

ANDREW JACKSON:

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE?

Perhaps no American president has been as polarizing as Andrew Jackson. While in office, Jackson was subject to much criticism for his tyrannical manner, yet his popularity grew due to how he identified with the American people. Jackson has often been regarded as a “man of the people,” since ordinary Americans could relate to him. However, his presidency was filled with much criticism, from his forced removal of native people to decisions that sparked talks of secession between north and south. However, when ranking the presidents of United States history, historians routinely rank Jackson inside the top 10.

Andrew Jackson was born in 1767 in the Waxhaws, a settlement that sits along the border between North and South Carolina. Hardship struck his family before Jackson was even born; his father died shortly before his birth, which left his mother, Elizabeth, alone with the responsibility of raising Andrew and his two brothers. Overworked and overwhelmed, Elizabeth tried her best to educate and prepare Andrew with essential life skills. However, despite her best efforts, Andrew grew up a rebel who was known for bullying others. Three years into the Revolutionary War, Jackson (at just age 13) joined the effort alongside his older brothers, as well as his mother who volunteered to aid injured soldiers docked in Charleston harbor. Jackson survived the war, but both of his brothers, and his mother, died in the conflict. At the war's end, Jackson was orphaned, alone, and with little resources to improve his life.

As Jackson grew older, he became engaged in a wild lifestyle of betting, horse-racing and partying; this behavior led Jackson to engage in various duels, especially when he felt someone had threatened his honor (he even killed a man once). By the time he ran for the presidency, he already had two bullets lodged in his body from previous duels.

Eventually Jackson settled on a legal career and traveled west into the new Tennessee territory and quickly established himself as an able politician. He soon found himself engaged in military affairs as well, and when the War of 1812 began against the British, Jackson was ordered to help save the city of New Orleans from attack. His daring defense of the city made him a national hero, and his strict and bold leadership also earned him the nickname of “Old Hickory.”



In 1824 Jackson ran for the presidency and won a plurality of both the popular and electoral votes; the people wanted Jackson, however since he did not win a majority of electoral votes, the decision fell to the House of Representatives where a backdoor deal saw John Quincy Adams become the sixth president of the United States. Jackson forever referred to this stolen election as a “corrupt bargain.”

He was finally elected to office in 1828 as a true “rags to riches” president. As expected, Jackson bucked the trends of his predecessors. He did not rely on a cabinet for advice, instead preferring to listen to trusted friends and supporters (nicknamed the “kitchen cabinet” since they supposedly met in the White House kitchen). Jackson also replaced government officials with his supporters, a practice that became known as the “spoils system.”

Jackson's presidency was marked by issues where he fought for what he believed was in the interests of the common man. Often, his decisions created a stir of controversy (and much of this controversy over Jackson's time in office still exists today). However, his actions in these events still made him wildly popular among the American people, even after he left office in 1839. However, this is not to assume Jackson was loved by all; his actions harmed many, including hundreds of thousands of Native Americans who lived on ancestral land. These people ultimately suffered the most from Jackson's time in office.

JACKSON'S TREATMENT OF NATIVE PEOPLE

President Andrew Jackson had little sympathy for Native Americans. This attitude was bolstered in 1814 when he led the U.S. military to victory over the Creek nation. The Creek were required to sign a treaty that ceded over 22 million acres of land in southern Georgia and central Alabama. This war earned Jackson the nickname “sharp knife” among the Creek, and this name would soon become very popular among other tribes as well. This early action provides a glimpse into the type of policy Jackson will follow toward the native people once elected.

In 1818, Jackson further persecuted native people when he led wars against the Seminole tribe for harboring enslaved people who had escaped. His ruthlessness in this war led one historian to say that

“his actions were a . . . flagrant disobedience [and] gross inequality . . . he swept through Florida, crushed the Indians, executed Seminole leaders, and violated nearly every standard of justice.”

