

SPECKLED SNAKE RESPONSE

*Speckled Snake, Muskogee (Creek) tribal leader response to Andrew Jackson
[excerpt]*

Notes

Brothers: I have listened to many talks from our great father. When he first came over the wide waters, he was only a little man who wore a red coat...He was very little then. His legs were cramped from sitting a long time in his big boat, and he begged us for a little land to light his fire on. He said he had come over the wide waters to teach the Indians new things, and to make them happy. He said he loved his red brothers. He was very kind.

Brothers: The Muskogees gave the white man land, and they made him a fire so he could warm himself. And when his enemies, the white men to the south [Spaniards], made war on him, our young men drew the tomahawk and protected his head from the scalper's knife. But when the white man had warmed himself before the Indian's fire and filled himself with Indian corn, he became very big...Then he became our Great Father. He loved his red children. And he said, "Move a little farther on, so I don't step on you." With one foot he shoved the red man across the Oconee [River], and with the other he trampled down the graves of our fathers and the forest where we had so long hunted deer.

But our Great Father still loved his red children. And soon he made us another talk. He said, "Move a little further on. You are too close to me." But there were some bad men among the Muskogees then, just as there are now. They stayed on, close to the graves of their fathers until they were crushed by the heavy feet of our Great Father. Their teeth bit his feet, and that made him angry. But he continued to love his red children. And when he found them too slow to move, he sent his big guns before him to sweep them out of his way.

Brothers: I have listened to a great many talks from our Great Father but they always begin and end the same way: "Move further on. You are too close to me."

Brothers: Our Great Father says "Where you are now, the white men have always claimed the land." He speaks with a straight tongue, and he cannot lie. But when he first came over the wide waters, while he was still a little man...he said: "Give me a little land. You can spare it, and I will pay you for it."

Brothers: When our Great Father made us talk at an earlier time, he said, "Go a little further on. Go across the Oconee and the Okmulgee [Rivers]. There is good country there." He also said, "It will be yours forever." I have listened to his talk now... He says, "Move across the Mississippi. There is game there. You can stay there as long as the grass grows or the water runs."

Brothers: Won't our Great Father come there too? He loves his red children. He loves his red children, and his tongue is not forked.

Brothers: Our Great Father says that our bad men have made his heart...but where are the red children he loves, who were once as many as the leaves of the forest? How many have been killed by his soldiers? How many have been crushed beneath his feet?

Source: Snake, S. (1973). Response to Andrew Jackson [Speech transcript]. *The American Poetry Review*, 2(2), p. 43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27774562?seq=2>