



Exploration, Settlement, and Growth of Florida: Seminole Indians

The history of the Seminole Indians is one of resistance. The activities in this lesson focus on important concepts of adaptation, migration, and diversity amid changing circumstances. Students will use links to videos and other sources, images, maps, and background information.

STANDARDS, GRADES 3RD-5TH:

3rd - SS.3.G.4.1; SS.3.G.4.4; SS.3.G.1.1.; SS.3.G.1.2.

4th - SS.4.A.3.6; SS.4.A.3.7; SS.4.A.3.8; SS.4.A.3.9; SS.4.A.3.10; SS.4.A.4.1;
SS.4.A.4.2; SS.4.A.9.1; SS.4.G.1.2; SS.4.G.1.4.

5th - SS.5.A.6.6; SS.5.G.1.1.

ACTIVITY 1. The Enduring Seminoles

ACTIVITY 2. Forced Migration

ACTIVITY 2. John Horse





ACTIVITY #1 - The Enduring Seminoles

The history of the Seminole Indians is one of resistance. The activities in this lesson focus on important concepts of adaptation, migration, and diversity amid changing circumstances. Students will use links to videos and other sources, images, maps, and background information.

Lesson Essential Question: How did the Seminoles adapt to change?

Objective: Students will understand the concept of adaptation and how it applied to the survival of the Seminole people.

Materials: View interactive artifact in 3D, read “The Seminole People in Florida”

Vocabulary: ADAPTATION: the idea of adjusting oneself to different conditions, environment, etc.

- 1. Have students read** “The Seminole People in Florida.”
- 2. Have the students** first view the 3D historic Seminole Doll on the TBHC website. They will be able to rotate the image and zoom. Explain that making crafts by hand was a way for Seminoles to make a living through tourism; a way they had to adapt to survive in Florida after the Seminole Wars were fought.
- 3. Students will list** five ways in which the Seminoles had to adapt. Examples can be cultural, economic, or other ways. Discuss as a class.





Indian village, Silver Springs, Florida, circa 1939 - Burgert Brothers photos - courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System

A Brief History of the Seminole People in Florida

(Courtesy of the Museum of Florida History)

The Seminole people have been an important part of Florida history for more than 300 years. Their story of survival and success is remarkable, and their unique culture endures today.

The ancestors of today's Seminole people migrated to Florida in the 1700s and early 1800s. These Indians came primarily from Alabama and Georgia, and although they were simply known as "Creeks" to the British, they spoke different languages and lived in independent towns. Different bands of Creeks established towns in north Florida and traded with both the British and Spanish. After 1765, all Florida Indians were referred to as "Seminoles." The name comes from the Spanish word *cimarrón* which means "wild" or "runaway." However, a more fitting interpretation may be "free."

The first half of the nineteenth century was tumultuous for Florida's Seminoles. The U.S. military waged three wars against them; in fact,

the Second Seminole War resulted in the majority of Seminoles being removed to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma.) Less than 200 survivors retreated deep into the Everglades and the military ended its hunt for them.

The Seminoles lived in virtual isolation in and around the Everglades for many years. They lived in open-sided structures called chickees, which were adapted to the swampy environment.



Seminole Indian Chickee, Silver Springs, Florida, circa 1935 - Burgert Brothers photo, courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

A Brief History of the Seminole People in Florida

continued

They survived by hunting, gathering wild foods, and growing crops like corn, pumpkins, and potatoes. As white settlers began moving to south Florida, they established trading posts. The Seminoles sold animal hides and pelts to the traders and in turn bought cloth, guns, tools, and food staples. This way of life lasted into the twentieth century.

The great influx of settlers and drainage of the Everglades hastened the end of the trading post era. As a result, some Seminoles entered new tourist attractions in Miami. Seminole exhibition villages were a large part of the tourist scene in south Florida from the 1920s to the 1960s. At these villages, men wrestled alligators to the delight of crowds. Both men and women made crafts such as dolls, baskets, and carvings to sell to the tourists.



Miami tourists watch as Seminole Indian men wrestling alligators, circa 1950 - Burgert Brothers photo, courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

These seasonal jobs in the villages provided important income, and the exhibition nature of the attractions enabled some of the traditional ways to continue.

A typical scene at tourist villages included women sewing colorful patchwork clothing. This colorful style of clothing is one of the most recognizable



Sewing colorful patchwork clothing, Florida's First People on display at the Tampa Bay History Center.

aspects of Seminole culture today. Seminole women invented patchwork around 1917. To make patchwork clothing, different colored strips of cloth are sewn together, then cut and reassembled to make rows of designs. The rows are sewn together horizontally to form the garment. The Seminole people wore patchwork clothing and sold it to tourists. It is still part of the Seminoles' traditional dress today.

