

3 The Age of Jackson

Section Focus

Key Terms Missouri Compromise ■ Jacksonian democracy ■ spoils system ■ Indian Removal Act ■ Trail of Tears ■ doctrine of nullification

Main Idea Following his election as President in 1828, Andrew Jackson forced Indians from their land and wrestled with domestic political disputes.

Objectives As you read, look for answers to these questions:

1. What kinds of political disputes appeared in the early 1820s?
2. How did Andrew Jackson represent something new in American politics?
3. On what issues did President Jackson take strong stands?

The Era of Good Feelings collapsed in the 1820s. The changing economics of the country—manufacturing in the Northeast, cotton in the South, an expanding frontier in the West—created new social and political tensions. Not even Monroe’s sweeping re-election in 1820 could mask the rising conflict among these sections of the country.

THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE

Sectional dissension burst into the open when Missouri applied for statehood. At the time, the United States was evenly split into eleven slave states and eleven free states. The admission of a new state would tilt the balance of power in Congress.

In Congress, Representative James Tallmadge of New York proposed that slavery be forbidden in Missouri. This proposal angered southerners. They asked: Did the Constitution give Congress the authority to ban slavery? If nonslave states ever formed a majority in Congress, might they ban slavery altogether? “It is a most unhappy question, awakening sectional feelings, and exasperating them to the highest degree,” Henry Clay, then Speaker of the House, wrote.

It was Clay who found a way out of the dilemma. While the debate was raging, Maine too declared itself ready for statehood. Wanting to safeguard the Union, Clay introduced—and Congress accepted—the **Missouri Compromise** of 1820. The compromise proposed that Missouri be admitted as a slave state, and Maine as a free state. Thus the balance of power between slave states and free

states was maintained. The compromise also called for slavery to be excluded from the Louisiana Territory north of the parallel 36°30’.

THE ELECTION OF 1824

By 1824 sectional dissension had brought confusion to American politics. The Republican Party was split, with four men seeking to succeed Monroe as President. They were Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, William Crawford, and Andrew Jackson. Clay was the firm nationalist. Adams, the son of the second President, was a skilled diplomat, well-educated and aristocratic. Crawford was a southern gentleman trying to keep alive Jeffersonian ideals.

Jackson, a senator from Tennessee, was the rugged war hero of the Battle of New Orleans. Jackson’s nickname was “Old Hickory,” after one of the hardest woods in the forest. He was tough. He was self-assured. He got things done. Although Jackson lived the life of a Tennessee planter-aristocrat, he embodied the ideal of a self-made man of the frontier.

Jackson had the broadest popular support and received the most electoral votes. But he did not win a majority, so the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. Clay, who had come in fourth, was out of the running and threw his support to Adams. Clay thought that Adams was most likely to maintain the American System. With the election decided in Adams’s favor, the new President then named Clay his Secretary of State. Jackson’s supporters accused the two of making a “corrupt bargain.”

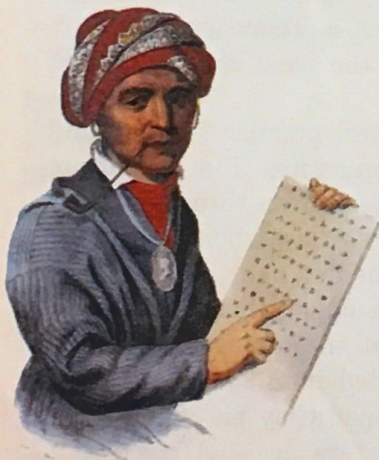
Although no evidence exists that Clay and Adams had made a deal, Jackson's supporters had their rallying cry. Money and power, they charged, had defeated liberty. Jackson resigned his Senate seat and went back to Tennessee to plan for the election of 1828.

As President, Adams urged the federal government to stimulate economic growth. But with Jackson's friends in Congress constantly attacking Adams, little got done. The Republican Party, meanwhile, split. Jackson's followers, stressing their ties to the common people, called themselves Democratic Republicans (later simply "Democrats"). The Adams-Clay camp focused on the President's commitment to a national program and called themselves National Republicans.

