

The revolutionary age of andrew jackson assignment

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Subject Matter The Age of Andrew Jackson was a time of revolution when enormous changes were “ shaking and transforming America. ” Prominent figures “ wrestl[ed] with the nation’s prospects and with each other,” further shaping the people and its democratic government. (Remini, i) Every decision Jackson and his men made in some way or another affected the social, economical, and political aspects of life in the Age of Jackson. Once Andrew Jackson took office, the people immediately embarked on a journey to develop a closer relationship with the government.

Though conflicts, many times over particular issues concerning the nation’s practices and patterns, occurred between the President and Congress, Jackson proved to be a “ living symbol of the advance of American democracy” and, eventually, Congress seemed to agree. (Remini 27) The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson is arranged into three parts, or “ books”. Each describes events primarily through the accounts of prominent historical figures such as Webster, Clay, and Jackson. The events, spanning from westward expansion to the days of Jackson, are presented chronologically.

Book I of The Revolutionary Age of Jackson, titled “ A New Age” talks of how “ American society itself had changed. ” The nation simply “ throbbed and pulsed with energy. ” People began to believe in equality of opportunity. They believed that “ no one should have special privileges... Government must... prevent any one from gaining an advantage over the others. ” (Remini, 15) Many issues had also risen, many concerning preserving the

Union, slavery, Indian presence, and etc. And “ central to all these issues” was Andrew Jackson.

Jackson’s election “ marked a new beginning in the relationship between the government and the people” Never had there been such an inauguration of a President. Never before had the “ ordinary citizen??? the common man??? so spontaneously expressed his enthusiasm for a new administration. ” (Remini, 33) It already shows that the people and the government were bonding. It was “ the beginning of truly popular government in America” and all because of Andrew Jackson and his administration. (Remini, 150) The Age of Jackson marked the beginning of modern political campaigning. Now he politicians were reaching out to the masses, employing “ gimmicks of all kinds to arouse and sustain popular interest in the activities of the party. ” (Remini, 50) All the proof needed to argue that popular government had indeed arrived was seen in the constant rise of the number of voters and by looking at the candidates elected into office. To a large extent, popular government emerged because of a small group of men: Martin Van Buren, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Thomas Harton Benton, and John C. Calhoun. Book II, titled “ Issues and Answers”, is where Remini presents his purpose.

He presents the many issues of the time????” how to make America truly democratic; how to hold the Union together, when slavery was threatening to tear it apart; what to do with the Indians... how to solve the fierce power struggle between the President and the Congress”??? and explains the actions of Jackson and how he changed American life. (Remini, i) Making America truly democratic began with politics. Jackson believed that

government jobs belonged to all and thus supported the principal of rotation to avoid corruption of the office holders.

Rotation meant that more people served. And when more people served, there was a more democratic system. " It seemed to the ordinary citizen that the people themselves had finally assumed control of their government. " (Remini, 135) Whether or not a democracy truly came to America can be debated. What matters is that the people believed democracy had come. When the Civil War drew near, many Americans " wistfully looked back to the Age of Jackson and remembered how their President had guided the country away from secession and its bloody consequence. (Remini, 84) He exerted notable leadership and had the desire to " save the Union. " A debate concerning states' rights commenced with Calhoun and Jackson on different sides. While Calhoun worked to defend the rights of the South, Jackson " did everything within his power to work out a compromise. " (Remini, 103) The president had successfully avoided armed conflict and the breakup of the Union by issuing the Compromise Tariff of 1833. The Indian problem proved to be an " ugly contradiction to the general democratic mood of the Jacksonian age. (Remini, 105) While many Americans felt Indians blocked the progress of " the civilized white man," Jackson felt they made notable advances. He acted out of concern for the well-being of the Indians, moving them out west of the Mississippi because " it was necessary to preserve [their] life and culture. " (Remini, 113) Apparently, the democratic government freely elected by the people had solved the Indian problem to its own satisfaction. It is " a terrible contradiction" that a powerful democratic

nation had solved one of its problems by the “ near extinction of the entire race of people. Despite the severity and the cruel nature of the matter, what Jackson did was possibly the only course of action they could take. With such an explosive fervor for land and expansion, the Indians were at threat, and Jackson had placed them beyond “ the reach of injury or oppression. ”

(Remini, 120) Book III, titled “ The Growth of Presidential Power”, concerns the struggle between the President and Congress. The Bank War, a substantial issue under Jackson’s administration, runs through the entire last third of The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson.

