from *A Practical System of Modern Geography* by Jesse Olney, a popular geography text published in 1840.

“The Indians are the descendants of those who occupied the country at the time of its discovery by Europeans. Most of these prefer their own modes of savage life to those of the whites, and as the latter have extended their settlements, they have removed farther and farther back into the wilderness: at the present time but a small number of them are found east of the Mississippi River.” (p. 63)

“The Valley of the Mississippi embraces the vast region lying between the Allegheny and Rocky Mountains, watered by the Mississippi and its numerous branches. It extends 20 degrees in latitude and about 30 in longitude. If we except the Amazon, probably no other valley on the globe will compare in size with it; and it probably surpasses all others in the richness and variety of its soil, and its general adaptation to the support and comfort of civilized men. In extent it is like a continent; in beauty and fertility, it is the most perfect garden of nature. If we glance an eye over this immense region, connected by navigable rivers—if we regard the fertility of soil, the variety of productions, and if we combine those advantages offered by nature, with the moral energy of the free and active people who are spreading their increasing millions over its surface—what a brilliant prospect opens upon us through the darkness of future time! We see arts, science, industry, virtue, and social happiness already increasing in that region beyond what the wildest fancy would have dared to hope, thirty or forty years ago.” (p. 128)

“The Western States are remarkable for the remains of antiquity with which they abound. These consist of the ruins of forts or fortifications, mounds of earth, or graves, walls, hearths, &c. To judge from these works, the nation that constructed them, must have been far more civilized, and much better acquainted with the useful arts than the present Indians. From the lofty trees with which they are overgrown, it is concluded a long period must have elapsed—perhaps 1000 years—since the desertion of these fabrics, and the extinction of the people by whom they were erected. They are found in the vicinity of each other, spread over the great plains from the southern shore of Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico, generally in the neighborhood of the great rivers. Their structure is regular, and they have been supposed to warrant the opinion of the existence, in ancient times, of great cities along the Mississippi. The mummies, or dried bodies enveloped with coarse cloth, and found in some of the saltpetre caves of Kentucky, indicate the existence formerly of a race in these parts, different from that of the

present Indians, and that had probably become extinct long before the discovery of this continent by Columbus.” (p. 130)

**“INDIAN TERRITORY**—This Territory embraces a large extent of country, noted for its numerous rivers, its extensive forests, mild climate and abundance of game. The United States’ government set apart this Territory for the future residence of those Indians who have emigrated from the States east of the Mississippi. The present population is not far from 75,000. The tribes that have made the greatest advances towards civilization, are the Cherokees, Choctaws, Creeks, and Shawnees. A number of missionaries reside among them and have exerted a happy influence on their habits, manners, and moral condition. . . . What Desert is in the western part of this territory? By what is this Desert traversed? Did you ever see a Buffalo? An Indian?” (pp. 146–47)

**“MISSOURI TERRITORY**—This is an extensive region remarkable for its large rivers and immense prairies. It is inhabited by Indians and wild animals, with the exception of a few posts held by troops of the United States. For the most part, this country is a plain more or less covered with grass, and in many places very fertile. The richest and most valuable lands are found on the margins of the rivers, which are usually covered with well-timbered forests. At a short distance, however, the trees disappear, and the soil becomes dry and barren. Indeed, some parts of this territory, especially towards the Rocky Mountains, are almost a moving sand, and may be likened to the Great Sahara or African Desert.” (pp. 147–48)



**Jesse Olney**

*Dictionary of American Portraits*  
Dover, 1967

## Understanding the Document

1. What general attitude is revealed about Native Americans? In what ways would Euro-American use of the land differ from that of Native Americans?
2. The description of the region “between the Allegheny and Rocky Mountains” in the second paragraph could not be more flattering if it was an advertisement for western expansion. Is that what it is? What would be the impact on Indians?
3. A statement in the second paragraph refers to “. . . the moral energy of a free and active people. . . .” What is “moral energy”? Why might the author make reference to it in the context of this paragraph?
4. In the final sentence of the second paragraph the author links arts, science and industry with virtue and social happiness. In what way is this statement damaging to future relations between Euro-Americans and Native Americans?
5. The author describes the remains of ancient civilizations in paragraph three. Why does the author assume these people were unrelated to Indians of the early 1800s?
6. Contrast the description in paragraph 2 with the descriptions of Indian Territory and Missouri Territory. What might be the implications for Indian policy of describing the Great Plains as “likened to the Great Sahara?”

## Activities

**Activity I:** Assuming the role of a U.S. senator knowledgeable about this information, create a policy for the treatment of Native Americans that would be politically feasible.

**Activity II:** Conduct research about the Mississippian Culture in ancient America. Compare the comments in the third paragraph with your findings. Why have modern textbooks only recently included information about ancient American civilizations, while Olney’s text, written in 1840, refers to great cities along the Mississippi River?