During Jackson’s presidency, his attitude toward native people intensified into one characterized by forced removal from their ancestral lands. Until his death in 1845, Andrew Jackson believed it was his duty, and the responsibility of future presidents, to remove native tribes from the East in order to secure land for future generations of Americans. At the same time, Jackson believed the native people to be like children who needed guidance. Moving the native people from their homelands to make room for white Americans was, Jackson believed, in everyone’s best interest.

In 1828, around 125,000 native people lived on ancestral land in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, and South and North Carolina. Earlier attempts to relocate the native population led many to sell their land for mere pennies an acre in exchange for peaceful travel to Indian Territory, a new territory west of the Mississippi River where the U.S. government intended to corral the native people together (in 1907, this territory was renamed Oklahoma).

Native people had correctly predicted that one day they might be forced from their land. Over time, several tribes attempted to assimilate into American culture, hoping that if they appeared more “American” they might be allowed to stay. These tribes — nicknamed by white Americans as the “Five Civilized Tribes” — included the Seminole, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw — all sought ways to quietly integrate into American life. Most had given up hunting for farming, and many learned to read and write English.



This map, made in 1909, shows the gold deposits in Georgia. The circled area was Cherokee land.

The Cherokee had their own written language, a newspaper, and a constitution that was even modeled after the U.S. Constitution.

However, as the corrupt practice of slavery crept west, many including Jackson saw native land as increasingly valuable. This highly coveted land became even more valuable in 1828 when gold was discovered on Cherokee land in Georgia. Almost overnight, thousands upon thousands of white Americans poured onto Cherokee lands.

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act with President Jackson’s full support. This law authorized the president to trade land in Indian Territory for native lands in the east. A few tribes relocated peacefully, however many resisted, including the Cherokee who sued the U.S. government. The Supreme Court agreed that the Cherokee had a right to their land. However, this did not matter to Jackson; he convinced a small group of rogue Cherokee to sign the Treaty of New Echota that relinquished their ancestral land; most Cherokee viewed the treaty as invalid since it did not represent the interests of all.

During the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839, the United States military forcefully removed the Cherokee west to Indian Territory. The event was so horrific, a soldier in Georgia who helped in the removal said,

“I fought in many wars between the states and have seen many men killed, some by my own hands, but the Cherokee Removal was the cruelest work I ever knew.”

This event would forever be known as the Trail of Tears. Despite destroying lives, families, and cultures, Jackson left office a proud man. He was confident he would be remembered as a national hero while many believe this event forever tarnished his legacy.

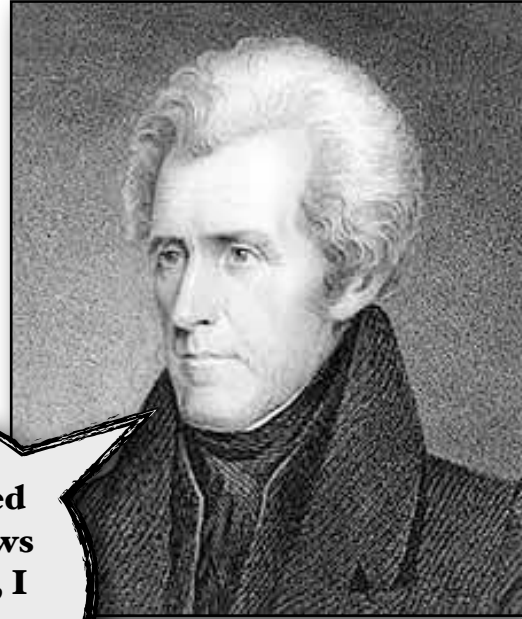
JACKSON'S HANDLING OF THE NULLIFICATION CRISIS

In 1828, Congress passed a law that raised tariffs. A tariff is an additional tax paid on imported goods. This meant that any product imported into the United States from foreign lands had to incur an additional tax. A higher tariff would make foreign goods more expensive, thereby encouraging people to buy the cheaper, American-made goods. This tariff, however, was met with very different reactions in the North, West, and South, and even has been given the nickname the “Tariff of Abominations.”

