

Worcester v. Georgia

Cherokee Sovereignty and Actions of the U.S. Government

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Grade Level	8th – 9th Grade	**Time Frame**	100 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	2 class periods
Course	Oklahoma History, U.S. History		

Essential Question

How have Native American tribes fought to maintain their tribal sovereignty? How have the policies and decisions of the U.S. government impacted tribal sovereignty?

Summary

Students will analyze the United States Supreme Court case of "Worcester v. Georgia," and summarize and categorize actions that protected or undermined the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. Students will extend their learning by watching a video of a judge discussing the powers of the judicial branch. Students will then use their knowledge to evaluate President Andrew Jackson's decision to ignore the Supreme Court's ruling in "Worcester v. Georgia" in a Four Corners activity. To conclude the lesson, students will write a paragraph in which they summarize their learning using important terms from the lesson.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in a Word Splash activity to activate prior knowledge about Indian removal policies and Native American resistance to those policies.

Explore

Students analyze the *Worcester v. Georgia* Supreme Court case using the Categorical Highlighting instructional strategy.

Explain

Students complete a chart by categorizing the information they highlighted as actions taken to protect the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation or as actions taken to undermine the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation.

Extend

Students watch an ICAP video about the role of judges in carrying out the powers of the judicial branch then participate in a Four Corners activity in which they evaluate President Andrew Jackson's decision to ignore the Supreme Court's ruling in *Worcester v. Georgia.*

Evaluate

Students revisit the Word Splash activity from the beginning of the lesson and summarize their learning in a paragraph using important terms from the lesson.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages
CLR402: Draw logical conclusions in somewhat challenging passages
IDT403: Summarize key supporting ideas and details in somewhat challenging passages
REL403: Identify clear cause-effect relationships in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

8.7.3B: disregard for the Worcester v. Georgia decision

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

OKH.2.3: Analyze the motivations for removal of American Indians and the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830; trace the forced removal of American Indian nations, including the impact on the tribal nations removed to present-day Oklahoma and tribal resistance to the forced relocations.

Attachments

- An Explanation of the Case—Worcester v. Georgia.docx
- An Explanation of the Case—Worcester v. Georgia.pdf
- Four Corners Signs—Worcester v. Georgia.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Worcester v. Georgia.pptx
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Student Copy)—Worcester v. Georgia - Spanish.docx
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Student Copy)—Worcester v. Georgia - Spanish.pdf
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Student Copy)—Worcester v. Georgia.docx
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Student Copy)—Worcester v. Georgia.pdf
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Teacher Copy)—Worcester v. Georgia.docx
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Teacher Copy)—Worcester v. Georgia.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Four Corners Signs document (attached; for teacher use; print two-sided, in color)
- Worcester v. Georgia—An Explanation of the Case handout (attached; one per student)
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Student Copy) handout (attached; one per student)
- Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Teacher Copy) document (attached; for teacher use)
- Highlighters (two colors per student)
- Notebook paper (one per student)

Preparation

Material Preparation

Prior to beginning this lesson, print out the attached **Four Corners Signs**. Hang each sign in a different corner of your classroom.

Scaffolding Preparation

This lesson is intended to be taught within the context of a unit on Indian removal, and makes assumptions that students are already familiar with the vocabulary terms listed in the Engage: Indian Removal Act of 1830, Cherokee, resistance, tribal sovereignty, and Andrew Jackson. Review these terms with students prior to the lesson, to the extend you deem necessary.

The most complicated term for students is likely *tribal sovereignty*. Explain to students that during the 1830s, tribes were legally considered to be "sovereign" nations that existed within the boundaries of the United States. Further explain that only the federal government had the power to enter into treaties with Native American tribes. Help students understand that tribal sovereignty means that tribes inherently possess the independence and autonomy to govern their people and maintain authority over their territory.

10 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson.

Display **slide 3** and organize students into groups of three or four. Introduce the Word Splash instructional strategy and draw students' attention to the five vocabulary terms on the slide: Indian Removal Act of 1830, Cherokee, resistance, tribal sovereignty, and Andrew Jackson.

Have students work within their groups to explain how each term is connected to two or more of the other terms. Ensure that students do this for each term. Allow 5–7 minutes for discussion.

Invite volunteers to share their ideas with the class. As students share, clarify any misconceptions. Once you are satisfied that students have sufficiently reviewed the terms on the slide and any relevant content covered in past lessons, move to the next portion of the activity.