### Document 3

#### Indian Government

The following excerpt on Indian government is taken from Bishop Davenport's *A New Gazetteer or Geographical Dictionary*, published in 1837. (p. 7)

“There is established in each society a certain species of government, which prevails over the whole continent of America, with exceeding little variation; because over the whole of this continent the manners and way of life are nearly similar and uniform. Without arts, riches, or luxury, the great instruments of subjection in polished societies, an American [Indian] has no method by which he can render himself considerable among his companions, but by superiority in personal qualities of body or mind. But, as nature has not been very lavish in her personal distinctions, where all enjoy the same education, all are pretty much on an equality, and will desire to remain so. Liberty, therefore, is the prevailing passion of the Americans [Indians]; and their government, under the influence of this sentiment, is, perhaps, better secured than by the wisest political regulations. They are very far, however, from despising all sort of authority; they are attentive to the voice of wisdom, which experience has conferred on the aged, and they enlist under the banners of the chief in whose valor and military address they have learned to repose a just and merited confidence. . . . His power, however, is rather persuasive than coercive; he is revered as a father, rather than feared as a monarch. He has no guards, no prisons, no officers of justice, and one act of ill-judged violence would pull him from his humble throne. The elders in the other form of government, which may be considered as a *mild* and *nominal* aristocracy, have no more power. In most countries, therefore, age alone is sufficient for acquiring respect, influence, and authority. It is age which teaches experience, and experience is the only source of knowledge among a savage people.”

### Understanding the Document

1. What generalizations are made about Native American government? In what ways might such generalizations be detrimental to U.S.-Indian relations?
2. According to this excerpt what is the basis of the chief's authority?
3. How is the power of the chief described?
4. Why is liberty the "prevailing passion" of Native Americans?
5. Why is age alone seen as sufficient for acquiring respect, influence and authority in Native American societies?
6. If "... experience is the only source of knowledge among a savage people," what has experience taught many Native American tribes about Euro-Americans?
7. How could Euro-American perceptions of Native American governments influence political relationships between the two cultures?

### Activity

**Activity I:** The paragraph describing Native American government discusses at some length the relationship between age and leadership in tribal societies. To what extent is age a factor in selecting leaders in our society today? Support your answer with at least three examples. To what extent should it be a factor in selecting leaders? Does American society today attribute general characteristics to certain age groups?

## Document 4

### The Five States of Society

The following excerpts, taken from William Channing Woodbridge's *Rudiments of Geography* published in 1822, delineate the accepted definitions of the five states of society in the world, from the perspective of the United States in the early nineteenth century. Other excerpts include some related comments about government and religion. The last excerpt from Woodbridge's volume is a map.

Men are found in five different states of society; the Savage, Barbarous, Half-Civilized, Civilized, and Enlightened.

1<sup>st</sup>. The Savage state is that which men gain their support chiefly by *hunting, fishing or robbery*, dress in skins, and generally live in the open air, or in miserable huts. They have little knowledge of agriculture or the mechanic arts, no division of lands or system of laws, and they seldom collect in towns or villages.

2<sup>nd</sup> The Barbarous state is that in which nations subsist by agriculture, or the pasturage of cattle and sheep, with some knowledge of the mechanic arts. They collect in villages and have some regular forms of government and religion, but *no written language or books*.

Savages and Barbarians are usually cruel and revengeful, and oblige their women to labor like slaves.

3<sup>rd</sup> The Half-Civilized state is like that of the Chinese, and other nations in the south of Asia, who understand agriculture and many of the arts as well, and have *some books and learning*, with established laws and religion. Still *they treat their women as slaves*, usually keeping them in confinement, and have many other customs like those of barbarous nations.

4<sup>th</sup> The Civilized state which is found in Poland and South America. Civilized nations are those in which the sciences and arts are well understood, especially the art of printing, and *females are treated as companions*. Many of their customs are still barbarous, and most of the people remain in the grossest ignorance.

5<sup>th</sup> Enlightened nations are those in which knowledge is more general, and the sciences and arts are found in the greatest perfection, as in most of the nations of Europe.  
(pp. 48–9)

## GOVERNMENT

The first kind of government in the world was the *Patriarchal*, in which every father, or *patriarch*, governed his own family and servants. Some patriarchs became governors of many kindred families, or a tribe, and were called *chiefs*. The government of savage and barbarous nations is usually that of patriarchs, or chiefs. (p. 50)

## RELIGION

It is supposed that there are more than 700 millions of people on the earth, of whom 400 millions are Pagans, 200 millions Christians, 90 or 100 millions Mahometans, and 8 or 10 million Jews. The savage, barbarous and half-civilized nations of the world are either Pagans or Mahometans; except the Abyssinians, who profess to be Christians; but their religion is very corrupt. (p.52)

**Understanding the Documents**

1. What criteria are used to distinguish one stage of civilization from another?
2. To what extent are these criteria Eurocentric?
3. To what extent are the comments about religion and government Eurocentric?
4. What parallels can be drawn between religion, government and state of civilization?
5. What does the map suggest about the influence of certain religions on the level of civilization? Which religion is the most advanced? Least advanced?
6. What parts of the world contain the highest level of civilization? The lowest?
7. In what part of the world do the highest and lowest forms of civilization share a common boundary?
8. In the United States, what people (culture) occupied the area west of the Mississippi River? What is their state of civilization? What is their religion?
9. How could the ideas presented in the text and map justify Euro-American attitudes and government Indian policy?



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