Life in the North and South was vastly different, and that caused great disagreement over the new tariff law. Most of the nation's manufacturing base was in the north. Ever since Samuel Slater built the first textile factory in Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1793, industry dominated the region. The south, however, relied heavily on imports. Southern states did not produce much, instead relying on the labor of enslaved people to grow commodities like cotton, indigo, and rice. Since the tariff raised the price of foreign goods, southerners claimed the law unfairly hurt them while, at the same time, benefited the north. The south would be forced to pay the increase in everyday products, while northern factories would see a drastic uptick in business since their prices were now comparatively cheaper.

John C. Calhoun, a life-long South Carolinian and Jackson's Vice President, split from the President and called for southern states to nullify the tariff, or refuse to enforce it. Would Jackson allow southern states to openly disregard the law?

To Calhoun and the rest of southerners, a law that favored one group over another was unconstitutional. He asked for Jackson to reconsider the tariff but Jackson refused, citing the tariff to be in the best interest of the nation. Westerners agreed with Jackson; as big



“If even one drop of blood is shed in defiance of the laws of the United States, I will hang the first man I see from the first tree I can find.”

supporters of canals and roads, Westerners saw tariff revenue as a way to connect the country. Calhoun and South Carolina decided to double down.

A state rejecting federal law was nothing new; Virginia and Kentucky had attempted to nullify the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798. However, this time it was different. South Carolina threatened to secede from the United States if the tariff law was not repealed.

Jackson was furious with southerners, however he did not back down. He encouraged Congress to pass the Force Bill, which they did on March 2, 1833. This new legislation gave Jackson the authority to use the military, if necessary, to enforce the tariff law in the south. South Carolina and the United States teetered on the edge of civil war as Calhoun held steadfast to his view of states' rights, that states should be able to nullify federal law if it violated the Constitution. By mid-March, both sides agreed that compromise was in their best interest. Jackson agreed to reduce the tariff in exchange for southern compliance, however the idea that states can nullify federal law will lead to more talk of secession in the decades to come.

JACKSON AND HIS WAR WITH THE NATIONAL BANK

In 1791, a national bank was first created by President George Washington and his Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton. The bank was to serve as a central storehouse for the nation's money supply. The creation of the bank was not without its critics, however. Thomas Jefferson and other Democratic-Republicans vehemently protested the creation of the national bank; Jefferson believed that Congress lacked the power to create a banking system the action was therefore unconstitutional. The bank's charter was set to expire in 1811 and, due to many in government believing the bank was no longer necessary, Congress opted to let the bank of the United States close its doors.

Following the War of 1812, Congress realized how difficult it was to fight a full-scale war without a stable money supply. In 1816, almost immediately after war, Congress reversed their decision just a few years earlier and authorized the creation of the Second Bank of the United States. The second bank enjoyed eight years of relative peace, but things quickly changed once Jackson was elected in 1828.

Like Jefferson, President Jackson believed that the federal government lacked the power to create a national bank. In his eyes, this made the bank unconstitutional. Secondly, he believed the bank only benefited the elite members of society, as the it was run by a board of directors with ties to industry, manufacturing, and finance. In Jackson's view, this led to the bank favoring the northern industrial states. Third, Jackson believed the bank was incredibly reckless; for example, the bank often lent money that it did not have to purchase land in the western territories. Jackson believed the bank had to go.

The bank's charter was set to expire in 1833, and President Jackson knew that he had to win reelection in 1832 if he was going to have his wish. However, Jackson's reelection bid was not going to be an easy one. Would he support the bank's charter renewal and lose the vote of the common man? Or, would Jackson publicly



In this cartoon of the times, Jackson is battling the many-headed "Bank Snake" with a "veto stick."

denounce the bank, winning the vote of farmers and merchants throughout the country yet drawing the anger of the elite. Keeping true to his beliefs, President Jackson supported the non-renewal of the bank's charter.

The election of 1832 pitted the incumbent Andrew Jackson against bank-backed Henry Clay. Jackson's stance on the bank paid off as he won in a landslide - he won 219 electoral votes while Clay only mustered 49. Now, it was only a matter of time before the charter would expire and the bank would cease to exist. Realizing the end of his bank was near, bank President Nicholas Biddle vowed to continue to fight the president, saying that,

"just because he has scalped Indians and imprisoned Judges [does not mean] he is to have his way with the bank."

