

jacksonian  
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sample



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## **Jacksonian Democracy: Democracy For the “ Common Man” Essay Sample**

The Age of Jackson, from 1820's to 1830's, was a period of contradictions, especially in democracy. During this time, Jackson, who got elected in 1828, brought about many changes in the government. There was an increase in voting participation, popular elections and nomination of committees by caucuses, etc. Jackson realized that as a political leader, he needed a true purpose to protect and serve the rights American people, trying to bring “ common people” to the political arena. Nonetheless, Jackson supported only a specific sector of the American population who were white males and women. Other minorities such as blacks and Native Americans were excluded. The Jacksonian Democrats, a group of supporters of President Jackson, viewed themselves as guardians of the Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty, and equality of opportunity. However, the contradiction lies on his actions. This could indicate that Jackson and his followers had their own extent to which they were the protectors of democracy.

In terms of Jackson's attempt to give the “ common man” political rights, American citizens were satisfied. They believed that Jackson was a true promoter of the common man as seen in ‘ The Working Men's Declaration of Independence’ of 1829 . In this document based upon Declaration of Independence, the author asserts that the organization of the Democrats should be responsible for people who undermine fundamental privileges. Thus, the workingmen did view Jackson as a supporter to his ideals. Although Jackson stressed the views of the citizens in his veto message of 1832 when

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the citizens had a point of view supporting the ideals, his message supports the view that Jackson was a true democrat and protector of the common man. Established in 1816, the Second Bank of the United States had, by the 1830's, become a tool of the rich Northeastern citizens that failed to respond to the people and states' needs. The president of the 2nd Bank, Nicholas Biddle, claimed that many Americans did not like Northern businessmen.

Because the Bank represented an inequality of economic opportunity for the citizens, Jackson also loathed the Bank. In 1832, Jackson vetoed the Bank's charter saying, ' The present Bank of the United States... appears that more than a fourth part of the stock is held by foreigners and the residue is held by a few hundred of our own citizens, chiefly of the richest class... It is easy to conceive that great evils... might flow from such a concentration of power in the hands of a few men.' Clearly, he believed that the Bank would have a monopoly on banking feeling that it was owned and run unjustly by wealthy aristocrats who were not always American. Afterwards, to Jackson's delight, the Bank eventually collapsed. Around the same time, another issue faced the nation. In 1832, South Carolina, despising high protective tariffs that had been increasing since the Tariff of Abominations of 1828, decided to nullify a national law, the Tariff of 1832. Jackson was irate at South Carolina's actions.

In response, he proposed (and got passed) the Force Bill, allowing an invasion of South Carolina if necessary with military power. At the same time, he worked on developing a compromise tariff to deal with the state and got South Carolina agreed to the new tariff. Jackson's quick response to the Nullification Crisis was similar with his philosophy, working hard to support the Constitution and democracy. In 1837, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a <https://assignbuster.com/jacksonian-democracy-democracy-for-the-common-man-essay-sample/>

Democrat who was picked from Jackson, demonstrated that the Jacksonians did stay true to their ideals. In the landmark case of *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge* of 1837, equality of economic opportunity was evidently shown. The case involving a monopoly on Charles River crossings was resolved by a decision that new enterprises could not be limited by implied privileges by old charters. Taney wrote, "While the rights of private property are sacredly guarded... the community also have rights." Thus, the community was put above the individual corporation and equality of opportunity prevailed.

While Jackson truly supported democracy, he was not responsible for all the equality in America. In fact, Jackson did not stick to his ideals. His political opponents often called him hypocritical. In Daniel Webster's answer to Jackson's bank veto message, Webster claims that the message "raises a cry that liberty is in danger, at the very moment when it puts forth claims to powers heretofore unknown and unheard of." The opinion of Webster, a firm opponent of Jackson, commented Jackson with a negative remark. However, it is true that Jackson expanded his power drastically while supposedly protecting democracy. There were numerous actions that Jackson took. One was the spoils system in order to get his supporters into as many governmental positions as possible. He also consistently used his unauthorized "Kitchen Cabinet" for advice instead of a real cabinet. Furthermore, he even ignored the Supreme Court in their decision about the Cherokees Indians. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act called for removal of resisting Southern Native American tribes from their native homelands.

The tribes, however, maintained resistance. In 1831 and 1832, the Cherokees went to the courts. In 1832, in the court case of Worcester v. Georgia, Chief Justice Marshall stated that the Cherokees had their independent land and thus did not need to follow Georgia's governing of the Cherokees' territory. Jackson, however, sent no force to prevent Southerners from forcing Indians westward. Thus, during the 1830's, thousands of Native Americans were forced to march along the Trail of Tears to the foreign terrain in the West. The bleak journey made by the Native Americans was portrayed effectively in a painting found in the Woolaroc Museum . Besides overusing his presidential power, Jackson undoubtedly disturbed the rights of the Native Americans by allowing the Trail of Tears. Not only were Native Americans mistreated under Jackson, but also free Blacks, women, immigrants, and slaves.

The problem of free Blacks and immigrants during the Age of Jackson was demonstrated by their tendency to rebel. Commenting on the constant riots caused by prejudice of Jackson, Philip Hone wrote in his diary that the fights between Americans and the minorities (Irish) disturbed the peace of America. Later, in 1834, he indicated that the root cause of this riot was due to the hostility to the blacks and to those whose skins were darker than Whites. This document points out the obvious lack of equality and freedom for all citizens in America. Jackson, a slaveholder himself, was not an abolitionist; Jackson even supported the 1836 "Gag Rule" which laid out abolitionist petitions to Congress. As seen above, it is ironic how Jackson could call himself an advocate of liberty while millions of Americans were enslaved, some under his control.

While Jacksonian Democrats may have been hypocritical calling themselves the guardians of the Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty and equal economic activity, they did do many things that encouraged each of these things. Their actions may have been more influenced by self-interest than by the good of the people at some point, but they followed through on their democratic beliefs. For these reasons, Jacksonian Democrats were more developers and helpers than guardians of these democratic foundations.

While thinking and saying one thing, the Jacksonians would often do something completely different. This idea of being different from others played an important role in many political topics. It eventually grew to help for many of the ideas that we hold true today, that allow the United States to grow even more powerful and better than ever in conflict and in ideology.