

# The Trail of Tears

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History's Mysteries—Solve the Crime of the Time



### **About the author**

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# WELCOME TO THE TRAIL OF TEARS!

In this hands-on investigative activity, students are given an authentic task: to think like criminalists and review mock forensic files of a historical event. Students gather, analyze, and interpret evidence, engaging in tasks such as examining physical objects (e.g., a model of a guillotine, bullets, a blood-spattered uniform), poring over photographs, analyzing documents, and reading maps and charts. A PowerPoint® presentation includes an introduction to the task, a coroner's report, and several types of sources from the "crime scene." Students then fill out a "forensic report" graphic organizer, hypothesize how the event took place, and conclude by reading a "Mystery Solved" handout that provides historical background on the "crime." Optional extension activities include having students create a "breaking news" TV report, write a front-page newspaper article, or compose a "news alert" text message. Grades 6–12.



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## Purpose and Overview

### Activity Introduction

Welcome to *History's Mysteries: Solve the Crime of the Time*. Included are investigative case files that cover some of the main areas of a U.S. history standards-based curriculum. The central purpose of these files is to spark interest and excitement in students for further study of a given unit.

A History Mystery is rooted in having students act like criminalists whose job is to gather, analyze, and interpret forensic evidence. Real-life criminalists are skilled in studying everyday items, examining bullets, and analyzing documents. Likewise, in a history class, a teacher's job is to help students develop critical thinking skills also based in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data.

In this hands-on investigative activity, students are given an authentic task—to think like criminalists and review mock forensic files of a historical event. Each file contains primary and secondary source replica/realia that students analyze in order to hypothesize how a given event took place.

This activity works best as an introduction to a U.S. history unit, but it may also be used as a way to review before a DBQ-based assessment at the end of a unit. Students are motivated to solve each Mystery both with accuracy and speed as the first student/team to do so correctly wins a "Criminalist of the Year" name plate for classroom display.

### How does a History Mystery work?

Students are given the task of reviewing a historical event case file and filling out a Forensic Report. Once this initial step is completed, students then read a **Mystery Solved: Press Release** that reveals all the accurate details of the real life History Mystery.

Each *History's Mysteries Case File* review and **Forensic Report** are completed in a single (60-minute) class session. The follow up **Mystery Solved: Press Release** reading and follow up activities (**Front Page News**, **Breaking News Report**, or **Text Message News Alert**) can take another half to full one hour class period.

Each unit comes with reproducible student analysis sheets, teacher directions, student directions, CD-ROM that allows students to view the files on a computer (or the entire class with an LCD projector).



#### Teaching tip

For more scaffolding and greater

challenge to the activity, you can also add a step where students work on a **Front Page News Article**, **Breaking News Report**, or a **Text Message News Alert** in which students further synthesize what they believed took place in either an essay, short skit, or short summary form (for better language mastery, beginner or advanced writing skills, ELL and/or AP\* students).

What impact did Andrew Jackson's policies have on Native Americans?



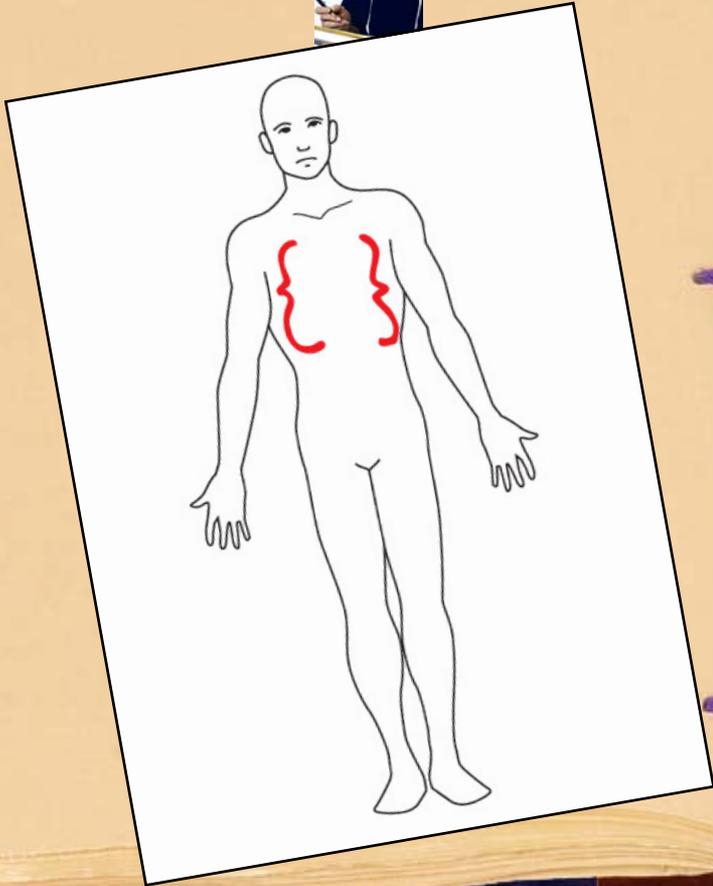
AREA 1:  
CRIME SCENE



Little Rock, Arkansas



AREA 2:  
CORONER'S REPORT



VICTIM'S NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)  
*Ross, Quantie, aka Elizabeth Brown Henley*

SEX	AGE	RACE	WEIGHT	HT
M <input checked="" type="radio"/> F		<i>Native American</i>		

DESCRIPTION OF CORPSE  
*Adult female. Wearing thin cotton dress and shawl.*

EXTERNAL INJURIES  
*Severe cold exposure and frostbite-like injuries.*

INTERNAL INJURIES  
*Severe lung infection. Internal and external injuries indicate cause of death as pneumonia.*

**AREA 3:  
DETECTIVE'S RESEARCH**



The Cherokee were at one time the largest and most powerful Native American nation in what is now the United States. They originally lived in the current states of Georgia, Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Alabama.

The Cherokee called themselves Keetoowah or Aní Yunwiya, meaning "the Principal People."

