There was a time when we did not know the whites—our wants were then fewer than they are now. They were always within our control—we had then seen nothing which we could not get. Before our intercourse with the whites, who have caused such a destruction in our game, we could lie down to sleep, and when we awoke we would find the buffalo feeding around our camp—but now we are killing them for their skins, and feeding the wolves with their flesh, to make our children cry over their bones.

Here, my Great Father, is a pipe which I present you, as I am accustomed to present pipes to all the red skins in peace with us. It is filled with such tobacco as we were accustomed to smoke before we knew the white people. It is pleasant, and the spontaneous growth of the most remote parts of our country. I know that the robes, leggings, moccasins, bear claws, etc., are of little value to you, but we wish you to have them deposited and preserved in some conspicuous part of your lodge, so that when we are gone and the sod turned over our bones, if our children should visit this place, as we do now, they may see and recognize with pleasure the deposits of their fathers; and reflect on the times that are past.

Questions

1. How, according to Sharitarish, has “our intercourse with the whites” affected the Indians’ way of life?

2. What is Sharitarish’s aspiration for his people?

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61. Appeal of the Cherokee Nation (1830)


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One of the early laws of Andrew Jackson’s administration, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, provided for uprooting the Cherokee and four other tribes, with a total population of around 60,000 living in the Southeast. The Cherokee had made great efforts to become citizens, establishing schools, adopting a constitution modeled on that of the United States, and becoming successful farmers, many of whom owned slaves. But in his messages to Congress, Jackson referred to them as “savages” and supported Georgia’s effort to seize Cherokee land and nullify the tribe’s laws.

Cherokee leaders petitioned Congress, proclaiming their desire to “remain on the land of our fathers,” as guaranteed in treaties with the federal government. They also went to court to protect their rights. Chief Justice John Marshall held that Georgia’s action in extending its jurisdiction over the Cherokee violated the tribe’s treaties with Washington. But presidents Jackson and Van Buren refused to recognize the ruling’s validity. Eventually, nearly all the Cherokee, along with the other “civilized tribes,” were forced to leave their homes. Over 4,000 Indians perished during the winter of 1838–1839 on the Trail of Tears, as the removal route to present-day Oklahoma came to be called.

We are aware that some persons suppose it will be for our advantage to remove beyond the Mississippi. We think otherwise. Our people universally think otherwise. Thinking that it would be fatal to their interests, they have almost to a man sent their memorial to Congress, deprecating the necessity of a removal. This question was distinctly before their minds when they signed their memorial. Not an adult person can be found, who has not an opinion on the subject; and if the people were to understand distinctly, that they could be protected against the laws of the neighboring States, there is probably not an adult person in the nation, who would think it best to remove; though possibly a few might emigrate individually. There are doubtless many who would flee to an unknown country, however beset with dangers, privations and sufferings, rather than be sentenced to spend six years in a Georgia prison for advising one of
their neighbors not to betray his country. And there are others who
could not think of living as outlaws in their native land, exposed to
numeral vexations, and excluded from being parties or witnesses
in a court of justice. It is incredible that Georgia should ever have
enacted the oppressive laws to which reference is here made, unless
she had supposed that something extremely terrific in its character
was necessary, in order to make the Cherokees willing to remove.
We are not willing to remove; and if we could be brought to this
extremity, it would be, not by argument; not because our judgment
was satisfied; not because our condition will be improved—but only
because we cannot endure to be deprived of our national and indi-
vidual rights, and subjected to a process of intolerable oppression.

We wish to remain on the land of our fathers. We have a perfect
and original right to claim this, without interruption or molesta-
tion. The treaties with us, and laws of the United States made in
pursuance of treaties, guaranty our residence, and our privileges,
and secure us against intruders. Our only request is, that these trea-
tries may be fulfilled, and these laws executed.

But if we are compelled to leave our country, we see nothing
but ruin before us. The country west of the Arkansas territory is
unknown to us. From what we can learn of it, we have no prepos-
sessions in its favor. All the inviting parts of it, as we believe, are
occupied by various Indian nations, to which it has been assigned.
They would regard us as intruders, and look upon us with an evil
eye. The far greater part of that region is, beyond all controversy,
badly supplied with wood and water; and no Indian tribe can live as
agriculturists without these articles. All our neighbors, in case of
our removal, though crowded into our near vicinity, would speak a
language totally different from ours, and practice different cus-
toms. The original possessors of that region are now wandering sav-
ages, lurking for prey in the neighborhood. They have always been
at war, and would be easily tempted to turn their arms against
peaceful emigrants. Were the country to which we are urged much
better than it is represented to be, and were it free from the objec-
tions which we have made to it, still it is not the land of our birth,
nor of our affections. It contains neither the scenes of our child-
hood, nor the graves of our fathers.

Questions
1. What reasons do the Cherokee give for rejecting the idea of moving
beyond the Mississippi River?
2. How do the Cherokee understand their "national and individual rights"?

62. Andrew Jackson, Veto of the Bank Bill
(1832)

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and
Papers of the Presidents (10 vols.: Washington, D.C., 1896–1899), Vol. 3,
pp. 1139–54.

The central political struggle of the Age of Jackson was the president's war
on the Bank of the United States. The Second Bank of the United States, a
private corporation that conducted the federal government's financial
business and regulated currency issued by state banks, had been given a
twenty-year charter by Congress in 1816. The issue of the bank's future
came to a head in 1832, when the institution's allies persuaded Congress to
approve a bill extending it for another twenty years. Jackson vetoed the
bill. His veto message is perhaps the central document of what would
come to be called "Jacksonian democracy."

The proper role of government, Jackson insisted, was to offer "equal
protection" to all citizens. In a democracy, it was unacceptable for Con-
gress to create a source of economic power and privilege unaccountable to
the people. Jackson presented himself to "humble" Americans as their
defender against entrenched economic interests. Jackson's effective appeal
to popular sentiments helped him win reelection in 1832. His victory
ensured the death of the Bank of the United States.