

A Seminole Warrior Cloaked in Defiance

By Owen Edwards, Smithsonian.com on 07.25.17

Word Count **410**

Level **560L**



A painting of Osceola from the 1800s. In 1837, Osceola's capture got national attention. Image: Smithsonian American Art Museum/Wikimedia.

In 2010, an art show opened in New York City. It includes works by Native Americans. The show is being held in the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. One of the items in the show is a pair of garters. These are bands used to hold up stockings. They are tied below the knee. The garters were worn by Billy Powell.

Most people know Billy Powell as Osceola. He was part of the Florida Seminole tribe. Osceola is a hero among Native Americans. He was a famous war leader. He fought back against the U.S. government when it tried to take away the Seminoles' land.

Son of an English father and Indian mother

Osceola was born in Alabama in 1804. His father was thought to have been English, and named William Powell. His mother was part Creek Indian and part white. In 1814, Osceola and his mother moved to Florida. They went there to live among the Creeks and Seminoles. Around this time, Osceola began to call himself full Indian instead of mixed race.

In 1838, artist George Catlin painted a picture of Osceola. The picture showed the warrior's fancy clothes. Osceola wore a hat with a feather. He also wore colorful cloth and jewelry. Catlin said the Seminoles thought of Osceola as the leader of the tribe.

Donald L. Fixico is a historian. He says that Osceola liked to wear fancy clothes. The outfits helped him stand out. The Creeks started wearing European clothing in the 1700s. Osceola wore his garters for decoration.

Leading the fight against the federal government

Osceola became an important leader in 1830. That year, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. This was a very harsh law. It forced Native Americans in the South to give up their land. They had to move to new lands west of the Mississippi River.

Some chiefs went along with this. But Osceola and other Seminoles refused to give up their land. They battled back against the U.S. government. In 1835, Osceola and several followers killed a government official.

Osceola became a wanted man. U.S. Army troops arrested him in 1837. He was sent to prison, first in Florida and later in South Carolina.

Osceola's capture was noticed by the whole country. He became famous. He was seen as a defender of his people. After he died, he became even more famous. Today, there are places named after him, including Osceola National Forest in Florida.

Quiz

- 1 Read paragraph two from the article.

Most people know Billy Powell as Osceola. He was part of the Florida Seminole tribe. Osceola is a hero among Native Americans. He was a famous war leader. He fought back against the U.S. government when it tried to take away the Seminoles' land.

Which question is answered in the paragraph?

- (A) Why is Osceola a hero among Native Americans?
 - (B) Why did Osceola have two names?
 - (C) How did the U.S. government try to get the Seminoles' land?
 - (D) How big was the Seminole tribe?
- 2 Which paragraph in the section "Leading the fight against the federal government" explains WHY Osceola was angry with the U.S. government?
- 3 Read the paragraph below from the section "Son of an English father and Indian mother."

Osceola was born in Alabama in 1804. His father was thought to have been English, and named William Powell. His mother was part Creek Indian and part white. In 1814, Osceola and his mother moved to Florida. They went there to live among the Creeks and Seminoles. Around this time, Osceola began to call himself full Indian instead of mixed race.

What is the MAIN idea of the paragraph?

- (A) The father of Osceola was also named William Powell.
- (B) Although he was part white, Osceola thought of himself as full Indian.
- (C) Creeks and Seminoles were Indians who lived in Florida.
- (D) The mother of Osceola was part Creek Indian and part white.

4 A MAIN idea of the article is that Osceola was a famous leader.

Which key detail from the article BEST supports the article's MAIN idea?

- (A) The show is being held in the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.
- (B) In 1838, artist George Catlin painted a picture of Osceola.
- (C) He was sent to prison, first in Florida and later in South Carolina.
- (D) Today, there are places named after him, including Osceola National Forest in Florida.

Answer Key

- 1 Read paragraph two from the article.

Most people know Billy Powell as Osceola. He was part of the Florida Seminole tribe. Osceola is a hero among Native Americans. He was a famous war leader. He fought back against the U.S. government when it tried to take away the Seminoles' land.

Which question is answered in the paragraph?

- (A) **Why is Osceola a hero among Native Americans?**
- (B) Why did Osceola have two names?
- (C) How did the U.S. government try to get the Seminoles' land?
- (D) How big was the Seminole tribe?
- 2 Which paragraph in the section "Leading the fight against the federal government" explains WHY Osceola was angry with the U.S. government?

Paragraph 5:

Osceola became an important leader in 1830. That year, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. This was a very harsh law. It forced Native Americans in the South to give up their land. They had to move to new lands west of the Mississippi River.

- 3 Read the paragraph below from the section "Son of an English father and Indian mother."

Osceola was born in Alabama in 1804. His father was thought to have been English, and named William Powell. His mother was part Creek Indian and part white. In 1814, Osceola and his mother moved to Florida. They went there to live among the Creeks and Seminoles. Around this time, Osceola began to call himself full Indian instead of mixed race.

What is the MAIN idea of the paragraph?

- (A) The father of Osceola was also named William Powell.
- (B) **Although he was part white, Osceola thought of himself as full Indian.**
- (C) Creeks and Seminoles were Indians who lived in Florida.
- (D) The mother of Osceola was part Creek Indian and part white.

4 A MAIN idea of the article is that Osceola was a famous leader.

Which key detail from the article BEST supports the article's MAIN idea?

- (A) The show is being held in the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.
- (B) In 1838, artist George Catlin painted a picture of Osceola.
- (C) He was sent to prison, first in Florida and later in South Carolina.
- (D) **Today, there are places named after him, including Osceola National Forest in Florida.**