A quote from Henry Clay calls it a “ revolution... tending towards a total change of the... character of the Government. ” (Remini, 124) The Bank of the United States had gained a considerable amount of power, controlling financial operations of the entire country. Such privileges “ ran contrary to the spirit of this democratic age. ” (Remini, 128) Jackson, thinking that the Bank was dangerous to the government, wrote a veto message and sent it to Congress in 1832. It “ changed and amplified the fundamental power of the President. (Remini, 134) Whereas previous vetoes were issued by question of constitutionality, Jackson believed the President can veto a bill when he felt it harmed the nation. This interpretation of presidential “ prerogatives” changed the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government. The Presidential Election of 1832 was the first election in which the American people were “ actually invited to decide an important issue. ” (Remini, 140) Also, the selection of candidates was conducted in a more democratic manner than ever before.

The election marked the beginning of the end for the Bank of the United States, and it also signaled the democratization of the electoral process. " A climate of respect and regard for the popular will" had risen, and this was " one of the great contributions of the Jacksonian era. " (Remini, 151) "' The President is the direct representative of the American people,'" said by Jackson, was truly a revolutionary statement. It " certainly did not accord with the practice or beliefs of previous Presidents," and it " restructured the government to the advantage of the executive branch. (Remini, 165) Many prominent figures such as Calhoun and Clay rose up against the President and accused him of despotism. However, finally finding acceptance of his theory, Jackson altered the essential character of the presidency. The President from this point on became the " true" head of government. Remini finally finishes his book with a conclusive chapter. He praises Jackson for increasing the number of ordinary individuals involved in the functioning of the government, exercising a leadership new to presidential history, and redefining the presidency in its relationship with Congress and the people.

The Jacksonian Era broad about a " new breed of politician who preached the doctrine of popular rule," and represented the political beginnings of modern America. (Remini, 178) Thesis The author explicitly states that " the revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson changed much of America's way of life. It established the nation's basic political practices and patterns. It stands at the beginning of the modern America we have inherited. " (Remini, ii) Jackson was one of the people, spoke for the people, and acted for the people.

He was the people's President, and because of his beliefs, he revolutionized American politics. America was changed forever. Politically, Jackson created a truly popular government in spirit. The people of America were always supporting the President, whose first election was already the most enthusiastic of the time. More of the masses began voting and more of them began looking at the candidates running in office. The rotation system even brought more of the people themselves into office. Activity in the political parties sparked and contributed much into the advancement of democracy within the nation. Andrew Jackson ultimately "brought the people and the government closer together." The time period was thus coined the era of "Jacksonian Democracy." (Remini, 66) His leadership created a precedent for future presidents to come. His "desire to save the Union" did save the Union in a time when the issue of slavery first made its way over the country. The way he handled the issues was unmatched, as proven from the failure to avoid the Civil War decades later. (Remini, 84) Also, as a President who "had sworn to uphold the Constitution and faithfully execute the laws of the United States," he did "not tolerate defiance of the national government," exercising the use of government military strength. (Remini, 102-103) A result of the Bank War was an increase in presidential power. Jackson's relentless use of vetoes proves that. The War also "altered the fundamental structure of government." (Remini, 123) When Congress declares a bill constitutional, it doesn't mean that it has to be signed.

According to Jackson, if one feels it unconstitutional, it isn't necessary. It is up to the people, who are "equally entitled to protection by law." (Remini,

136) The conventional system was also changed by the age of Jackson. “ More people were involved in the process... They represented every section, state, class, and economic interest and most political views in the nation. ” The system provided for electoral success and the purposes of democracy were well served. The traditional notion that voting was only for the rich vanished, and Jackson changed the entire direction of government.

He “ marked a new beginning in American political history” by saying, “ The President is the direct representative of the American people, and he is elected by the people and responsible to them. ” (Remini, 165) This revolutionary philosophy changed the course of presidential history and its relationship with the Congress and its people. Remini, again, emphasizes the influence of the revolutionary age of Andrew Jackson, which created fundamental practices for the future. Though it was a time of departure from traditional operations of government, it represented the political beginning of a modern America.

