

## President Andrew Jackson Thinks Aloud

The United States has a problem. The people of the United States and the Indians are starting to get in each other's way. Since George Washington was president, we have tried to civilize the Indians and teach them to live like white people but it doesn't seem to be working. We want them to become good Christians, but the Indians prefer to follow their own beliefs and to hunt and farm as they please.

The Indians live on lands that could be used by white citizens of the United States. It is hard to stop fighting between the whites and the Indians when they both want the same land. The Indians use the land mostly to hunt and don't really build cities or big farms. Whites want to use this land for farming and cotton production. This would put many people to work and help them earn money. But bad fighting has broken out between the white settlers and Indians. The Indians could move out West where they will not be bothered by the white settlers but it would be hard for them to leave the lands their tribes have been on for hundreds of years. The Indians could be safer out in the West, but their way of life might also be lost forever. It would be hard for them to start over, but it would also be hard for them to stay in the East where whites are moving onto their lands.

The Indians do not believe they are a part of the United States. Indians make their own laws and rules and do not follow the same laws as Americans. Indians currently live right next to white Americans. It is becoming harder to keep these people separate. If the Indians do not want to mix with Americans and do not want to share their lands, they may have to move west just to survive. I need to come up with a solution to this problem because I am the people's leader and they want me to make a decision that will solve this problem. Should we let Indians stay on the lands they have always lived on, or should we remove them to new lands so that white settlers can have their lands? *Is Indian Removal the best solution for the problems between whites and Indians?* I must decide.

### Guiding Questions:

1. What is Andrew Jackson's problem?
2. Why would the Indians want to stay on their lands?
3. Why would the white settlers want the Indians to move out west?
4. Why is this a hard decision for Andrew Jackson?

*[This letter is fictional but authentically represents the ideas of the historical character.]*

Background: You are **Catherine Beecher**, a prominent educator and writer. You have published a letter in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* calling on American women to stand up against the Indian Removal Act even though women have few political rights.

**To President Jackson and the caring ladies of the United States:**

The present problems among Indian nations in the United States demand the immediate attention of anyone who claims to be kind. The Indians were here first and helped the early settlers. Many Indians have fought in wars to help protect our nation. The United States has already taken and purchased much of their land but promised to respect Indians' right to keep the remaining territory. If we make them leave their land now, we would have lied to them. It is our moral duty to defend the Indians' rights.

Americans have become powerful while the Indians have mostly faded away. We should protect them as if they were our children. We asked them to be "civilized" and they have made remarkable progress. In fact, the Civilization Program has been successful. For example, the Cherokees wrote their own constitution and read the Bible in their own language. They have made progress in education and industry. There is no reason to remove the Indians from their homeland.

If the United States ignores its treaties with the Indians, they will be driven west and their way of life will be destroyed forever. The good Christian women of this nation must try to stop Indian Removal. Women are not able to vote or be elected to an office, but women can feel for the Indians and demand that the United States do the right thing. So I, Catherine Beecher, say to you, let every woman who hears this stand up and stop this tragedy from happening.

Guiding Questions

1. Who is Catherine Beecher?
2. What problems are the Indians having and who does she blame?
3. Why does she think removal is wrong?
4. What does she think the United States should do about the Indians?

Background: You are **Elias Boudinot**, the editor of the most important Cherokee newspaper. You are a member of an important Cherokee family and have been a Cherokee leader. White missionaries educated you. You wrote numerous editorials arguing against removal, but now you promote the removal of Indians.

Dear President Jackson:

The Cherokee have become more Christian and more educated because of the Civilization Program. Cherokee have become herdsmen and farmers. Becoming “civilized” however is no longer enough. The United States will not protect us from angry white settlers or from states like Georgia who take our lands.

I believe that we must sign a treaty with the United States and give up our lands to move west because it is our only hope for surviving and for keeping our way of life. Cherokee men like Chief John Ross are liars because they promise the people that they will be able to stay on their lands even though these lands are being taken. White settlers steal our lands, arrest our people, and make us follow their laws. Even when the U.S. Supreme Court tells the settlers to stop taking our lands, they just ignore the court and do it anyway.

