

This lesson was made possible through a generous grant from Humanities Texas

▶ A Speedy and Final Close: President Mirabeau Lamar and Cherokee Relations

Objective

Students will read background information and primary sources about the Cherokee removal from Texas during Lamar's Presidency and make predictions based on their readings.

Procedure:

- Students will independently read the background papers on Cherokee Removal from Texas. Working with a partner, students will then read and make notes on President Mirabeau Lamar's June 27th, 1839 Letter to Burnet, Johnson, Rusk, Burton and Mayfield, and complete the graphic organizer as they read.
- Students will independently create a prediction (20B) based on their prior understanding of Texas relations with the Cherokee of how the recipients will enact the president's orders. Students will include in their predictions: how the recipients of the letter will respond, how the Texas people will respond, the impact on the Cherokee, and the impact on other Native American groups. Students will write an editorial or create a political cartoon justifying their predictions based on their readings.
- Upon completion of their editorials/cartoons, students will read the final page, "What really happened." The class will discuss the planning of the removal, Lamar's letter, their predictions and how these compare and contrast with the actual events.

Additional Resource:

Lamar letter to Shawnee (additional background information)
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/indian/war/lamar-linney-1839-1.html>

Vocabulary

Rebellion

Armed resistance to government

Scrip

paper currency in denominations of less than one dollar

Removal

Forcefully removing a whole group from one geographic area to another

TEKS:

(4) History. The student understands how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of the Republic of Texas and early Texas statehood. The student is expected to:
(A) identify individuals, events, and issues during the administrations of Republic of Texas Presidents Houston, Lamar, and...Chief Bowles... the Córdova Rebellion ...and the roles of racial and ethnic groups
(20) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
(B) analyze information by... sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

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What Actually Happened...

On July 9th, the Peace Commissioners sent word to Chief Bowles' camp, with the request "Come and see us and we will talk more fully... [we] will give you and as many of you head men as you choose to bring, safe escort to our camp."

Bowles met with the Peace Commission, but asked for more time in the hopes that additional Cherokee leaders could be present. Representatives of the Peace Commission told him that if the Cherokee continued to be "friendly with the wild Indians and Mexicans, we will be forced to kill your people in defense of our frontier. You are between two fires and if you remain you will be destroyed." Chief Bowles again asked for more time. Despite additional discussions, the negotiations went nowhere.

As the Cherokees rode back to their camp on the morning of July 15, the Texas Army prepared to attack. Three miles north of their abandoned campsite, the Texans engaged the rear guard of Bowles' people in a brief firefight. In the initial battle, the Indians were defeated, losing eighteen men to the Texans' three. After gathering provisions left behind by the fleeing Cherokees, the Texans followed in pursuit. The Texan force numbered 250-300, and included many leaders of the Republic. Combined Indian forces of Cherokee, Shawnee, Delaware, and Kickapoo were probably twice that number.

Taking up a position in the Neches River bottom, the Indians were able to repel two charges by the Texas forces. The fighting became hand-to-hand in some places, and eyewitnesses claimed both sides battled courageously. When the firing stopped, a hundred Indian warriors lay dead and dying in the Neches River bottom; three Texans had been killed and thirty more wounded. Among the dead was Chief Bowles.

John H. Reagan, a participant of the fighting recalled: "Chief Bowl displayed great courage...He remained on the field on horseback, wearing a military hat, silk vest, and handsome sword and sash which had been presented to him by President Houston. He was a magnificent picture of barbaric manhood and was very conspicuous during the whole battle, being the last to leave the field when the Indians retreated. His horse, however, was now disabled, and he dismounted, after having been wounded himself. As he walked away he was shot in the back and fell. Then, as he sat up with his face toward us, I started toward him with a view to secure his surrender. At the same time my captain, Bob Smith, with a pistol in his hand, ran toward him from farther down the line. We reached him at the same instant, and realizing what was imminent, I called, 'Captain, don't shoot him.' But he fired, striking Bowl in the head, and killing him instantly."

The Native Americans were chased across the Red River into Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). According to Brigadier General H.K. Douglass, commander of the Texas Army, "This devastating march was continued up to the 25th, until the entire Cherokee country had been traversed and Indian trails had disappeared. Houses were burnt and...destroyed every day until none remained. All cattle and other livestock were appropriated...On the 25th orders were issued for the companies to be marched home by different routes and mustered out of service, which was done."

The defeat and expulsion of the Cherokee changed life for many other Native Americans in Texas. In the aftermath of fighting, many of the weaker or more peaceful Indigenous people in East Texas were also forced to relocate. By 1841, East Texas was almost entirely cleared of Native Americans.