In 1833, Jackson sped up his plans. He announced a plan to remove all federal funds from bank and redistribute the money to various state banks, thereby starving the bank to death. On September 10, 1833, the national bank was out of business; the bank war was officially over. Many in Congress believed that the president had abused his power during the bank crisis and, as a result, Jackson was censured by Congress in 1834. President Jackson could have hardly cared less. He was convinced the bank war resulted in a landmark victory for the American people.

THE AGE OF ANDREW JACKSON

NECESSARY VOCABULARY:

polarize: to divide into two sharply contrasting beliefs or opinions

plurality: the largest share of votes received by a candidate who does not receive a majority.

majority: the number of votes received by a candidate that is more than half of the total number of votes.

persecute: to subject someone to hostility and ill-treatment due to their ethnicity and religious beliefs.

assimilate: to absorb and integrate into a society or culture.

rogue: a dishonest or unprincipled person that acts in unpredictable ways.

tariff: a tax placed on imported goods.

commodity: a raw material that can be bought or sold, such as coffee or corn.

nullify: to invalidate and make void; to refuse to follow.

unconstitutional: not in accordance with the United States Constitution.

double down: to strengthen one's commitment toward a particular plan or strength, especially a risky one.

secede: withdraw formally from an organization or alliance.

critic: a person who expresses an unfavorable opinion of something.

vehement: showing strong, intense, or forceful feelings.

charter: a written grant (that needs renewed every so many years) by a country's government that allows the creation of an institution.

denounce: publicly declare to be wrong or evil.

incumbent: a public official currently holding office and seeking reelection.

landslide: an overwhelming majority of votes for one person; an election that is not even close.

censure: express severe disapproval or someone, especially in a formal statement.

IDENTIFY 5 KEY EVENTS/MOMENTS IN JACKSON'S LIFE THAT HELPED HIM IDENTIFY WITH THE COMMON PERSON AND BECOME A "MAN OF THE PEOPLE."

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

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE ELECTION OF 1824?

WHAT DID ANDREW JACKSON CALL THE ELECTION OF 1824? WHY WAS THAT?

WHAT IS THE SPOILS SYSTEM?

DO YOU THINK THE SPOILS SYSTEM IS A GOOD WAY TO CHOOSE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS? EXPLAIN.

**ANDREW JACKSON
MAN OF THE PEOPLE?**

**THE AGE OF
JACKSON
ORGANIZER**

**JACKSON'S TREATMENT OF
NATIVE PEOPLE**

- 1.) WHAT ARE THREE WORDS YOU CAN USE TO DESCRIBE JACKSON'S POLICIES TOWARD NATIVE PEOPLE?**

- 2.) HOW DID TRIBES HOPE TO DEFY JACKSON'S REMOVAL POLICIES?**

- 3.) WHAT FACTORS FORCED THE NATIVE PEOPLE FROM THEIR LANDS?**

HOW DID JACKSON DEFY OTHER BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT IN HIS TREATMENT OF NATIVE PEOPLE?

WHAT WAS THE TREATY OF NEW ECHOTA?

HOW DID NORTHERNERS VIEW THE TARIFF? WHY?

HOW WAS THIS CRISIS RESOLVED?

HOW DID SOUTHERNERS VIEW THE TARIFF? WHY?

WHO WAS JOHN C. CALHOUN, AND WHAT DID HE THREATEN TO DO?

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JACKSON AND HIS WAR WITH THE NATIONAL BANK

WHEN ASKED WHAT IS MOST LIKELY TO BE REMEMBERED FROM HIS TWO TERMS AS PRESIDENT, ANDREW JACKSON REPLIED,

"I KILLED THE BANK."

DO YOU THINK THIS IS A PROUD STATEMENT? OR WAS JACKSON ASHAMED? EXPLAIN.

HOW DID JACKSON VIEW THE BANK?

WHAT WAS JACKSON'S PLAN?

HOW DID THE AMERICAN PUBLIC REACT?