

## Dade Battlefield Booklet



*The **Dade Battlefield Massacre** started the **2<sup>nd</sup> Seminole War** in Florida. Lasting from 1835-1842, this was the longest and most expensive war between the US and Native Americans.*

**Author’s Note:** Dade Battlefield Historic State Park is located in Florida. We walked the paths that soldiers and Native Americans walked. As we listened to the narratives of both sides, though we could no longer see the violence of war, we could feel it through the trees and the somber breezes whispering through the leaves.

Two first-person narratives furnish insight into the events of December 28, 1835. Ransom Clark provides an account of the experience of American soldiers who were killed in an ambush by Seminole Indians. Seminole leader, Halpatter Tustenuggee, known as Alligator, provides an account of the battle from a Native perspective.

The narratives are colorful and violent. Without changing the language, this book cuts their words down in order to be appropriate for fourth grade studies.

With the use of images, the intent is for students to better understand this important historical event, its impact, and to consider the relationships among peoples with vastly different views of the world.

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*“...” indicates where portions of the narrative have been left out in order to make the overall presentation appropriate for elementary learners. In Florida, fourth-grade standards cover Florida History, including Native Americans. While standards outside of Florida may not specifically address Seminole Indians, the activities herein are applicable to a wider understanding of relationships between peoples.*

*It is important to note that the language used by the survivors includes terms that are not appropriate in today’s culture. It was a different time and the ways they expressed themselves is indicative of their relationship and limited knowledge of one another.*

## Analyzing Perspectives Discussion

**Perspective** - an attitude towards something -  
whether one sees it as positive, negative, or neutral;  
a way of **regarding** (*seeing or thinking about*) something

**Step In:** What do you think *each of these people* might feel,  
care deeply about, or believe? What might they know about or experience?

\*Reason with the limited information and  
images you have. The clues are in the details.

**Step Out:** What would you like to learn about so you can understand  
*each of these people's* perspectives better?

\*What is NOT in this picture  
which would help you get to know these soldiers?

**Step Back:** What do you notice about YOUR OWN perspective,  
feelings, and assumptions about *each of these people*?

Was your first impression of the Seminole warrior **positive, negative, or neutral**?

Was your first impression of the Federal soldier **positive, negative, or neutral**?

Who do you assume is going to be **massacred** in “The Dade Battlefield Massacre”?

What does it take to step into someone else’s  
*perspective*?

## Setting the Scene:

A large group of U.S. Federal soldiers are walking along a long dirt road. They started marching on December 23. It is now December 28. They have missed Christmas. They are traveling from Fort Brooke on the coast to Fort King in the middle of Florida. The commander, Major Dade, is concerned because Fort King has stopped communicating. They are going to make sure Fort King is secure. There has been tension with the Seminole Indians. U.S. settlers had been running to Fort King. The Seminoles are scheduled to be deported from Florida in 4 days. Major Dade is friends with Micanopy, an important Seminole chief, who he trusts will follow the treaty. It is very cold and many soldiers have put their coats over their ammunition bags, making bullets hard to reach. They are getting close to Fort King...

## Private Ransom Clark's Eyewitness Account of the Dade Massacre

"It was eight o'clock

[on December 28, 1835].

Suddenly I heard a rifle shot ... a **volley**, as if from a thousand rifles, was poured in upon us from the front, and all along our left **flank** . . . .

We [**the Federals**] were surrounded by about 900 Indians and 100 Negroes who had run away from their masters' **plantations** and joined themselves to the **savages**. ....

**Volley** -

large number of bullets shot at the same time

**Flank** -

side of a group of soldiers

**Federals** -

armed forces of the U.S. Government

**Plantations** -

big farms usually for sugar cane, cotton, or tobacco

**Savages** -

brutal, vicious, uncivilized person

<p>The pond was on our right, and the Indians were scattered round,</p> <p>in a semicircle, on our left, in the rear, and <b>in advance</b> ...”</p>	<p><b>Advance</b> - front of a group of soldiers</p>
<p>How many attackers did Ransom see?</p>	<p>Where were the Seminoles?</p>



<p>“At the first fire, one-third of the <b>detachment</b>, and Major Dade and Captain Fraser were killed...”</p>	<p><b>Detachment</b> - group of soldiers sent away on a mission</p>
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The first fire of the Indians was the most destructive, seemingly killing or disabling one half our men.