I joined the group of Cherokees who traveled to Washington in 1835 to come up with a fair treaty because it is our only hope for survival. Look around. Our people are miserable. Cherokees are homeless, naked and hungry. But, a brighter future lies ahead. Removal to the west is the best solution. If we stay, we will be killed. Instead of fighting against the white people who are more powerful, we should move west while we can. We have to go to save ourselves. Relocation to the West gives us a new beginning. The United States government promises to help us move, to protect us from harm, to give us good lands in the west, and to even pay us for leaving. I wish we could stay on our old lands but we can’t survive here any longer. We must go and I call on all Indian leaders to lead their people to make the right decision.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. Who is Elias Boudinot?
2. How does Elias Boudinot’s view the removal of Indians?
3. What problems are foreseen by Elias Boudinot?
4. What does Elias feel the Indians will benefit from the removal?

Background: You are **Lewis Cass**, Governor of the Michigan Territory. You have travelled to many Indian villages and are considered an expert on Indians. You published the first public essay calling for Indians to be removed to the west.

Dear President Andrew Jackson:

I believe it is in the Indians' best interest to be removed from their land and moved to the territory west of the Mississippi River. The Indians are an uncivilized nation of savages. They behave like wild, untamed animals even though missionaries were sent to improve the Indians way of life. The civilization program has failed because Indians have refused to farm and to accept Christianity. Indian governments are not able to make good decisions but they also aren't willing to follow the rules of the United States government. Yes, a few Indians have become civilized by learning Christianity and by learning to farm, but most Indians are poor and uncivilized and therefore must be removed.

If Indians move west of the Mississippi River, they will be safe and secure. The Indians have overhunted their present lands and overused their natural resources. Relocating the Indians will provide them with new resources so they can continue their own way of life. Removing the Indians from their lands will also provide more land for incoming white settlers so that economic progress can be made on Indian lands. Indians' best choice is to move west.

We do not wish to force Indians to move but if they refuse the new lands and the help the government offers, we may be left with no other choice. Living on their present lands and continuing to remain uncivilized will result in the destruction of Indians which I do not want. Moving west is their only hope.

#### Guiding Questions

1. Who is Lewis Cass?
2. What is Lewis Cass's view of Indian removal?
3. What are the benefits of Indian removal? What does Lewis Cass believe will happen to the Indians if they choose to continue living on their land?
4. How does Lewis Cass defend his ideas when people say it is wrong to move the Indians?

Background: You are **John Ross**, the main Cherokee chief. The Cherokee people elected you chief. You oppose Indian removal and the Treaty of New Echota, which required the Cherokee to move west. You represent most Cherokees.

Dear President Jackson,

A small group of Cherokee signed a horrible treaty (Treaty of New Echota) with the United States. This treaty made us give up all of our lands and promise that we would move west. I did not sign it and almost all Cherokee Indians hate it. In fact, over 15,000 Cherokee Indians signed their name to a piece of paper saying they would not move west. Mr. President, this treaty should never have been signed and I call on you to let us live in peace on our lands in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. Please do not make us move west to a land we do not know.

We are a civilized group of Indians who have already learned to live like white men. We have a right to keep the land where we have always lived. Even if we agreed to be "removed," we will never really be safe on our new western lands because the United States might just make us move again. In 1828, Cherokees who had earlier moved west had to give up their land and move even farther west. Our only hope is to stay right here where we have always lived and to convince the United States that we are not their enemy.

Moving west will destroy the culture of the Cherokee nation. We will die like the deer in the forest. If the Indians move west, we will also be forced to live alongside other Indians who do not want us there and in lands we do not know. Where will we find food? Where will we find water? The Cherokee people strongly disagree with Indian Removal. But we have hope because we believe in our hearts that the United States will see how badly they have treated us and let us keep our lands. We call on you as President to support our right to keep our lands.

Guiding Questions:

1. Who is John Ross?
2. Why does he disagree with the treaty signed by some Cherokee Indians?
3. Why is John Ross afraid of moving west?
4. What does John Ross think should happen instead of Indian Removal?  
Where does he think the Indians should live?