SOURCES:

Indian Relations in Texas: Expulsion of the Cherokees. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 1 Jul. 2015. Web. 30 Jul. 2015. <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/indian/war/page1.html>

Spellman, Paul N. *Forgotten Texas Leader: Hugh McLeod and the Texas Santa Fe Expedition*. Texas A&M University Press, 1999. Print.

De Shields, James T. *Border Wars of Texas: Being an Authentic and Popular Account, in Chronological Order, of the Long and Bitter Conflict Waged Between Savage Indian Tribes and the Pioneer Settlers of Texas*, Texas: Herald Company, 1912. Print.

Background Information

President Mirabeau Lamar and Cherokee Relations

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The Cherokee Nation were an important and powerful group in the southeastern United States. Many Cherokees migrated west to Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas as a result of wars, epidemics, and food shortages. Cherokees settled in Texas near the Red River.

As a result of increased American settlement, a group of about sixty families under Chief Bowles (Duwali) settled in Rusk County near the Caddos. Distrust between American settlers and the Cherokees grew, especially after the Cherokees developed a relationship with the Mexican government in the hopes of gaining a legal title to their land. Attempts to secure this title from Mexico before 1832 were unsuccessful.

During the Texas Revolution, Texas officials promised the Cherokees title to their lands in return for neutrality. To protect their ability to gain title to their lands from either side, the Cherokee remained neutral between Texas and Mexico during the Texas Revolution.

Sam Houston was an adopted member of the Cherokee Nation, a personal friend of Chief Bowles, and an advocate for the Cherokee people. As President of the Republic of Texas, he negotiated a permanent reservation for the Cherokee in East Texas, but the treaty, never ratified by the Texas Congress, was declared null and void in 1837.

Background Information

The Córdova Rebellion

Beginning in late 1835, Vicente Córdova, a wealthy community official of Nacogdoches, had begun to plan and organize local resistance against Texian (non-Hispanic white residents of Mexican Texas and, later, the Republic of Texas) influence in anticipation of Texas declaring independence from Mexico. Similar to the Cherokee, who resented Texian settlement on their land claims, many Tejanos were also upset by the Republic of Texas government's unwillingness to protect the property and political rights of the Tejano population. Additionally, many Tejanos remained loyal to Mexico and were not happy that Texas was independent.

In the late summer of 1838, word arrived from several sources that Mexico was seeking an arrangement with the Cherokee which would give them title to their land in exchange for assistance in joining a war against the Texans.

With Mexico's help, a wealthy Tejano official from Nacogdoches named Vicente Córdova secretly raised a Tejano force to rebel against the Republic of Texas. He convinced some Cherokee and other East Texas Native American groups to join his revolt.

On August 4, 1838, a group from Nacogdoches searching for stolen horses was fired upon by a party of Tejanos. After finding evidence of a large Tejano force, the group returned to Nacogdoches to report the attack. Thomas J. Rusk, who was at this time Nacogdoches County's Representative in the Texas Congress, sent a call to nearby settlements for reinforcements. President Houston attempted to keep the peace by outlawing unlawful assemblies and the carrying of firearms.

The Tejano leaders of the rebellion replied with their own proclamation, signed by Córdova and eighteen others. Stating that they could no longer bear injuries and usurpations of their rights, they

were ready to fight in defense of those rights. After learning that the rebels were moving toward the Cherokee nation, Rusk defied Houston's orders that he should not cross the Angelina River to interfere, and ordered troops to march directly toward the Cherokee village of Chief Bowles. Along the way, Rusk learned that the Tejano force had been overtaken near Seguin and defeated. After communicating with local Native Americans, who disavowed any knowledge of the uprising, Rusk and his volunteer army returned to Nacogdoches. After being questioned, Cherokee leaders said they had not taken part in the rebellion, and President Houston took no action against them.

But this was not the end of the story. Mexican agent Julián Pedro Miracle was killed near the Red River after the uprising. On his body were found a diary and papers that indicated the existence of an official project of the Mexican government to incite East Texas tribes against the Republic of Texas. The diary recorded that Miracle had visited Chief Bowles and that the Cherokee had agreed to make war against the Texans.

In May 1839, after the election of President Mirabeau Lamar, a group of Texas Rangers defeated a party of Mexicans and Native Americans, including some Cherokees from Bowles' village. On the body of the leader Manuel Flores, documents encouraging Native Tribes to make war against the Texans was discovered. Included were letters from Mexican officials addressed to Córdova and Bowles. Despite the objection of Chief Bowles, who firmly denied that the Cherokee intended to ally with Mexico against the Republic, and Houston's belief in their innocence, President Lamar sent a force to occupy the Neches River at the edge of Cherokee lands.