We promptly threw ourselves behind trees, and opened a sharp fire of **musketry**...

the Indians chiefly fired, lying or squatting in the grass. ...

“We immediately then began to **fell trees**, and erect a little triangular **breastwork**.

We had barely raised [it] knee high, when we again saw the Indians advancing ... yelling and whooping, . . . I know well that I killed three men. I fired also forty or fifty **rounds**,  
...

...The cannon was necessarily fired at random, as only two or three Indians appeared together. ... “

**Musketry** -  
many long guns

**Fell Trees** -  
cut down trees

**Breastwork** -  
low place of defense

**Rounds** - bullets

**What did the soldiers do to protect themselves?**

**Why didn't the cannon make much difference?**





“Our men were by degrees all cut down. The battle lasted until about four in the afternoon, and I was about the last one who handled a gun, ...Lt. Basinger was the only officer left alive, and he severely wounded. He told me as the Indians approached to **feign myself dead.**

I looked through the logs and saw the savages approaching in great numbers.

A heavily made Indian, of middle stature, painted down to the waist [assumed to be Micanopy] seemed to be the chief. He made them a speech... they did not seem to suspect the wounded of being alive – **offered no indignity**, but stepped about carefully, quietly stripping off our **accoutrements** and carrying away our

**Feign Dead** -  
pretend to be dead

**Offered No Indignity** -  
were respectful

**Accoutrements** -  
personal items and  
equipment

<p><b>arms.</b> Then they <b>retired in a body</b> in the direction from whence they came..."</p> <p><i>[Ransom tells about being shot in his right leg, right arm, right shoulder, and lung. He crawls towards Ft. Brooke.]</i></p> <p>"On the 5th day, I arrived within 3/4 of a mile of the fort, when from loss of blood, hunger and exhaustion I sank upon the ground to die.</p> <p>I was discovered in this situation a short time afterwards by a friendly <b>squaw</b>, who assisted me to the fort."</p>	<p><b>Arms</b> - weapons</p> <p><b>Retired in a Body</b> - left as a group</p> <p><b>Squaw</b> - term that comes from the Massachusetts Algonquian tribe meaning female, young woman that is no longer appropriate to use in modern expression</p>
<p><b>Why might the Seminoles have taken personal items and equipment from the fallen soldiers?</b></p>	<p><b>Who did Ransom see as he "feigned dead"?</b></p>







## Micanopy: A Seminole Chief



## Seminole Indians, Florida: tommy Jumper, Chief



## An Eyewitness Account of the Dade Massacre by Seminole Leader Halpatter Tustenuggee (Alligator)

<p>“We had been preparing for this more than a year.</p> <p>Though promises had been made [<i>to the Governmental Agent</i>] to assemble on the 1st of January, <b>it was not to leave the country, but to fight for it.</b></p> <p>In council, it was determined to strike a decided blow about this time.</p> <p>Our <b>agent</b> at Fort King had put <b>irons</b> on our men and said we must go.</p>	<p><b>Agent</b> - U.S. government official who interacts with Native Americans</p> <p><b>Irons</b> - big metal handcuffs</p>
<p><b>Why did the Native Americans “strike a blow” against the Americans?</b></p>	

### Osceola, Seminole Chief

Osceola (*Asi-Yaholo*) was NOT a chief, but he was a charismatic Seminole warrior. He was the most internationally recognized Native American of his time! His heritage was mixed; he had a Creek mother and an English trader father. He earned the Seminole title **Tallassee Tustennuggee** (i.e. *village war leader*). He became an American symbol of **patriotism** and **bravery**.



<p>The troops were three days on their march, and approaching the Swamp. Here we thought it best to <b>assail</b> them; ... Micanopy was <b>timid</b>, and urged delay. Jumper earnestly opposed it, and <b>reproached</b> the old Chief for his decision. He [Jumper] addressed the Indians and requested those who had <b>faint hearts</b> to remain behind; he was going when Micanopy said he was ready.</p> <p>Just as the day was breaking, we moved out of the swamp into the <b>pine-barren</b>. I counted, by direction of Jumper, one hundred and eighty warriors. Upon approaching the road, each man chose his position on the west side ...</p> <p>Every warrior was protected by tree, or <b>secreted</b> in the high palmettoes.</p>	<p><b>Assail</b> - attack</p> <p><b>Reproached</b> - Talk to someone in a disapproving or disappointed way</p> <p><b>Timid/Faint Hearts</b> - afraid</p> <p><b>Pine-Barren</b> - forest of tall pine trees and grass</p> <p><b>Secreted</b> - hidden</p>
<p><b>Where did the Seminoles prepare to assail? Why might they choose these locations?</b></p>	<p><b>Why did Jumper reproach Micanopy?</b></p>





About nine o'clock in the morning the **command** approached.