Possible Student Responses

Students may make the following connections:

The *Cherokee* resisted the *Indian Removal Act of 1830* because they did not want to be forced to leave their homeland. The *Indian Removal Act of 1830* threatened the *tribal sovereignty* of the *Cherokee* tribe because the law was going to force the Cherokee members to move. This meant that the U.S. government was trying to make this decision for the *Cherokee* Nation, rather than the tribe getting to choose for themselves. President *Andrew Jackson* supported passing the *Indian Removal Act* to force tribes such as the *Cherokee* tribe out of their homelands in order to open up land for white settlement and the expansion of the slave-based agricultural economy that dominated the south.

Display **slide 4**. Tell students that they will discuss the Supreme Court case *Worcester v. Georgia* in this lesson. Have student groups spend 2–3 minutes to predict how the terms from the Word Splash connect to *Worcester v. Georgia*. Call on groups to share their ideas and form a class hypothesis. Record this hypothesis so that students may return to it later in the lesson after learning about the court case.

Display **slide 5** and introduce the essential questions, "How have Native American tribes fought to maintain their tribal sovereignty? How have the policies and decisions of the U.S. government impacted tribal sovereignty?" Have students keep these essential questions in mind as they learn about *Worcester v. Georgia*.

Display **slide 6** and share the lesson objectives with the class.

25 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 7**. Use this slide to make sure that students have a common understanding of tribal sovereignty, as the term is used throughout the lesson. Explain to students that the Supreme Court case *Worcester v. Georgia* impacted the tribal sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. Tell students that they will explore those issues of tribal sovereignty surrounding the case.

Give each student one copy of the attached ***Worcester v. Georgia*—An Explanation of the Case** handout and two highlighters of different colors. Display **slide 8** and ask students to read this handout with their group, and use the Categorical Highlighting instructional strategy to analyze the text. Have students use one color to highlight actions taken to protect the tribal sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation and another color to highlight actions taken to remove the tribal sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. Have students discuss what should be highlighted with their group members.

Teacher's Note: Strategy Variations and Annotation

If you do not have highlighters for your students, consider having them circle actions taken to protect tribal sovereignty and underline actions taken to remove tribal sovereignty. Additionally, you may also have students add annotations in the margins to justify why they chose each part of the text they highlighted, similar to the Why-Lighting instructional strategy.

25 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 9**. Give each student one copy of the attached **Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Student Copy)** handout.

Ask students to work with their groups and use their Categorical Highlighting notes to complete the chart. Have students list at least two examples under each heading and explain each example using 1–3 complete sentences. Emphasize to students that their chosen examples should be information that is most important for each category. Have them prepare to share with the whole class.

Possible Student Responses

See the attached **Worcester v. Georgia and Tribal Sovereignty Chart (Teacher Copy)** document for examples of possible student answers.

Teacher's Note: Scaffolding

Consider guiding students through the following example as a class:

Direct students' attention to the second sentence of the second paragraph, "Settlers crowded in on Cherokee lands." Ask students to categorize this statement. Students should respond that it belongs under the heading, "Actions taken to remove tribal sovereignty." Have students discuss the statement with their groups and explain why it belongs in that category. Have groups share their explanations with the class. Clarify responses and provide additional guidance if necessary. Consider asking students to write 1–3 complete sentences explaining the statement and having them share out their responses.

After students complete the chart, have half of the student groups share an example of how sovereignty was protected, and have the other half share an example of how sovereignty was taken away. Allow groups 1–2 minutes to discuss which example they plan to share, and to select a spokesperson for their group. Have each spokesperson share their group's response. Encourage students to add to or edit their charts as their classmates share.

The purpose of this discussion is to make sure that students have a clear understanding of *Worcester v. Georgia* and how surrounding issues impacted the tribal sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation.

25 minutes

Extend

Explain to students that the case *Worcester v. Georgia* was decided by the Supreme Court. Remind students that the Supreme Court is the most powerful court in the United States and is made up of nine justices, or judges, as opposed to lower courts, in which cases are determined by a single judge.

Display **slide 10**. Share the video *ICAP - Worcester v Georgia*, which features an interview with District Judge Michael Tupper of Oklahoma Judicial District 12. Judge Tupper discusses the role of judges in carrying out the powers of the judicial branch.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=hWQjUwvLXvU

After students watch the video, display **slide 11**. Ask students to turn to an Elbow Partner and discuss two questions based on the video: What is the role of a judge? Why is the judicial branch important? Allow 1–2 minutes for discussion, then call on students to share their thoughts with the whole class.

Ask students to assume the role of a judge, drawing on their knowledge of the court's decision regarding the Cherokee and the information in the ICAP video. Ask students to use their powers of judicial review to evaluate the actions of President Andrew Jackson following the ruling made in *Worcester v. Georgia*.

