

CHAPTER EIGHT: DEMOCRATS AND WHIGS: DEMOCRACY AND AMERICAN CULTURE, 1820–1840

READING AND STUDY GUIDE

- I. Democracy in America
 - A. Democratic Culture
 - B. Davy Crockett and the Frontier Myth

- II. Andrew Jackson and His Age
 - A. The Election of 1824 and “The Corrupt Bargain”
 - B. The Election of 1828: “Old Hickory’s” Triumph
 - C. The Reign of “King Mob”
 - D. States Rights and the Nullification Crisis

- III. White Man’s Democracy
 - A. Race and Politics in the Jacksonian Era
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Democracy did not yet embrace all Americans; it excluded women, African Americans, and Indians. The crowd Bingham depicts is overwhelmingly male and, apart from a lone African American in the background, all white. While the white men participate in the political life of the nation, the lone black figure labors on a wagon selling refreshments to the crowd.

No figure better personified this new age than Andrew Jackson, the country’s leading Democrat. Jackson’s 1828 election changed American politics, forcing his opponents, the Whigs, to make more effective use of the tools of democratic politics and the symbols of democracy in their campaigns. Indeed, in their electoral win in 1840, the Whigs had outdone the Democrats, portraying their candidate William Henry Harrison, as a simple man born in a log cabin who drank hard cider like an ordinary farmer.

Although the Whigs may have learned valuable political lessons from the Democrats about how to campaign, their party steadfastly opposed Jacksonian policies on every major issue of the day. From economic issues to the question of how to deal with American Indians, the two parties battled one another, offering the American people competing visions and clear choices.

Political participation in this period rose as Americans responded to the messages of the two parties and turned out to vote in unprecedented numbers.

Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 8, students should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the emergence of universal white male suffrage as a characteristic of Jacksonian democratic reform.
2. Explain the impact of early nineteenth-century political reform on the voting rights of women and African Americans.
3. Identify the Second Great Awakening as the second major example of a popular religious revolt in American history.
4. Define the term *evangelical Christianity* and describe its impact on American theology and religious style.
5. Explain the special appeal of evangelical Christianity to women and free blacks.
6. Describe the personal background of Andrew Jackson and identify which aspects of his background would be most politically appealing to Americans of the early nineteenth century.
7. Explain how Jackson's loss of the 1824 presidential election set the stage for his victory in 1828.
8. Comment on the importance of Martin Van Buren's support for Jackson in the 1828 election.
9. Discuss the results of the 1828 election in terms of regional, class, and religious support for each candidate.
10. Explain why Jackson vetoed the Maysville Road bill and the effects and consequences of his decision.
11. Outline the provisions of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.
12. Describe the Trail of Tears as an example of the Indian removal policy implemented by the United States government during the Jackson administration.
13. Identify two Supreme Court decisions from the John Marshall court that addressed the issue of Indian removal.

14. Briefly discuss John C. Calhoun's theory of nullification as set forth in *The South Carolina Exposition and Protest*.
15. Discuss the Bank War and the degree to which it reflected Jackson's commitment to states' rights as well as his commitment to the common man.
16. Explain the political and social significance of the Eaton Affair.
17. Define the term *gag rule* and explain its connection to the issue of slavery by 1836.
18. Describe the original organizers of the Whig party and explain the special role played by the Anti-Masons.
19. Outline the basic principles of Whig political ideology.
20. Explain the importance of the Texas issue in the 1844 presidential election and comment on the impact of the Pakenham letter on the Texas debate in Congress.
21. Explain the issues surrounding the Oregon question and how the issue helped Democrats win the presidency in 1844.

Key Terms & Definitions:

American System Henry Clay's comprehensive national plan for economic growth that included protective tariffs for American industry and government investment in roads and other internal improvements. (226)

"corrupt bargain" Term presidential candidate Jackson's supporters used to attack the alliance between John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay that deprived Clay of the presidency. (227)

"Old Hickory" The nickname that General Andrew Jackson earned for seeming as stout as an "Old Hickory tree" in fighting against the British in the War of 1812. (228)

spoils system The name applied to Jackson's system of replacing government officeholders with those loyal to him. (230)

nullification A constitutional doctrine advanced by supporters of states' rights that held that individual states could nullify unconstitutional acts of Congress. (231)

Force Bill A bill enacted by Congress that gave President Jackson the power to use military force to collect revenue, including tariffs. (232)

Indian Removal Act of 1830 Legislation that gave President Jackson the authority to remove Indians tribes to lands west of the Mississippi. (236)

Cherokee Cases *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1830) and *Worcester v. Georgia*, the two cases in which the Supreme Court of the United States determined that Indian nations retained certain rights of sovereign nations, but did not enjoy the full powers of a sovereign nation. (236)

Whigs (American, 19th Century) Anti-Jackson political party; the name evoked the seventeenth-century English opponents of absolute monarchy and the Patriot leaders who had opposed the tyranny of George III during the American Revolution. Whigs supported Clay's American System and a stronger central government. (239)

Bank Veto Speech Jackson's veto of a bill to re-charter of the Bank of the United States, in which he explained why he opposed the bank and laid out his own vision of American democracy and constitutional government. (241)

Study Questions:

What elements in the painting *Stump Speaking* illustrate the growth of American democracy? (220)

What role did the frontier play in nurturing the growth of democracy? (222)

What aspects of Davy Crockett's life made him a good symbol of frontier democracy? (223)

Why did James Kent oppose the elimination of property requirements? (224)

What were the strengths of John Quincy Adams as a presidential candidate? (225)

What were the main features of Clay's American System? (226)

Why did Jackson view the election of 1824 as a "corrupt bargain"? (227)

How did the "Coffin Handbill" attempt to discredit Andrew Jackson? (228)

How did the spoils system further Jackson's democratic agenda? (229)

What was the theory of states' rights? (230)

How did Webster's theory of the Union contrast with Calhoun's theory of states' rights? (231)

How does the political cartoonist represent nullification theory in the cartoon *Despotism*? (232)

What types of legal disabilities did blacks face outside of the slave South? (233)

What does Indian removal reveal about the limits of Jacksonian democracy? (234)

How does the Grand Caravan represent Jackson's Indian policy? (235)

What do the Cherokee cases reveal about the limits of judicial power? (236)

Was resistance to removal a viable strategy for the Cherokee? (237)

What was the “Trail of Tears?” (238)

Why did opponents of Jackson call themselves Whigs? (239)

What lasting contributions did the Anti-Masons make to American politics? (240)

How did Jackson use democratic rhetoric to rally support for his Bank Veto? (241)

How did Whigs interpret the Bank Veto? (242)

What are some of the signs of economic distress in this political cartoon on the Panic of 1837? (243)

How would you describe the difference between the two images of Jackson in these political cartoons? (244)

Why is Jackson portrayed as a monarch in this political cartoon? (245)

What political innovations helped the Whigs out-democrat the Democrats? (246)

Why were some women drawn to the Whig message? (247)

What were the most important differences between Whigs and Democrats on economic issues? (248)