In **advance**, some distance, was an officer on horse, who Micanopy said was the captain; he knew him personally; had been his friend in Tampa.

So soon as all the soldiers were opposite, between us and the pond, ...Jumper gave the whoop, Micanopy fired the first rifle, ... every Indian arose and fired, which laid upon the ground, dead, more than half the white men.

The cannon was **discharged** several times...; the balls passed far over our heads.

**Command** -  
group of military  
officers

**Advance** -  
the front

**Discharged** -  
shot a weapon

<p>The soldiers shouted and whooped, and the officers shook their swords and swore.</p> <p>...</p>	
<p><b>How did the Seminoles know to start shooting their rifles?</b></p>	<p><b>What might have caused Micanopy to turn on his friend?</b></p>



<p>As we were returning to the <b>swamp</b> supposing all were dead, an Indian came up and said the white men were building a fort of logs.</p> <p>Jumper and myself, with ten warriors, returned. As we approached, we saw six</p>	<p><b>Swamp</b> - A forested wetland; there is standing water most if not all of the year.</p>
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<p>men behind two logs placed above another, with the cannon a short distance off. ...When I got inside the log-pen, there were three white men alive, whom the negroes put to death, after a conversation in English.</p> <p>There was a brave man in the pen; he would not give up; ... but two Indians on horseback <b>overtook</b> him, ...</p> <p>The firing had <b>ceased</b>, and all was quiet when we returned to the swamp about noon. .... (Of the Seminoles) Three warriors were killed and five wounded.”</p>	<p><b>Overtook</b> - to catch up and pass</p> <p><b>Ceased</b> – stopped</p>
<p><b>How many Seminoles did Alligator say attacked the log-pen in the end?</b> <b>How many did Ransom say?</b></p>	<p><b>How long did the battle last?</b></p>

## What Happened Next:

*This event will be identified as the start of the **2nd Seminole War** (1835-1842) in which the **Federals** will attempt to catch and deport the Seminole Indians to Oklahoma and the **Seminoles** will fight for their freedom to stay in Florida! The **Seminole Wars** will be the longest and most expensive war the U.S. government wages against Native Americans. In the end, both sides will claim victory. But, the Florida Seminoles will remain UNCONQUERED! The Federals leave and the Seminoles never sign a peace treaty. Today, about 3,000 Seminole Indians still live in Florida.*

***Ransom** traveled, told his story, and died 5 years later from his injuries. He was buried in his home town in New York. He was 28 years old.*

***Alligator** was eventually captured and sent to Oklahoma. He may have lived into old-age and learnt the alphabet alongside his children...or escaped to Mexico.*

# STICKING POINTS

Based on what you have read, complete the graphic organizers.

Sticking Points	Agree	Disagree	
		Ransom	Alligator
<p><b>Facts</b></p> <p><i>When did it start?</i> <i>How long did it last?</i></p> <p><i>Where are they?</i></p> <p><i>How many warriors were there?</i></p> <p><i>What weapons were used?</i></p> <p><i>How many Federals died?</i></p>			
<p><b>Values</b></p> <p><i>Who is valued?</i></p> <p><i>What skills or objects are valued?</i></p> <p><i>What character traits are valued?</i></p>			



Sticking Points	Agree	Disagree	
		Ransom	Alligator
<p><b>Interests</b>  <i>Practical interests like land, group loyalty, activities, or investments</i></p>			
<p><b>Policies</b>  <i>General decisions and actions.</i>   <i>This includes <b>government</b> institutions of which they are a part.</i></p>			
<p><b>From his perspective, what caused the 2nd Seminole War?</b></p>			
<p><b>Hidden Treasure</b>      Each group <b>perceives</b> the other is "savage," but can you find the APPRECIATION hidden in each text?</p>			
<p><b>What does <u>Ransom</u> appreciate about the <u>Seminoles</u>?</b></p>		<p><b>What does <u>Alligator</u> appreciate about the <u>Federals</u>?</b></p>	

## EXTENSION 1: Blind Spots

There were about 500 U.S. Federal soldiers in Florida.