In the 1890s, the government attempted to address the question of where the Seminoles should live by setting aside parcels of land. These parcels eventually became reservations. The Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division, a program of the New Deal, employed Seminole men to build roads, fences, wells, and make other land improvements on the reservations. A cattle program was also started at Brighton Reservation in 1936, and it is still a success story today.

In August 1957, the Seminole Tribe of Florida became a federally recognized sovereign tribe. The Tribe operates under a Constitution, Bylaws, and Corporate Charter. It has approximately 3,200 members today.

After many years of economic struggles, the Seminoles achieved their goal to be self-sufficient

A Brief History of the Seminole People in Florida

continued

and not reliant on the federal government for money. Their sovereignty allows business ventures like casinos that permit them to be financially independent. Because of their new-found wealth, the Tribe can provide for its members, especially in health care, housing, employment, and education.

The Seminole people of Florida have persevered despite the many social, political, and economic pressures brought against them. They have proven to be successful at adapting to new circumstances while still preserving important aspects of their culture.

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**View a decades-old
Seminole Doll
artifact in 3D!**

[CLICK TO VIEW](#)



STUDENTS

List 5 ways in which the Seminoles had to adapt. Examples can be cultural, economical, or other ways.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



ACTIVITY #2 - Forced Migration of the Seminoles

Lesson Essential Question: How did the Seminole Wars force the migration of Native Americans?

Objective: Students will examine maps to understand how the Seminoles were forced to migrate during the Seminole Wars. Students will use map skills to make predictions and inferences.

Materials: Maps of Seminole migration, video link: Dade Battle Reenactment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmVI-lvde6E> , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZY_ZHzFZp4

Vocabulary:

Migration: To go from one country, region, or place to another.

Map Key: A table on a map, chart, or the like, listing and explaining the symbols used.

Compass Rose: A design used on maps to indicate the directional points of a compass

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1. **Have students view** the YouTube link on the Dade Battle Reenactment for a background on the Seminole Wars.
 2. **Review** the definition of migration with students.
 3. **Introduce** the important features of a map and their purposes. (Map Key or Legend, and Compass Rose)
 3. **Students examine the maps** that shows Seminole migration during the Seminole Wars. Have students try to determine what direction or places the Seminoles migrated to and when using map features.
 4. **Students will answer** the questions related to each map.



Forced Migration of the Seminoles



1. Looking at the map, what part of Florida is the location of the First Seminole War?
(Northern, Southern, Eastern or Western)

2. What direction have the Seminoles moved throughout the three Seminole Wars?
(Hint: Use the symbols in the map key and the compass rose.)

3. According to the map, Seminoles lived on reservations during which of the three wars?

ACTIVITY 2: FORCED MIGRATION OF THE SEMINOLES



Photo courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center

Final Seminole Migration, 1858
Over 4,000 Seminoles Forced to the Indian Territory
1832 to 1858

■ = Indian Territory ("Oklahoma")

4. What direction did the Seminoles travel to get to Indian Territory?

5. As the Seminoles moved from Florida to Indian Territory, in what ways do you think they had to adapt to their new environment? (*Hint: In what ways might Oklahoma differ from Florida?*)



ACTIVITY #3 - Black Seminole Leader: John Horse

Lesson Essential Question: How were African Americans significant to the Seminoles?

Objective: Students learn about John Horse, an African-American Seminole Indian and the impact he had on Colonial Florida.

Materials: Background on John Horse <http://www.johnhorse.com/black-seminoles/synopsis.htm> and John Horse illustration

1. **Students view** John Horse illustration. Teacher shares the struggles of John Horse and African American Seminoles in their pursuit of freedom from slavery.
2. **Students visit** the “Rebellion” website: <http://www.johnhorse.com/index.html> View the picture tour to get an overview of John Horse and the role of African Americans in the formation of the Seminole Nation. (The Picture Tour link can be found in the Overview or in the Images section.) The vocabulary may be difficult for 4th grade students to read by themselves.



Black Seminole Leader: John Horse



1. **John Horse illustration.** Discuss the struggles of John Horse and African American Seminoles in their pursuit of freedom from slavery.
2. **Students view** the picture tour at the “Rebellion” website: <http://www.johnhorse.com/index.html>