Background Information

Differences Between Houston and Lamar

During the Córdova Rebellion, President Houston remained in Nacogdoches, writing letters of reassurance to his friend Chief Bowles, and issuing orders to Rusk. Houston trusted the Cherokee and hoped to keep the peace. Rusk disagreed and disobeyed Houston's orders. He chose to send reports to Vice President Mirabeau B. Lamar, who also believed the Cherokee could not be trusted.

Because the Texas Constitution stated that the president could not serve consecutive terms, Houston could not seek reelection when his term expired in 1838. He hoped to find a candidate who could carry on with his policies, especially regarding Native Americans.

However, Mirabeau Lamar had already decided to run for president. As vice president, Lamar had opposed many of Houston's policies. In particular, Lamar disagreed with Houston's handling of the Native peoples in Texas. Unlike President Houston, Lamar believed that Native Americans had no integrity and there was no possibility of peaceful negotiation or co-existence. Lamar appealed to many white Texans, who were tired of Sam Houston's peace efforts. As president, Houston had achieved little cooperation with the Texas Congress, which ratified almost none of his treaties.

In his campaign he focused on the former president's inability to end attacks by Native Americans. Lamar also criticized Houston's inability to gain recognition of Texas's independence in Europe or by Mexico. Lamar won the election, and became the next President of the Republic of Texas. In contrast with President Houston, Congress cooperated with Lamar, and passed his frontier defense bills authorizing over a million dollars to pay for troops, military roads, and forts.

Background Information

Conflict with the Cherokees

Relations with the Cherokees quickly came to a boil. Public sentiment was against the Cherokee. The Houston Telegraph ran an editorial on June 19, 1839 urging action against the Cherokee Nation, describing them as “wily savages” and “spirits of darkness on the borders.” Referring to an 1836 treaty, the editorial continued: “We have neither the time nor patience to discuss that treaty. It has never been ratified...to confirm it now would inflict irreparable injury on Texas...The Cherokee are, and always were, unwelcome intruders among us. If they will not return peaceably to their original tribe, it will become our duty – now that their stealthy machinations with Mexico have been fully discovered, to compel their retirement and perpetual alienation from the country.”

The Peace Commission

To speak with the Cherokee, President Lamar sent a peace commission to negotiate with Chief Bowles and other Cherokee leaders. He also deployed about 900 army regulars, volunteers, and militia to East Texas.

On June 27th, 1839, President Lamar authorized the following individuals to act as Peace Commissioners to the Cherokees:

- **David B. Burnet** – Vice President of Republic of Texas
- **Sydney Johnston** – Secretary of War for the Republic of Texas
- **Thomas J. Rusk** – Chief Justice of the Republic of Texas Supreme Court
- **Isaac Watts Burton** – Close friend of President Lamar; Senator for the Republic of Texas
- **James S. Mayfield** – lawyer in Nacogdoches; later state representative and Secretary of State to President Lamar

SOURCES:

Indian Relations in Texas: Expulsion of the Cherokees. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 1 Jul. 2015. Web. 30 Jul. 2015.
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/indian/war/page1.html>

Spellman, Paul N. *Forgotten Texas Leader: Hugh McLeod and the Texas Santa Fe Expedition.* College Station; Texas, Texas A&M University Press, 1999. Print.

De Shields, James T. *Border Wars of Texas: Being an Authentic and Popular Account, in Chronological Order, of the Long and Bitter Conflict Waged Between Savage Indian Tribes and the Pioneer Settlers of Texas,* Tioga, Texas: Herald Company, 1912. Print.

McGraw Hill Textbook, McGraw-Hill Education, Columbus, Ohio.

Rebecca J. Herring, “CORDOVA REBELLION,” Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jcc03>), accessed July 30, 2015. Uploaded on June 12, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Name _____

Date _____

A Speedy and Final Close:

President Mirabeau Lamar and Cherokee Relations

Respond to the questions as you read the letter from Lamar to the Peace Commission

<p>What is the purpose of Lamar's letter to the Peace Commission?</p>	
<p>What compensation does Lamar recommend for the Cherokees in exchange for leaving?</p>	
<p>How long will the Peace Commission allow the Cherokee to remain in Texas?</p>	
<p>What does Lamar say about other native peoples and their removal?</p>	
<p>What can you infer from Lamar's closing statements: "bringing our Indian difficulties in that quarter to a Speedy and final close"?</p>	

To
 David G. Burnett
 A. Sidney Johnson, Thomas S. Rusk,
 J. W. Burton & James S. Mayfield Esqrs.
 Executive Department
 Houston 27th June 1839
 Gentlemen.