Major Dade had 100 soldiers, 7 officers, 1 doctor, and 1 slave interpreter. They marched the dirt path from Fort Brookes (Tampa) to Fort King (Ocala) because they had lost communications and were concerned for their fort and the settlers sheltering inside.

The Seminoles sent 180 warriors.

Four wounded Federal soldiers survived...two hidden by the pond, one killed while escaping, and Ransom Clark. Black interpreter Luis Pacheco was captured. He was not killed because he was not free.

Federals perceived it a massacre; Seminoles saw it as a great victory.

- Summary from Missall's "The Seminole Struggle" (pg. 126-131)

### Blind Spots:

What did Ransom & Alligator miss?

Who survived the battle, but his *perspective* is missing?

What *question* might the reader still have?

## Seminole Woman and Baby

Seminoles are diverse. At this time, there are Black Seminoles who have joined the tribe after escaping slavery. They have families. This is before the Civil War when slavery still existed in Florida.

Seminoles themselves have black slaves and black captives of war.

If captured by the Federals, black individuals know they will be divided from the rest of the tribe.

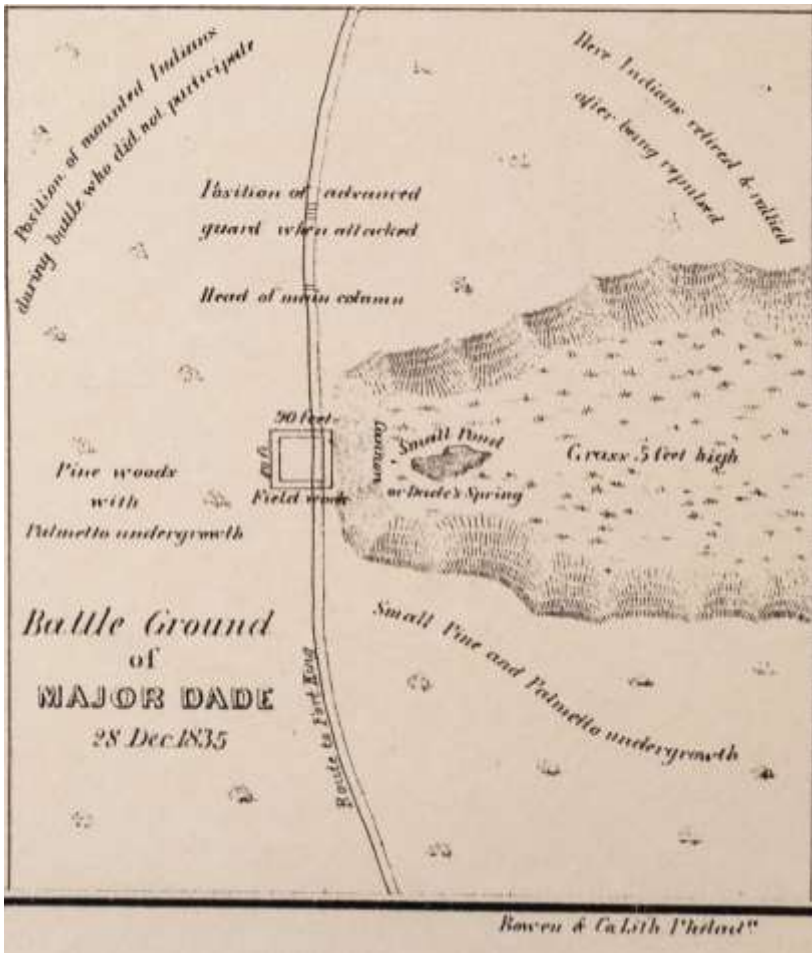


Why did the Seminoles fight against **resettlement**?

Why is **cultural unity** (*staying together and keeping similar beliefs and behaviors*) important?

## EXTENSION 2: Map Analysis

Map Excerpt: "Seat of War in Florida" by Major Gen. W. Scott



1. Circle 3 locations the Seminole warriors could hide.
2. Color where the Federals were 1st attacked and the log-pen they built.