A NEW DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT

In 1828 all eyes were on the coming rematch between Jackson and Adams. Democrats viewed the election as a contest between aristocracy and democracy, between corruption and reform. Adams's backers, the eastern aristocracy, attacked Jackson as a gambler, drunkard, and murderer of innocent Indian women and children.

"Old Hickory" won the election in 1828 in a landslide. His victory has been called a triumph for the common man and a victory for democracy. But Jackson's election did not create democracy. Democracy created him. By 1828 more adult white males were eligible to vote than ever before. The



BIOGRAPHY

SEQUOYA (1770?–1843), was a Cherokee Indian after whom the giant redwood tree is named. Sequoyia devised an alphabet with 85 characters, to represent each of the sounds in the Cherokee language. The system was easily mastered, and by 1828 there were many books and a newspaper written in Cherokee. Sequoyia also helped keep peace between his people and the U.S. government.

constitutions of the new western states had provided for universal manhood suffrage, and the older states were lowering property requirements for voting. In all but two states the people, rather than the legislatures, voted for presidential electors.

Thus, Andrew Jackson's election coincided with a new democratic spirit in America—**Jacksonian democracy**. The mass of people once had been content to let their "betters" make the decisions of government. Jackson's election signaled new thinking in the land. Americans no longer thought of themselves as having betters.

JACKSON TAKES OFFICE

As the day for Jackson's inauguration drew near, hordes of well-wishers and tourists descended on Washington, D.C. "I never saw such a crowd before," observed Daniel Webster, senator from Massachusetts. "Persons have come 500 miles to see General Jackson, and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from some dreadful danger!"

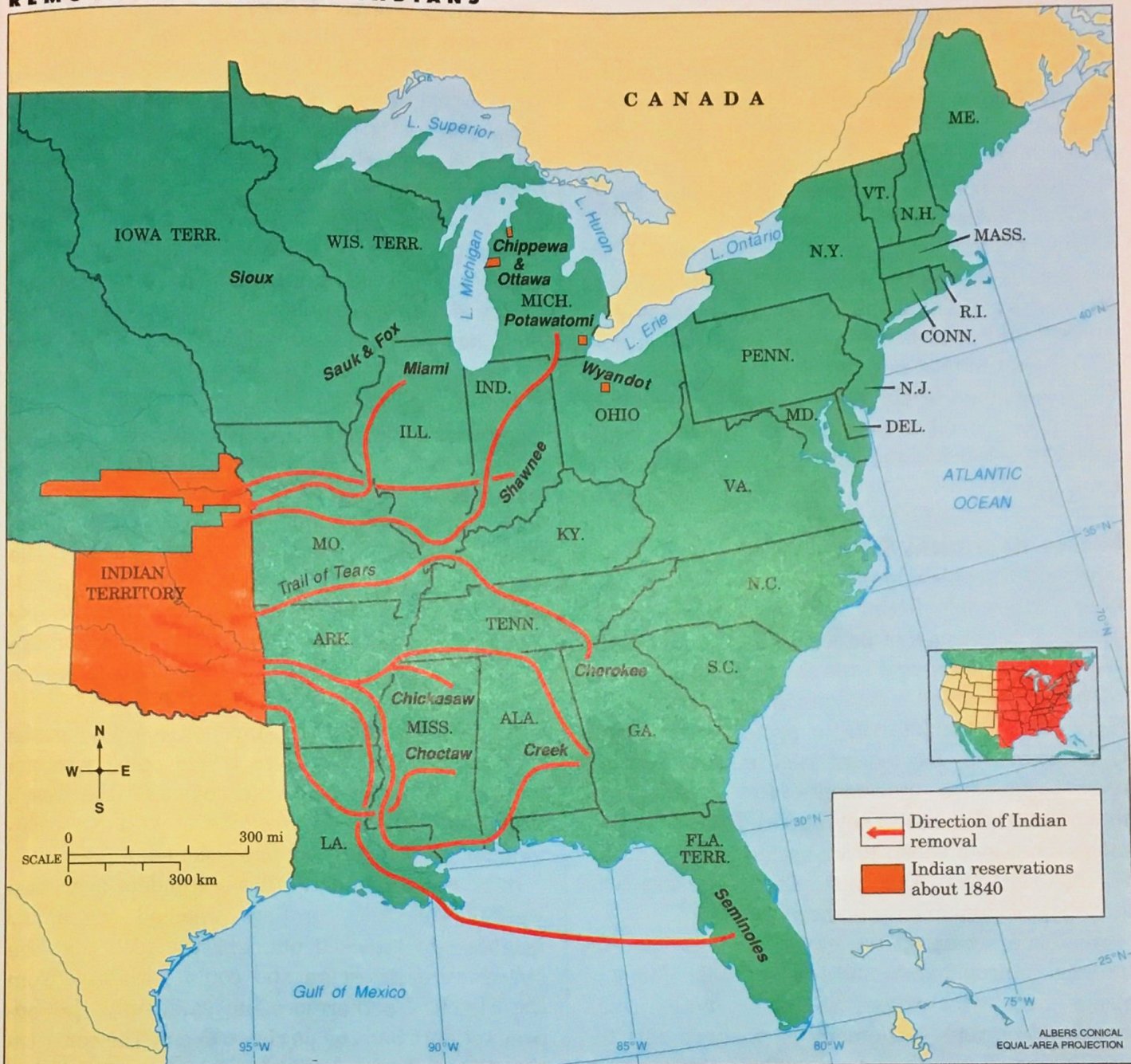
The ceremony was planned for outdoors so that the thousands present could witness it. The reception afterwards at the White House was riotous. "The reign of KING MOB seemed triumphant," a Supreme Court justice complained. The mob finally dispersed, some through the windows, when punch and liquor were transferred to the White House lawn.

