

Lesson Plan: Tsali and the Trail of Tears

- Grade 4 Goals: Social Studies 2, 3, 4
English/Language Arts 4
- Purpose: Students will learn about the legend of Tsali in relation to the Trail of Tears and compare the Cherokee removal to current events.
- Materials: Tsali’s Story information sheet, one copy per group of three to four students

Trail of Tears Map
- Time: One class period
- Process:
1. Introduce the lesson by discussing how the Cherokee, whose territory once covered eight states, were forced to relocate to Oklahoma (then called Indian Territory) to make room for white settlers. Use the map to show the distances covered by Native American people, many of whom traveled on foot. Through what states did they have to travel to get to Indian Territory?
 2. Distribute copies of Tsali’s Story to students and provide time for them to read it.
 3. Discuss how the Trail of Tears relates to current events. Pose the following questions: Can you name contemporary events in which people were expelled from their homeland because of their race or ethnicity? How were those conflicts resolved (if at all)? What strategies can you think of to solve this issue?
 4. Have students write essays based on their ideas.

Information Sheet: Tsali's Story

The legend of Tsali begins in 1830 with a speech given by President Andrew Jackson to Congress. President Jackson believed that Indians in the southeast were in the way of white settlement, and he wanted them removed so that white settlers could take the land. His speech set into motion the forced removal of the Five Civilized Tribes – the Creek, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, the Seminole, and the Cherokee – from their ancient homelands. This removal order changed western North Carolina forever by taking away many Cherokee from their land and opening up the western mountains for settlement by whites.

Five years after that speech, only a few Cherokee had signed the removal treaty, and Cherokee chief John Ross asked Congress not to ratify the treaty. The Cherokee wanted to stay on the land they had known all their lives. Congress ignored the pleas of the Cherokee and ratified the treaty in 1836. The United States government gave the Cherokee two years to move west to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma).

Most Cherokee never believed that removal would happen. When the deadline for voluntary removal passed in 1838, only about a thousand Cherokee had left. General Winfield Scott took command of the operation to forcibly remove the remaining Cherokee and issued a proclamation on May 10, 1838, telling the Cherokee of North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama to prepare for their move west.

General Scott ordered the roundup and forced removal of all Cherokee families to begin in May of 1838. The journey was so horrible that it became known as *Nunna daul Tsuny* (The Trail Where They Cried), or the Trail of Tears. During the Trail of Tears, one observer stated, the Cherokee “buried fourteen or fifteen at

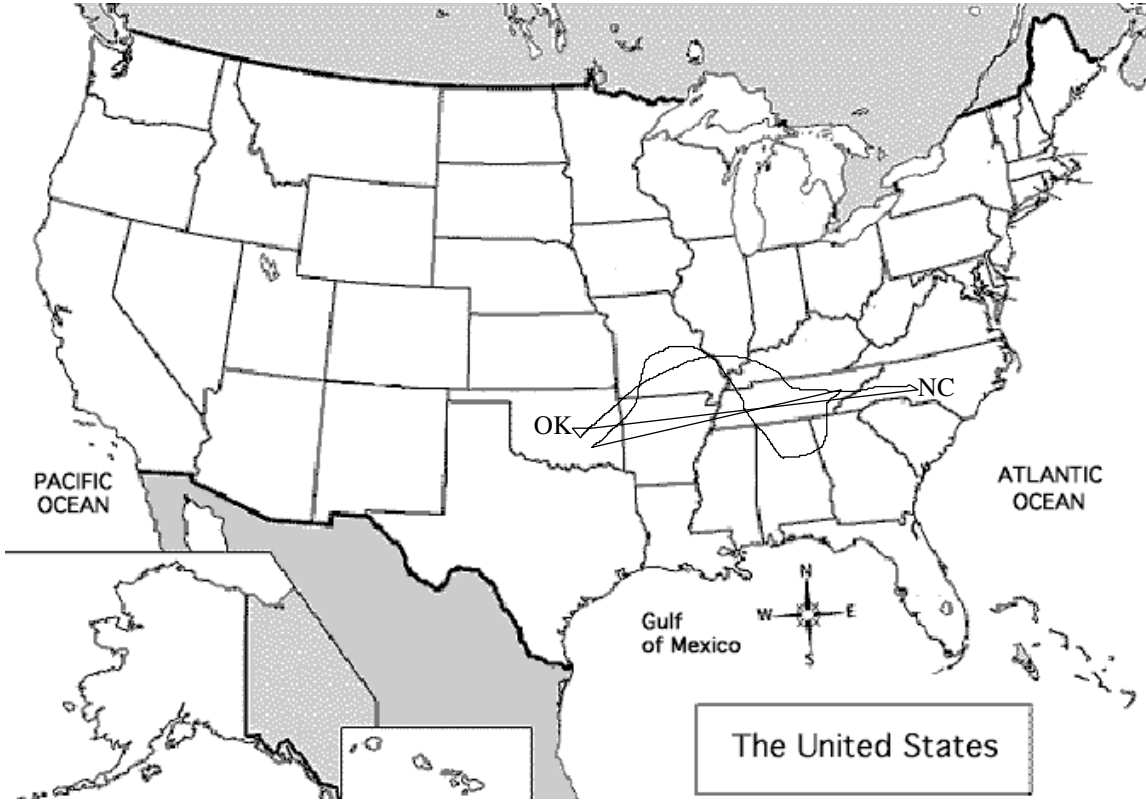
every stopping place, and they make a journey of ten miles per day only on an average." Most of the Cherokee men, women, and children in North Carolina walked the Trail of Tears, but some refused to leave. They took refuge in their beloved mountains. General Scott ordered troops to track down and bring in these "renegade" Cherokee. Tsali was one of these figures.

In October 1838 federal troops rounded up a family of twelve, led by Tsali, in the mountains of North Carolina. While on their way to the removal camp, soldiers mistreated Tsali's wife. Tsali and his family killed two of the soldiers and fled back into the mountains.

A fellow Cherokee named Euchella led a band that recaptured Tsali and his family. They executed Tsali, two of his sons, and his son-in-law. Euchella had made a deal with the United States Army. In exchange for his deed, all fugitive Cherokee were allowed to remain safely in North Carolina. Their descendants became known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

The legend of Tsali continues today in many forms, from *Unto These Hills*, a play telling his story, to signs on the landscape that bear his name. Tsali is not forgotten, though the details of his legend may vary greatly. The Cherokee knew it was wrong to be forced to leave their homeland. Tsali and his family fought – and died – for what they thought was right.

Trail of Tears Map



Trail of Tears Map Legend

NC = North Carolina

OK = Present-day Oklahoma

———— = Trail of Tears route