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Trail of Tears, Part 1

The Cherokee people once freely roamed more than 44,000 square miles of what is now the southeastern United States. The first Cherokee contact with whites came in 1540. A Spanish explorer named Hernando de Soto came through their land in search of gold. De Soto did not find what he was looking for. He took little more than food from the Cherokees. They took little notice of the white man then. The Cherokee kept their distance from strangers and carried on as they always had for centuries.



During the 1600's, British colonists arrived. They did not pass through as de Soto did. They cleared the land and built towns. Soon they were claiming more and more land. The colonists did not realize they were on Cherokee land. They did not realize the Cherokees had claimed the land for centuries before their arrival.

The colonists kept coming. They had very different ways. They cleared Cherokee hunting grounds. They did not use bows and arrows. They used guns. They brought horses. They taught the Cherokees how to ride and use their guns. The coming of white men changed the Cherokee way of life.

As the white population grew, so did the conflict between the two peoples. Some Cherokee chiefs trusted the whites. Others did not. In 1730, six Cherokee chiefs sailed to London to meet with King George II. The king offered friendship and protection "for as long as the mountains and rivers last, and the sun shines." This promise was the first of several that were broken.

When the Seven Years War began in 1754, the Cherokees were drawn into the struggle between France and Britain. The Cherokees wanted to honor their agreement with Britain and King George. They helped the British fight the French. This war was soon called the French and Indian War. The French surrendered to the British in 1762. When the Treaty of Paris was signed, the French lost all claim to land east of the Mississippi River. That was when the British began chipping away at Cherokee land. The Cherokees received small amounts of money, goods, and more promises for peace in return for hunting grounds in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia.

Between 1768 and 1775, a series of three treaties signed between the Cherokees and the British took more than five million acres of their land. The Cherokees were forced to build new towns along the Tennessee River. Some went to Arkansas. The tribe had been reduced to less than ten thousand. Their hunting ground was reduced by a quarter.

In 1791, the Treaty of Holston created a new plan to deal with the Cherokees. The United States took charge of Cherokee trade. They were also to protect the Cherokee borders. The nation received \$1,000 a year for the land they lost to the settlers. Hope was renewed but the old Cherokee way of life was disappearing. They began to live

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like the white settlers and some even adopted the practice of owning black slaves. They were educated in the white man's language and Cherokee schoolhouses sprang up in their villages. Many of the wealthier Cherokees even sent their children to boarding schools.

By 1827, the Cherokee tribe had their own constitution. They were now considered the Cherokee Nation. The new nation favored cooperation with the United States. They were resolute in the notion that "not one more foot of land" would leave their nation. What they didn't realize was that the U.S. government had promised the Georgia state governor that it would end any Cherokee land claims in Georgia as early as 1802. It had further promised to move the Cherokees out of the state.

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Questions

1. Who was the first white man to make contact with the Cherokees?

- _____ 2. What happened to Cherokee land when the colonists arrived?

- A. The colonists cleared the land and built houses.
- B. The colonists helped the Cherokees build new homes.
- C. The colonists left the land as it was.
- D. The colonists fought with the Cherokees over the land.

- _____ 3. Which of these things was new to the Cherokee way of life?

- A. horses
- B. guns
- C. wagons
- D. all of the above

- _____ 4. The three treaties signed between 1768 and 1775 took away how much Cherokee land?

- A. 500 acres
- B. 5,000,000 acres
- C. 50,000 acres
- D. 5,000 acres

5. What was the name of the treaty signed in 1791?

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6. How much did the government agree to give the Cherokees for their land?

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☐ King George II offered friendship and protection "for as long as the mountains and rivers last, and the sun shines." This promise was the first of several that were broken. Why do you believe so many of those in control felt it was acceptable to break these promises?

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Don't stop writing. Use a blank piece of paper to continue.