Once in office, Jackson launched a new era of politics. He started by replacing large numbers of government officeholders, many of them members of the upper classes. Jackson said that the duties of public office were so simple that any person of intelligence could do the work. He also wanted members of his own party to fill the places of those he had dismissed. This practice of giving government jobs to political backers is called the **spoils system**. Although subject to abuse, the spoils system did break the hold of the upper class over government jobs.

THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT

One of the first issues Jackson tackled was the status of Indian lands east of the Mississippi. The expansion of the Cotton Kingdom had created

REMOVAL OF EASTERN INDIANS



MAP SKILLS

Starting in 1830, federal policies forced most Eastern Indians off their traditional lands onto government-administered reservations in what is now Oklahoma. Other tribes in the East were also moved west of the Mississippi River. The arrows show the routes the Indians were forced to follow on their trek west. **CRITICAL THINKING** Was the seizure of Indian lands unavoidable? Why or why not?

pressure on the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws of the Southeast. These people, who had long been farmers, had adopted many of the methods of white society. They prospered, and they also held some of the best lands in the region. When Georgia tried to take Creek lands by a phony treaty, President John Quincy Adams

refused to honor it. This protection of Indian rights by the national government angered both southerners and westerners.

Jackson reversed the government's stand. Jackson had been an Indian fighter and, some said, an Indian hater. He proposed to Congress the forced relocation (removal) of the Southeastern Indians.

Despite vigorous protest from the National Republicans and from religious groups, Congress passed the **Indian Removal Act** in 1830. It called for the Indians to move to public lands beyond the Mississippi. The Democrats said they were acting in the Indians' best interests. But, in the words of the historian Robert Remini, the law "was harsh, arrogant, racist—and inevitable."

The law triggered the forced removal of the Southeastern Indians to the new Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. The harsh journey west in 1838 and 1839 became known as the **Trail of Tears**. On the trek nearly one-fourth of the 15,000 Cherokees died of hardship, sickness, and starvation. Also moved to public lands were the Seminoles from Florida and the Sauk and Fox Indians from Illinois.

RIISING SECTIONAL DIFFERENCES

During Jackson's administration, smoldering sectional differences flared up. These differences focused on the issues of internal improvements, the sale of public land, and especially tariffs.

The business and manufacturing interests of the Northeast wanted tariffs to protect their industries. They also backed internal improvements in order to speed the movement of raw materials and manufactured goods. They opposed the selling of public land at a cheap price because it was draining laborers from the East. Those workers who stayed were demanding higher wages.

Westerners wanted the government to sponsor internal improvements and to sell public land at a cheap price. Westerners knew that both moves would encourage settlement of western territories, giving these areas greater prosperity and political clout.