Recent events of which you are already apprised, convinced me of the necessity of the immediate removal of the Cherokee Indians, (and the ultimate removal of all other emigrant Tribes now residing in Texas, beyond Her Territorial limits; I have therefore appointed you Commissioners on the part of the Republic, to make the necessary arrangements for carrying this measure into effect.

Upon assembling at Stacigdoches, or such other place as you may find more convenient for your operations (which you are requested to do as early as practicable) you will inform yourselves of the best mode of procuring the removal of the Cherokees beyond the Red River, and take such steps as will accomplish that object with as little delay as circumstances will admit. It is desirable that this should be done in a peaceful and friendly manner, and to render the proposition acceptable to the Indians, you are authorized to make them a fair (and liberal compensation) for their improvements, Crops and such other property as they will be unable to take with them out of the County, the amount of which to be ascertained by appraisers which I have appointed for that purpose; but in consenting to make them this compensation you will not agree to pay them more than one fourth part of it in case

the residue to be paid in goods, which is understood the Merchants of Nacogdoches and San Augustine will advance at fair prices on the Credit of the Government. Previous however to making any stipulations to this effect with the Cherokees, you will have a distinct understanding with the Merchants, that they will receive from them in payment for goods such scrip or orders as you may issue to them, and that they will supply a sufficient quantity of goods at fair prices, to redeem all the scrip or orders which you may thus issue.

If you find that it will be acceptable to the Indians, ^{to receive} the whole amount of Compensation agreed to be given them for their improvements and other property, in goods, you will adopt that as the ~~prefferable~~ preferable mode of making payment, but if they express a decided wish to receive apart in cash, you will stipulate to pay them One fourth of the Amount in money, provided it does not exceed Twenty five thousand dollars, but in no event will you agree to pay a larger Sum than 25,000 of in cash, nor will you pay them any Money or issue to them any scrip for goods until the property agreed to be paid for has been delivered to such persons as may be appointed by the Secretary of War to receive and take charge of it. — You will also have it understood that after they have received their scrip, only a limited time (which you will designate) will be allowed for its Negotiation, immediately after the expiration of which they will commence their journey of removal beyond the Red River. —

On your Communication with these Indians, you will endeavour to convince them by all proper arguments of the friendly disposition of this Government towards them, and of its desire to make such arrangements

(them)

But will at the same time assure
as will be entirely just and satisfactory to them, that under no circum-
stances can they be permitted to remain in the Country longer than will
be required to make the necessary preparations for their removal. - That
this Course has been adopted towards them, because I am satisfied that it is
essential not only to the peace and prosperity of our own Citizens, but to their
Safety and Existence as a people, and that unless they Consent at once to receive
a fair Compensation for their improvements and other property, and remove out
of this Country, nothing short of the entire destruction of all they possess, and
the extermination of their Tribe will appease the indignation of the white
people against them.

If you meet, or can have Communication with the Nicksapo
tribe of Indians you will make known to them also, the necessity of their
immediate removal out of the Country, and you will take such Steps as
you may find necessary to get them beyond our limits without delay.

As regards the Delawares, Shawnees, and such other tribes as have
manifested a peaceful and friendly disposition, you will permit them to
remain in the Country for the present, upon their giving assurances of their
good Conduct while they do remain, but you will be careful to impress
it upon them, that any evidence of hostility on their part will cause their
immediate punishment and expulsion. - ^{in giving them permission to remain for this purpose} You will
be careful to excite no hope
on their part, of being eventually allowed to identify themselves with the
Country, or to claim any right in the Soil. - The terms of their Continuance
are, that they shall not be disturbed provided they Conduct themselves
properly until such time as Congress or the Government may make such
arrangements in respect to their future disposition as will be satisfactory

to both parties.

Reposing gentlemen the most entire confidence in your discretion and abilities, these matters are Confided to your management, with the fullest assurance on my part, that every thing will be done which circumstances may demand, towards bringing our Indian difficulties in that quarter to a speedy and final Close.

I am Gentlemen with great Respects
Your Obedient Servant

Mirabeau B. Lamar

A True Copy of the Original

a correct copy as per Record of the
Department of State.

