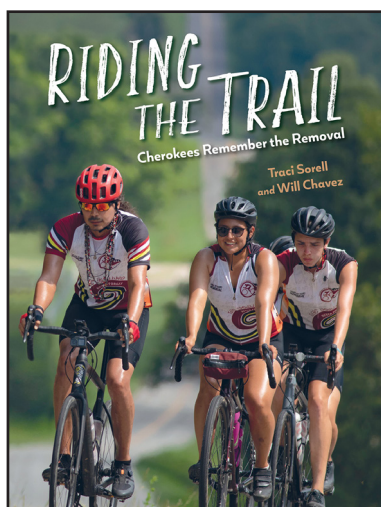


RIDING THE TRAIL

Cherokees Remember the Removal

DISCUSSION GUIDE



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ABOUT THE BOOK

This inspiring photo-rich nonfiction book follows Native youth riding to remember history, to link past and present through culture, to gain resilience, and to show activism.

The Cherokee Nation's Remember the Removal bicycle ride is a youth leadership program that includes a three-week, nearly 1,000-mile memorial ride to commemorate the forced removal of Cherokee people. The program teaches culture, history, and language as youth cycle the same route their ancestors involuntarily walked in 1838–1839. There are almost 300 alumni, including coauthor Will Chavez, who was also a coordinator of the program.

In 112 compelling pages by enrolled Cherokee Nation coauthors, *Riding the Trail* does something no other book does: presents the Trail of Tears in a contemporary context. While Cherokee people suffered that grim chapter in history, they thrive today.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Best-selling author and Cherokee Nation citizen **Traci Sorell** writes inclusive, award-winning fiction and nonfiction in a variety of formats for young people. She is a two-time Sibert Medal and Orbis Pictus honoree for her nonfiction work. She has received many awards from the American Indian Library Association. She is the author of *We Are Grateful Otsaliheliga*, *We Are Still Here!*, and *Mascot*, among many others.



Award-winning journalist, photographer, and Cherokee Nation and San Felipe Pueblo citizen **Will Chavez** previously coordinated the annual Remember the Removal ride from 2019–2024, participated in the inaugural ride in 1984, and served as a mentor rider in 2019. He is an assistant editor at the *Cherokee Phoenix*. He also serves on the board of directors for the National Trail of Tears Association.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use these questions to kick off classroom discussion, guide pre-thinking and post-reading responses, or inspire a writing assignment!

- Before reading *Riding the Trail*, reflect on what you know about the Trail of Tears. When did the events of this forced removal occur? What key locations were involved? Where do Cherokee people live today? Why is it important to remember the removal and understand this history? What do you hope to learn by reading this book?
- Examine the table of contents. Why do you think the chapters of this book are titled in both English and the Cherokee syllabary? If you do not already read the Cherokee language, what pronunciation and translation tools could you use to read and understand the Cherokee chapter titles? Of the resources listed after the epilogue, what are you most interested in exploring? Which of these resources do you think you might reference while reading the chapters?
- Read the epigraph aloud and discuss: What tone does this epigraph set for the book? Who was Rev. Daniel S. Buttrick? What treaty does he refer to? Why do you think the authors chose this quote to preface *Riding the Trail*?
- The introduction describes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 and 2021 Remember the Removal rides. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect events and programs in your community?
- How was Cherokee society organized before the arrival of Europeans? How was this system different from most European countries? How and why did Cherokee governance change over time?
- How did life change for Cherokee people after the arrival of European settler-colonists? How did the Cherokee Nation's experience with invasion compare to those of other Native Nations?
- Why did a small group of Cherokee people want to sign a treaty with the US government and go west? Why did Principal Chief John Ross declare that the Treaty of New Echota was fraudulent? How did the Cherokee Nation try to stop this treaty?
- What motivated the creation of the Remember the Removal (RTR) program in the 1980s? Can you think of programs with similar goals in your community?
- How was the 1984 inaugural ride different from the modern RTR program? How was it similar?
- Read and compare the biographies of the 2021 RTR riders. What do these riders have in common? How do they each stand out from each other? The RTR program is very selective; what do you think the selection committee prioritized when choosing riders?
- Some riders are from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) and some are from the Cherokee Nation. How did the EBCI come to be involved in the RTR program? What do you know about the relationship between the EBCI, the Cherokee Nation, and the United Keetoowah Band?
- What do riders learn through the RTR program before embarking on their journey? What tests are they required to complete in order to ride?



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- What is the significance of the designs on the 2021 RTR kit?
- What are the responsibilities of the lead rider? Why are riders rotated through this position? If you were a participant in this program, do you think you would enjoy being a lead rider? Why or why not?
- How do the RTR riders begin each day on their journey? Do you have a special morning observance or other way to prepare for a day that you know will be challenging?
- What historical and sacred sites do the 2021 RTR riders visit along their route? How do they connect with these places? Have you ever visited a site that is meaningful to you in a historical or sacred way?
- Genealogical research is a part of how the RTR riders prepare for and engage with their experience on the trail. What do you know about your own family history? How does it shape the way you understand the world?
- Who do the RTR riders meet along the way? How do their families and communities support them on their journey?
- How do weather and environmental conditions affect the RTR riders? What plans and strategies do they have in place to complete the ride safely?
- What did the end of the removal look like for the Cherokee people? What challenges did they face within their new Reservation? How has the Cherokee Nation grown and developed in the nearly two hundred years since their arrival in Oklahoma?
- How does the Cherokee Nation welcome and celebrate the RTR riders as they arrive in Tahlequah?
- What did the 2021 RTR riders and other alumna say about what they learned on the ride? What do the authors share in their notes at the end of the book about this journey's significance to them?