

Chickasaw

Student Curricula



Fort Washita

SECONDARY

Essential Questions:

- How did the establishment of Fort Washita affect political, economic and social change?
- What is the historical significance of Fort Washita?

Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Students will learn about historical events that occurred at Fort Washita and will consider their impact on both Chickasaw and American history.
- Students will recognize the location of Fort Washita and the significance of its geographical location.
- Students will utilize maps and other resources to determine their understanding of time and place regarding Fort Washita.
- Students will understand the strategic significance of Fort Washita at the height of its use as a working military installation as well as its significance today to the Chickasaw people.

Background:

Fort Washita was built in 1842 as the southwestern-most military post of the United States. The mission of Fort Washita was to maintain peace for the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations within their new lands, pursuant to treaty obligations.

There were many outside threats to the new home of the Chickasaw people, including attacks by the Republic of Texas militia, interference by unscrupulous intruders, constant raids and unsettled disputes with some of the Plains tribes and the presence of traders and trappers.

Even though Fort Washita was a military post, Chickasaw people frequently visited. It was home to the U.S. Indian agent office and a public post office. Chickasaws who lived nearby used services available there, such as blacksmithing. At least once, the Chickasaw annuity was paid at Fort Washita. Chickasaw people also used part of the fort as a burial ground.

Fort Washita operated as a U.S. military post until the start of the Civil War in 1861. It was then occupied by Confederate forces through 1865. The Confederates burned down the majority of the fort as they fled at the end of the Civil War.

After the war, the fort was left abandoned and was never occupied by the U.S. military again. In 1870, the U.S. War Department transferred the property to the U.S. Department of the Interior. Former Chickasaw and Choctaw agent and pardoned Confederate Brig. Gen. Douglas H. Cooper lived at the fort until his death in 1879. Later, Charles and Abbie Davis Colbert selected the land that included the remains of Fort Washita for their allotment and used one of the barracks as their family home.

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) acquired Fort Washita in 1962 and restored it as a historic site and museum. In 2017, the Chickasaw Nation purchased the historic site from OHS and continued the restoration efforts. Today, the Chickasaw Nation assumes responsibility and management of Fort Washita. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated as a National Historic Landmark. National Historic Landmarks are historic properties

that illustrate heritage and history of the United States. In August 2023, Fort Washita was placed in trust for the Chickasaw Nation.

Visitors to Fort Washita can tour restored structures, witness Civil War reenactments and participate in the yearly fur trade era rendezvous. At this event, guests can experience what life was like before and during the Civil War. Other events throughout the year include storytelling, outdoor movies and special seasonal and holiday events that the whole family can enjoy.

Materials/Resources:

Online video: "[Arrival in Indian Territory–Fort Washita](#)" Winter Fire, Season 1, Episode 3

Video Transcript: Winter Fire - A Chickasaw Storyteller's Series, Season 1, Episode 3

Online video: "[Fort Washita Virtual Tour](#)"

Letters from Fort Washita soldier

Fort Washita Evaluation Informative Essay Rubric

Vocabulary:

Dragoon	Cross timbers	Barracks	Ruins
Cartography	Interior	Garrison	Indian Removal Act
Junction	Texas militia	Confederacy	Chickasaw Removal

Lesson Plan

Engage:

Maps are a rich source of historical information. In this interactive learning experience, students will engage in a mapping activity that will allow them to closely explore historical locations and details, make connections, ask questions and be inspired by an important Oklahoma historical site.

Activity 1: "Where in the World is Fort Washita?"

1. Distribute the blank map of Oklahoma.
2. Using the blank map and additional classroom resources as needed (atlases, globes, map pencils, highlighters), guide students to the location of Fort Washita in southeast Oklahoma and have students draw a square on their map to indicate the Fort's location. Label it "Fort Washita."
3. Next, have students label the following additional locations:
 - a. Republic of Texas
 - b. Red River
 - c. Washita River

- d. Texas Road (as seen on this map of [Indian Territory 1889](#))
- e. Choctaw Nation
- f. Chickasaw Nation
- g. Cross Timbers
- h. Fort Towson

Explore:

Activity 2: “Gibson versus Washita”

1. Students will read the background information on Fort Washita and the entries for [Fort Washita](#) and [Fort Gibson](#) in the Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture on the Oklahoma Historical Society’s website.
2. Use highlighters to mark the differences and similarities between Fort Washita and Fort Gibson.
3. Divide students into two groups. One will develop three arguments as to why Fort Washita is a superior fort, and the other group will develop three arguments as to why Fort Gibson is the superior fort.