Southerners opposed government spending on internal improvements. They feared that Congress would pay for these improvements by raising tariffs, which had been climbing steadily since 1816. These tariffs made imported manufactured products more expensive. Because the southern economy depended on these imports, southerners saw the tariff as a form of taxation forced on them by the North. And as long as the West voted with the Northeast on the tariff issue, the South was helpless.

DEBATING STATES' RIGHTS

Southern leaders needed some way to drive a wedge between the West and the Northeast. In 1830, when eastern representatives called for limiting the sale of public land, the southerners had their chance. Senator Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina backed the West's call for a liberal land policy. Arguing that it was an abuse of federal power to cut off land sales, Hayne insisted that each state had the right to make its own decision.

Hayne's argument shifted the topic of debate from land sales to states' rights, thereby reviving an argument begun two years earlier. In 1828 Congress had passed a bill setting tariffs at their highest levels yet. Calling the bill the "Tariff of Abominations," leaders from South Carolina began talking secession. To prevent hotheads from leading South Carolina out of the Union, Vice President John C. Calhoun instead proposed the **doctrine of nullification**. The Congress, said Calhoun, had no power to pass laws that favored one section over another. When it did, a state had the right to declare such laws "null and void within the limits of the state."

Now, two years later, Hayne was reviving the nullification controversy to try to enlist western support. But he had a powerful rival for the West's attention. This was Daniel Webster—a New Englander, a nationalist, an impassioned orator.

In a Senate debate that extended over two weeks, Webster's oratory reached legendary heights. He attacked outright the idea that the states were sovereign and could withdraw from the Union. Furthermore, he said, only the Supreme Court had the power to decide the constitutionality of the law. Webster also pointed out that the West was a creation of the national government and benefited from nationalist programs. The doctrine of nullification, he warned, could lead to civil war:

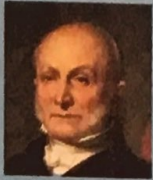
When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see it shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood!



THE PRESIDENTS



James Monroe



John Quincy Adams



Andrew Jackson



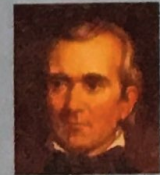
Martin Van Buren



William Henry Harrison



John Tyler



James Polk

James Monroe

1817–1825

5th President, Democratic-Republican

- Born April 28, 1758, in Virginia
- Married Elizabeth Kortright in 1786; 3 children
- Senator from Virginia; governor of Virginia; Secretary of State; Secretary of War
- Lived in Virginia when elected President
- Vice President: Daniel Tompkins
- Died July 4, 1831, in New York
- Key events while in office: Florida purchased from Spain; Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, Maine, and Missouri became states; Missouri Compromise; Monroe Doctrine

John Quincy Adams

1825–1829

6th President, National Republican

- Born July 11, 1767, in Massachusetts
- Married Louisa Johnson in 1797; 4 children
- Senator from Massachusetts; minister to Russia; minister to England; Secretary of State
- Lived in Massachusetts when elected President
- Vice President: John Calhoun
- Died February 23, 1848, in Washington, D.C.
- Key events while in office: Erie Canal completed

Andrew Jackson

1829–1837

7th President, Democrat

- Born March 15, 1767, in South Carolina

- Married Rachel Robards in 1791; no children
- Lawyer; representative and senator from Tennessee; general in War of 1812
- Lived in Tennessee when elected President
- Vice Presidents: John Calhoun; Martin Van Buren
- Died June 8, 1845, in Tennessee
- Key events while in office: Bank of the United States controversy; "Trail of Tears"; nullification crisis; Texan independence; Arkansas became a state

Martin Van Buren

1837–1841

8th President, Democrat

- Born December 5, 1782, in New York
- Married Hannah Hoes in 1807; 4 children
- Lawyer; senator from New York; governor of New York; Secretary of State; Vice President under Jackson
- Lived in New York when elected President
- Vice President: Richard Johnson
- Died July 24, 1862, in New York
- Key events while in office: Panic of 1837; Michigan became a state