## EXTENSION 3: Massacre or Not

**MASSACRE** - brutal slaughter, the deliberate and cruel killing of a large number of usually helpless or unresisting humans

### Was the Dade Battlefield Massacre a massacre?

Use historical evidence from the images and reports to support your answer.

Which images or evidence in the eyewitness reports support your answer?

This is a monument to Major Dade.  
The original was made out of the cannon  
that the Federals pulled out of the pond.



## GOVERNMENT INSISTENCE... SEMINOLE DEFIANCE



### Seeds of Sorrow

From the moment Europeans landed on their shores, Florida's indigenous people were under attack. For decades, tribes like the Seminoles struggled to keep their lands and freedom, devastated by disease, slavery and warfare. In 1830, the U.S. government took things one step further: President Andrew Jackson,

himself a veteran of the First Seminole War, signed the Indian Removal Act into law, demanding all Native people move west of the Mississippi River.



### The Ultimatum

In 1832, several Seminole leaders signed the Treaty of Payne's Landing, which required the Tribe to move to land in present-day Oklahoma. Many Seminoles disputed the treaty, saying they had been forced to sign or that those who agreed did not have authority to speak for the tribe. After years of resistance, the U.S. Army gave the Seminoles an ultimatum: Leave by Jan. 1, 1836, or be forced out of Florida. With the deadline approaching, many Seminole had made up their minds: They would defend their homes or die trying.

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Based on the "Eyewitness Accounts," what started the 2nd Seminole War?

Based on the museum plaque above, what else caused the 2nd Seminole War?

## EXTENSION 4: Osceola

When Chief Micanopy was late for a meeting, a Federal Agent put Osceola in irons for a short time. Osceola was supposed to be in this battle, but was fighting elsewhere... against that same Federal Agent! Micanopy and Jumper decided to fight the battle without him.





## Reading Portraiture

<p><b>See-Think-Wonder:</b> What do you see? What do you think about what you see? <b>What do you wonder about this portrait?</b></p>	
<p><b>Telescope:</b> Look closely at this portrait for one minute. Discuss observations with a partner. Use a paper as a telescope. Focus on different areas of the portrait. <b>What new things do you notice?</b></p>	
<p><b>Write down one question you have about this portrait.</b></p>	
<p><b>Quick Draw:</b> On a piece of paper, <b>draw this portrait.</b> You only have one minute. Use the whole page!</p>	Own Paper
<p><b>Word Draw:</b> <b>Finish your drawing using WORDS instead of lines.</b> Wherever you would draw a line, write a descriptive word, question, or whatever comes to mind.</p>	Own Paper
<p><b>Compare:</b> Read your portrait to a partner. <b>How are your WORDS similar?</b> How are they different?</p>	
<p><b>Unveiling Story Sentence 1:</b> What is the visible story? OR What is the human story?</p>	
<p><b>Unveiling Story Sentence 2:</b> What is the new story? OR What is the untold story?</p>	

## Glossary

**Advance-** the front

**Assail-** attack

**Breastwork-** low place of defense

**Ceased-** stopped

**Discharged-** shot a weapon

**Federals-** armed forces of the U.S. Government

**Fell trees-** cut down trees

**Flank-** side of a group of soldiers

**Massacre-** brutal slaughter, the deliberate and cruel killing of a large number of usually helpless or unresisting humans

**Musketry-** many long guns

**Overtook-** to catch up and pass

**Pine Barren-** a stretch of pine trees

**Plantations-** big farms usually for sugar cane, cotton, or tobacco

**Reproached-** talk to someone in a disapproving or disappointed way

**Rounds-** bullets

**Savages-** brutal, vicious, uncivilized persons

**Secreted-** hidden

**Timid/Faint Heart-** afraid

**Volley-** large number of bullets shot at the same time

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## Image References

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Page 7: Another View of the Breastworks LB Photography, 2023

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Page 10: Seminole Indians, FL: tommy Jumper, Chief Witteman Collection LOC, ND

Page 11: Osceola, Seminole chief painting by R. J. Curtis, 1838

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## References

Missall, J. & M.L.(2020). *The Seminole Struggle: A History of America's Longest Indian War*. Pineapple Press.

