

Sequoyah

Directions: Underline the words in the story as you find them, unscramble them and write them in the boxes below. Sequoyah was raised by his mother who was a successful trader. He learned the fur trade from her. He became lame during his youth, possibly due to an accident. After her death he was a fur trader and also became an excellent silversmith. One day the men in his shop were talking about the white man's "speaking leaves"; pages with English writing on them. He was sure he really could make marks to signify words. He started out by drawing pictures and then he started studying the sounds of the words in the Cherokee language. He found there were more than eighty sounds. He made a syllabary and was able to write all the words in their language. He spent twelve years working on his invention of a system of written language for the Cherokee nation. The alphabet was completed in 1821. He tried to interest his tribesmen in learning the symbols, but they thought he was crazy. He finally convinced his tribesmen this would be a valuable tool for conveying ideas and preserving their stories. Within a short time the Cherokee nation was literate; most of them could now read. It is said the language was so easy to learn a person could learn it in three or four days, seldom more than a week. The Christian missionaries learned the language and translated the Bible into Cherokee. Today in America you will find the name Sequoyah (Sequoia) on schools, caverns, hospitals, and ranches. The state of Oklahoma placed a bronze statue of him in the rotunda of the Capitol, the Hall of Fame at Washington D.C. In the 1830's the Cherokee people were forced by the government to move to Indian Territory which is now the state of Oklahoma. The move is referred to as the Trail of Tears.

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