On March 27, 1814, Andrew Jackson launched an assault on a fortified “Red Stick” Creek village. The “Red Sticks” built breastworks across a narrow strip of land at a bend in the Tallapoosa River. Below you will find quotes from Andrew Jackson’s letter to Tennessee Governor Willie Blount describing the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and a battlefield map that accompanied the letter. Study the quotes and map and complete the chart by describing the advantages and disadvantages of the “Red Sticks”’ position.

(1) Coffee’s cavalry
(2) Friendly Cherokees
(3) Creek village
(4) Broken ground
(5) Creek breastwork
(6) Island
(7) Jackson’s advance guard
(8) Artillery on a small hill
(9) Regulars
(10) Wagons, packhorses and wounded
(11 to 14) Militia
MAJ. GEN. ANDREW JACKSON TO GOV. WILLIE BLOUNT

“This bend resembles in its curvature that of a horse shoe, and is thence called by that name among the whites. Nature furnishes few situations so eligible for defence; and barbarians have never rendered one more secure by art. Across the neck of land which leads into it from the North, they had erected a breast-work, of greatest compactness and strength – from five to eight feet high, and prepared with double rows of port-holes very artfully arranged. The figure of this wall, manifested no less skill in the projectors of it, than its construction: an army could not approach it without being exposed to a double and cross fire from the enemy who lay in perfect security behind it.”

“Early on the morning of the 27th having encamped the preceding night at the distance of six miles from them – I detailed Genl. Coffee with the mounted men and nearly the whole of the Indian force, to pass the river at a ford about three miles below their encampment, and to surround the bend in such a manner that none of them should escape by attempting to cross the river.”

“I had planted my artillery on a small eminence, distant from its nearest point about eighty yards, and from its farthest, about two hundred and fifty; from whence I immediately opened a brisk fire upon its centre. With the musketry and rifles I kept up a galling fire whenever the enemy shewed themselves behind their works, or ventured to approach them.”

“Capt. Russell’s company of spies and a part of the Cherokee force, headed by their gallant chieftain, Col. Richard Brown, and conducted by the brave Col. Morgan, crossed over to the extremity of the peninsular in canoes, and set fire to a few of their buildings which were there situated.”

“I now determined upon taking possession of their works by storm….Having maintained for a few minutes a very obstinate contest, muzzle to muzzle, through the port-holes, in which many of the enemy’s balls were welded to the bayonets of our musquets, our troops succeeded in gaining possession of the opposite side of the works. The event could no longer be doubtful. The enemy altho many of them fought to the last with that kind of bravery desperations inspires, were at length entirely routed and cut to pieces. The whole margin of the river which surrounded the peninsular was strewed with the slain. Five hundred and fifty seven were found by officers of great respecability whom I had ordered to count them; besides a very great number who were thrown into the river by their surviving friends, and killed in attempting to pass by General Coffee’s men stationed on the opposite banks.”

“Both officers and men who had the best opportunities of judging, believe the loss of the enemy in killed, not to fall short of eight hundred and if their number was as great as it is represented to have been by the prisoners, and as it is believed to have been by Col. Carrol and other who had a fair view of them as they advanced to the breastworks, their loss must even have been more considerable – as it is quite certain that not more than twenty can have escaped.”

“Our loss was twenty six white men killed and one hundred and seven wounded – Cherokees, eighteen killed, and thirty six wounded, friendly Creeks Five killed and eleven wounded. The loss of Col. Williams’ reg’t of Regulars is seventeen killed and fifty five wounded; three of whom have since died. Among the former were Major Montgomery, Lieut’ Somerville, and Lieut’ Moulton, who, fell in the charge which was made on the works. 1 No men ever acted more gallantly, or fell more gloriously.”

Source: Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. 1, pp. 489-492. The original is in the handwriting of Maj. John Reid and was found in a building used by Gov. Willie Blount as an office in Clarksville, Tennessee.
Complete the chart by listing the advantages and disadvantages of the “Red Sticks” position at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

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This battle effectively ended the main Indian resistance to expanding settlement by white Americans and ended the Creek War portion of the War of 1812. If you were the “Red Stick” Creeks in this position, what would you have done differently throughout the battle?

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