Ed. W. Pease

acting Secy State

9th January 1841

A Speedy and Final Close:

President Mirabeau Lamar and Cherokee Relations

Lamar Cherokee Removal Letter

June, 1839

Hon. David G. Burnet,
A. Sidney Johnson, Thomas J. Rusk,
J. W. Burton & James S. Mayfield Esqrs.

Gentlemen,

Recent Events of which you are already apprised, Convince me of the necessity of the immediate removal of the Cherokee Indians, and the ultimate removal of all other emigrant Tribes now residing in Texas, beyond Her Territorial limits; I have therefore appointed you Commissioners on the part of the Republic to make the necessary arrangements for carrying this measure into effect.

Upon assembling at Nacogdoches, or such other point as you may find more Convenient for your operations (which you are requested to do as early as Practicable) you will inform yourselves of the best mode of procuring the removal of the Cherokees beyond the Red River, and take Such Steps as will accomplish that object with as little delay as circumstances will admit. It is desirable that this shall be done in a peaceful and friendly manner, and to render the proposition acceptable to the Indians, you are authorized to make them a fair and liberal Compensation for their improvements, Crops and such actual property as they will be unable to take with them out of the Country, the amount of which to be ascertained by appraisers which I have appointed For that purpose; but in Consenting to make them this Compensation you will not agree to pay them more than one fourth part of it in cash to both parties. the residue to be paid in goods, which is understood the merchants of Nacogdoches and San Augustine will advance at fair prices on the Credit of the Government. Previous however to making any stipulations to this effect with the Cherokees, you will have a distinct understanding with the Merchants, that they will receive from them in payment for goods such scrip or Orders as you may issue to them, and that they will supply a Sufficient quantity of goods at fair prices, to redeem all the Scrip or Orders which you may thus issue.

If you find that it will be acceptable to the Indians to receive the whole amount of the Compensation agreed to be given them for their improvements and Other property, in goods, you will adopt that as the Executive Department Houston 27th June 1839 preferable mode of making payment, but if they express a decided wish to receive a part in cash, you will stipulate to pay them One fourth of the Amount in money, provided it does not exceed Twenty five thousand dollars, but in no event will you agree to pay a larger sum than 25,000\$ in cash, nor will you pay them any money or issue to them any Scrip for goods until the property agreed to be paid for has been delivered to such persons as may be appointed by the Secretary of War to receive and take charge of it. You will also have it understood that after they have received their Scrip, only a limited time (Which you will designate) will be allowed for its Negotiation, immediately after the expiration of which they will commence their journey of removal beyond the Red River.

In your Communication with these Indians, you will endeavour to convince them by all proper arguments of the friendly disposition of this Government towards them, and of its desire to make such arrangements as will be entirely just and Satisfactory to them.

But will at the same time assure them that under no circumstances can they be permitted to remain in the Country longer than will be required to make the necessary preparations for their removal. That this Course has been adopted towards them, because I am satisfied that it is Essential not only to the peace and prosperity of our own citizens, but to their Safety and Existence as a people; and that unless they Consent at once to receive a fair Compensation for their improvements and other property, and remove out of this Country, nothing short of the entire destruction of all they possess, and the extermination of their Tribe will appease the indignation of the white people against them.

A Speedy and Final Close:

President Mirabeau Lamar and Cherokee Relations

If you meet, or can have Communication with the Kickapoo tribe of Indians you will make known to them also, the necessity of their immediate removal out of the country, and you will take such steps as you may find necessary to get them beyond our limits without delay. As regards the Delawares, Shawnees, and such other tribes as have manifested a peaceful and friendly disposition, you will permit them to remain in the country for the present, upon their giving assurances of their good conduct while they do remain, but you will be careful to impress it upon them, that any evidence of hostility on their part will cause their immediate punishment and expulsion.

But in giving them permission to remain for the present you will be careful to excite no hopes on their part, of eventually being allowed to identify themselves with the Country, or to claim any right in the Soil. The terms of their Continuance are, that they shall not be disturbed provided they Conduct themselves properly until such time as Congress or the Government may make such arrangements in respect to their future disposition as will be Satisfactory Reposing gentlemen the most entire confidence in your discretion and abilities, these matters are Confided to your management, with the fullest assurance on my part, that every thing will be done which circumstances may demand, towards bringing our Indian difficulties in that quarter to a Speedy and final close.

I am Gentlemen with great Respect
Your Obedient Servant
Mirabeau B. Lamar
[signature]

a True Copy of the Original

A correct copy as per Record of the Department of State.

[signature illegible]

9th January 1841

acting sec^y state

Mirabeau B. Lamar to David G. Burnet and others, *June 27, 1839*.
Texas Indian Papers Volume 1, #36, *Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission*.