Move to **slide 12** and introduce the Four Corners activity to students. Have students read the following statement on the slide, "President Jackson's decision to ignore the ruling in *Worcester v. Georgia* was constitutional."

Have students identify their level of agreement or disagreement based on the posters hung around the room: Strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Have them stand next to the poster that corresponds to their personal level of agreement or disagreement.

Teacher's Note: Organizing the Discussion

If there are large groups of students under one sign, consider splitting them into multiple smaller groups for discussion.

Have students discuss the reasoning for their choice with the others gathered around their same poster. The members of each group should work together to come up with a response that justifies their choice. Invite groups to share their reasoning with the class.

Possible Student Responses

Students may disagree or strongly disagree with the statement on slide 12. They may note that the president takes an oath of office swearing to uphold the Constitution, which requires the president, as the head of the executive branch, to ensure that the laws of the United States are enforced, including the laws defined by the Supreme Court. They may say that President Jackson's disregard for the ruling in *Worcester v. Georgia* was unconstitutional because he failed to carry out his responsibility to enforce the law. Students may also agree or strongly agree, arguing that state governments should be able to make laws about what happens within the boundaries of their states. They could also say that Jackson believed the court had gone too far and he disregarded the ruling to protect Georgia's "right" to Cherokee land.

Display **slide 13** and introduce the statement on the slide, "A president's decision to ignore a Supreme Court ruling is constitutional." Have each student repeat the process used with the previous statement by moving to a corner of the room that marks their level of agreement. Allow corner groups time for discussion.

Possible Student Responses

Students may strongly agree or disagree with the statement on slide 13, arguing that the president should always enforce a Supreme Court ruling as part of their responsibilities as president. They may elaborate by saying that it is important for the president to enforce rulings of the Supreme Court to uphold the separation of powers, checks and balances, and the rule of law. However, some students may choose "strongly agree" or "agree" if they believe that the Supreme Court's ruling was not in the best interest of the country or the ruling itself goes against the Constitution.

As students discuss, draw attention to the controversial nature of Jackson's decision to disregard the Supreme Court's ruling in *Worcester v. Georgia.* If necessary, guide them to understand that Jackson's choice was arguably unconstitutional because it undermined the system of checks and balances within the U.S. government. Help students realize that his actions threatened the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation by disregarding the ruling of the Supreme Court that confirmed the Cherokee people had sovereignty over their land and people, which the United States and the State of Georgia were legally obligated to respect.

15 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 14**. Have students return to the Word Splash list from the beginning of the lesson. Point out the new term added to the slide, "Worcester v. Georgia." Have students write a new, 5–8 sentence summary about how *Worcester v. Georgia* impacted Cherokee sovereignty using all six terms on the slide. You may choose to have students write these summaries individually, in pairs, or in groups. Distribute one sheet of notebook paper to each student and allow students time to complete their summaries.

Optional Activity Materials

You may choose to have students complete their summaries on notebook paper, notecards, in a composition book, or in a virtual format, like a Google Doc. Select the method that best fits your routine and preferences.

Sample Student Response

Students may connect the terms similar to the following:

The Indian Removal Act passed by the United States Congress in 1830 threatened the tribal sovereignty of the Five Tribes, including the Cherokee Nation, by attempting to force Native Americans to give up their homelands and move west to Indian Territory. In an attempt to maintain sovereignty and authority over their land, the Cherokee used the court system and resisted removal. Samuel Worcester, representing the interests of the Cherokee, challenged the State of Georgia in the Supreme Court case *Worcester v. Georgia*. In this case, the Supreme Court acted on its power of judicial review to overturn the Georgia law, declaring that states had no authority to interfere with Native American tribes. Additionally, the Supreme Court used its power to interpret the law to affirm that Native American tribes are their own distinct communities with sovereignty over their land and people. This ruling supported tribal sovereignty and protected the Cherokee Nation's right to govern themselves and maintain authority over their land. However, the actions of President Andrew Jackson threatened the sovereignty of the Cherokee. In response to the Supreme Court's decision, President Jackson refused to carry out his presidential duty to enforce the ruling. He allowed Georgians to continue to illegally move on to Cherokee land, which ultimately resulted in the forced removal of the Cherokee from their lands in Georgia. This represented a disregard for the Cherokee Nation's right to their land and their freedom to make choices for their people.

Resources

- K20 Center (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192
- K20 Center (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google docs. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/2327
- K20 Center (n.d.). Four corners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/138
- K20 Center (n.d.). Why-lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- K20 Center (n.d.). Word splash. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/199
- K20 Center (2020, February 18). *ICAP – Worcester v Georgia* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/hWQjUwvLXvU