Explain:

Activity 3: “Cloze the Gaps: Winter Fire–Fort Washita”

1. Distribute the viewing guide and cloze activity sheet to each student. Have students review the viewing guide questions prior to watching the video.
2. Together, watch the video “Winter Fire – Fort Washita” in its entirety.
3. Immediately following the video, assess students’ comprehension of content using the cloze activity sheet. Students should complete the cloze activity before answering the viewing guide questions.
4. Finally, have students complete the viewing guide. Use those questions to guide large group discussion.

Elaborate:

Activity 4: “Who Are You Going to Call? Ghost Story!”

Distribute a “Roll a Ghost Story” planning sheet and a die to each student.

1. Prompt students to read interviews from Works Progress Administration (WPA) Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma.
 - Mrs. M.P. McMinn
 - Richard Morgan
2. Ask each student to roll the single die and match the number on the die to the corresponding story element. The first roll determines the atmosphere of the story, the second determines the setting/location, the third roll determines the main character and the final roll determines the conflict central to the story. Use the “Roll a Ghost Story,” planning sheet to match each roll to the corresponding story element.

3. Each student should then write a ghost story set at Fort Washita based on the results of each of their rolls.
4. Once final drafts have been written and edited, host a spooky classroom read aloud of stories.

Evaluate:

Activity 5: “Turn Back Time Machine”

1. Have students read the letters of John R. Whaley.
2. Have students write an essay responding to the following prompt
 - a. If you could go back in time 150 years to Fort Washita, what would you want to see, do and ask about? Write an essay of no more than 5-6 paragraphs describing what you would like to see, do or experience. Remember to include your motivation for your choice(s). Provide specific examples to support your choice.
3. Score student responses using the provided rubric.

Alignment to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for the Social Studies

Content Standards

6.3.7 Identify and explain topics related to indigenous sovereignty.

6.5.5. Analyze reasons for conflict and cooperation among and between groups, societies, nations and regions.

8.8.4 Analyze the consequences of westward expansion, including the impact on the culture of American Indians and their homelands, and the growing sectional tensions regarding the expansion of slavery.

OKH.1.1 Integrate visual information to identify and describe the significant physical and human features including major trails, railway lines, waterways, cities, ecological regions, natural resources, highways and landforms.

OKH.2.1 Summarize and analyze the role of river transportation to early trade and mercantile settlements including Chouteau's Trading Post at Three Forks.

OKH.2.2 Describe the major trading and peacekeeping goals of early military posts including Fort Gibson.

OKH.2.4 Describe the consequences of Indian Removal on intertribal relationships with western nations, such as the Osage, Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho.

Social Studies Practices:

1.B.6-8.3 Examine the origins, purposes and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties and international agreements.

3.A.6-8.1 Gather, compare and analyze evidence from primary and secondary sources on the same topic, identifying possible bias and evaluating credibility.

3.A.6-8.3 Use multiple historical or contemporary primary sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional relevant sources.

4.A.6-8.2 Integrate the use of visual information (e.g. maps, charts, photographs, videos, political cartoons) with textual information from primary and secondary sources.

5.A.6-8.1 Compose narratives incorporating point of view, the use of an appropriate structure of ideas and application of information.

1.B.9-12.1 Evaluate the impact of the structure and powers exercised by local, state, tribal, national and international institutions on public policy.

3.A.9-12.1 Gather, organize and analyze various kinds of primary and secondary source evidence on related topics, evaluating the credibility of sources.

4.A.9-12.2 Analyze information from visual, oral, digital and interactive texts (e.g. maps, charts, images, political cartoons, videos) in order to draw conclusions and defend arguments.

5.A.9-12.1 Compose narrative writing, when appropriate to a given purpose or task, citing evidence from informational texts.

Have you used this lesson plan in your classroom, or do you have feedback? Please email us at

HistoryInquiries@Chickasaw.net.