William Henry Harrison

1841

9th President, Whig

- Born February 9, 1773, in Virginia
- Married Anna Symmes in 1795; 10 children
- Governor of Indiana Territory; defeated the Shawnee in Battle of Tippecanoe; general in War of 1812; representative and senator from Ohio

- Lived in Ohio when elected President
- Vice President: John Tyler
- Died April 4, 1841, in Washington, D.C.
- First President to die in office

John Tyler

1841–1845

10th President, Whig

- Born March 29, 1790, in Virginia
- Married Letitia Christian in 1813; 8 children
- Married Julia Gardiner in 1844; 7 children
- Lawyer; governor of Virginia; representative and senator from Virginia; Vice President under Harrison
- Lived in Virginia when elected Vice President
- Vice President: none
- Died January 18, 1862, in Virginia
- Key events while in office: annexation of Texas; Florida became a state

James Polk

1845–1849

11th President, Democrat

- Born November 2, 1795, in North Carolina
- Married Sarah Childress in 1824; no children
- Lawyer; representative from Tennessee; governor of Tennessee
- Lived in Tennessee when elected President
- Vice President: George Dallas
- Died June 15, 1849, in Tennessee
- Key events while in office: Mexican War; Mormons settled in Utah; Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls; Texas, Iowa, and Wisconsin became states

President Jackson made clear his support for Webster's position. At a dinner honoring Thomas Jefferson, Jackson rose, looked squarely at Calhoun, and made his toast: "Our Federal Union—it must be preserved!" Calhoun countered with his own toast: "The Union—*next to our liberty, the most dear!*"

"Our Federal Union—it must be preserved!"

—Andrew Jackson, 1830

CRISIS AND COMPROMISE

So far, the nullification debate had been fought merely with words. But in 1832 the two sides nearly came to blows after Congress passed yet another high tariff bill. South Carolina nullified the tariff and threatened to secede; Jackson vowed to hang anyone who opposed the authority of the federal government. Both sides then backed off, accepting a compromise tariff bill passed by Congress in 1833.

The nullification crisis passed, but only for a while. The politics, economics, and social system of the South increasingly isolated it from the rest of the country.

Nothing made this situation more clear than the career of John Calhoun. Once a strong nationalist, Calhoun resigned as Vice President at the height of the crisis and became a senator for South Carolina. Henceforth, he would be the principal spokesman for the South and for the doctrine of nullification. As long as southern leaders like Calhoun saw the South's interests as being opposed to those of the rest of the country, sectional conflicts would continue.

THE BANK WAR

The greatest controversy of the Jackson administration concerned the Bank of the United States. In 1832 Congress voted to renew the charter of the bank. When Jackson vetoed the bill, he dropped a bomb onto the nation's financial system.

Jackson distrusted the prosperous bank. He believed that powerful bank officers were influencing Congress to pass laws friendly to it. The bank was a monopoly, he said, creating a special class of privileged men.

Jackson's veto of the bank was the first presidential veto not based solely on constitutional grounds. By stating that a President had the right to veto any legislation for any reason, Jackson thus thrust the power of the presidency into the legislative process. From then on, Congress had to consider a presidential veto whenever it proposed a law.

The bank veto became a central issue in the presidential election of 1832. Henry Clay, the National Republican candidate, supported the bank. Jackson charged that it was a monster of monopoly and corruption. He presented himself as the defender of the people, the slayer of the dragon.

When Jackson won re-election in 1832, he took it as a sign that the public approved of his war on the bank. In his second term he set about to destroy the power of the bank even before its charter expired. Government money was taken out of the bank and deposited instead in state banks. The financial chaos that resulted from Jackson's war on the bank caused a major depression—the Panic of 1837. When hard times hit, however, Jackson was out of office and beyond blame.

SECTION REVIEW

1. KEY TERMS Missouri Compromise, Jacksonian democracy, spoils system, Indian Removal Act, Trail of Tears, doctrine of nullification

2. PEOPLE Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Robert Y. Hayne, John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster

3. COMPREHENSION What happened to the Republican Party in 1824? What new parties were later formed?

4. COMPREHENSION What were the issues in the Hayne-Webster debate?

5. CRITICAL THINKING How were Jackson's decisions in office a reflection of the spirit of democracy?