Critique Robert V. Remini is qualified for being a notable author, clearly demonstrating his scholarship in the Jacksonian Era from his many novels about the time period. Though retired from teaching history and humanities at the University of Illinois at Chicago, he still retains his title as a venerable professor. Not only is he consultant to “ The Papers of Andrew Jackson,” the “ official project which will publish all of Jackson’s important papers and correspondence,” but he is also Historian of the United States House of Representatives, commissioned to study and document its past. Goodman, 2) Even Christina Jeffrey, a visiting Professor of Politics at Coastal Carolina

University agrees, saying that “ he is beyond question superbly qualified to be Historian of the House of Representatives. ” He is, without denying, “ one of our greatest living American Historians. ” (Goodman, 4) Remini’s *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson* employs many quotations from many documents of the Age of Jackson, which primarily give the novel a more narrative feel as well as provide evidence for Remini’s claims.

Throughout the novel, many quotations were taken from prominent historical figures, travelers, and foreign visitors during the time. For instance, Remini was describing the changes of American society, and the words of Daniel Webster proved that the Jacksonian Age was “ wholly [sic] of a different character from the past” while the words of an Englishman stated that the continent “ present[ed] a scene of scrambling and roars with greedy hurry. ” (Remini, 5) At one point in the novel, instead of telling the death of Rachel, Jackson’s wife, in a factual, unadorned manner, the author describes the scenes with vividness.

According to Remini, Jackson had “ spent the night by Rachel’s side, his face in his hands, grieving... He would look into the face and feel the heart and pulse of the one to whom he was totally and utterly devoted. ” (Remini, 28) As shown, the effectiveness of the presentation is not only enhanced by authentic pieces of hard evidence, but also augmented by the author’s style of writing. Robert V. Remini presents a thesis with plenty of evidence to justify his claims about the Jacksonian Era. Much of it is from dialogue of significant people and common folk which significantly raises the book’s credibility because change in American life an’t be proven without what

people have actually said during the time. And all this evidence is structured in such a way that the Age of Andrew Jackson comes alive in all areas of life: political, economical, and social. All these aspects of life were delved deep into, and Remini made sure that each one was explained to the fullest in as little bias as possible. Modern day government was sparked by the Age of Jackson, which Remini fully explains, and the change that he talks about is undeniable. The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson proves to be an interesting book.

Richard Norton Smith, while commenting on one of Remini's works, praises him for having research that is "impeccable, his storytelling on a par with his outsized subject. And what a story he has to tell." (Goodman, 3) Remini purposely sets up his story with such a fashion that Jackson turns into a protagonist while the others turn into antagonists. Jackson is a hero who had sworn to "uphold the Constitution and faithfully execute the laws of the United States" and his enemies such as Nicholas Biddle were described as "arrogant" with "questions about [their] integrity." (Remini, 102) This book is highly recommended for its novelty in history telling and its fundamentality to an understanding of contemporary American government. Evaluation The American Pageant and The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson, though drawing upon the same conclusions, treat Andrew Jackson's career quite differently. The American Pageant expresses more of a negative tone toward the man than does Robert V. Remini. The spoils system, for example, was treated quite differently.

Remini's book calls it the "rotation" system, and treats it as a great democratic tool that brought about a closer relationship between the people and its government. The textbook, on the contrary, emphasizes the scandal when one million dollars was extracted from the Washington government by Samuel Swartwout. Although *The American Pageant* affirms the fact that the system was "an important element of the emerging two-party order," it accentuated the negative aspects of the system rather than the positive, which contrasts greatly with *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson*. (Pageant, 263)

The nullification crisis during the 1830s was also treated in different manners. The textbook credits Calhoun for saving the country from armed conflict. He was "the true hero of the hour," not Jackson. Instead, the President was a "cantankerous general" and threatened the states if they were to secede. (Pageant, 265) *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson* disagrees, praising the President as a man "sworn to uphold the Constitution and faithfully execute the laws." (Remini, 102) Both texts, however, agree that the next time the "nullies" and the Union clash, it would be a time when compromise would prove more elusive.

The Native American problem was also presented differently. *The American Pageant* noted Jackson's "callous jibe at the Indians' defender," the Congress, and his harsh comment, "John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it." (Pageant, 267) Yet, Remini goes on to explain that Jackson "acted out of concern for the well-being of the Indians and for their civilization," which completely opposes the first description. (Remini, 111) It

was undeniable that these views are at odds, but the fact is that the Indians were moved to reservations after having attempted to assimilate them into white culture.

The American Pageant only spends a few pages on the President and doesn't go quite as far in depth as Remini's *The Revolutionary Age of Jackson*. It is interesting to note the different views of President Andrew Jackson. Some may view him as a very controversial man, while others may view him the same way Remini does. The facts are given in *The American Pageant*, but *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson* gives the facts and tells an intriguing story that speaks of the triumphs of a once living symbol of American democracy.