

# Jacksonian democracy essay sample

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



Jacksonian Democrats viewed themselves as the guardians of the United States Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty, and equality of economic opportunity. In the light of the following documents and your knowledge of the 1820's and the 1830's, to what extent do you agree with the Jacksonians' view of themselves?

Patrons and devotees of Andrew Jackson believed themselves to be the guardians of the Constitution and the common people, as well as taking credit for an increase in universal male suffrage during the 1820's and 1830's. However, the issues of slavery, states rights, women's rights, the removal of the Native Americans and the national bank recharter and veto proposed many challenges than the Jacksonians could fruitfully handle. Jackson only protected the Constitution's content when it benefited himself or ran parallel to his ideas of government. He thought that he was the highest branch of the US government, even though the Constitution explains how all branches are equal. Instead of being the guardians, the Jacksonian Democrats were more of the beneficiaries of political democracy.

Jacksonian Democrats considered themselves the guardians of individual liberty, but they should have really called themselves the guardians of the individual liberty for white American men. Jackson was notorious for his open dislike of the Native American population in the United States. In 1830, he ignored Supreme Court rulings that recognized the Indians' rights to stay in the land they had settled centuries before the first settlers came, and forced them to migrate on the "Trail of Tears" through the Indian Removal Act. This made entire families move with all the belongings they could carry, as

captured in Document G, from Georgia to Oklahoma in 1838. Moreover, Jackson also discriminated against women.

He discouraged the up-and-coming Women's Rights movement and supported the Cult of Domesticity, also known as the Cult of True Womanhood, which essentially encouraged women to dedicate their lives to being good mothers and wives. Under the Jacksonian Democracy, Blacks and immigrants faced discrimination, as shown through their tendency to riot in cities. Philip Hone once addressed these in his diary, stating that, "dreadful riots between the Irish and the Americans have again disturbed the public peace", and also that, "The spirit of riot and insubordination...has made its appearance in...Philadelphia, and appears to have been produced by causes equally insignificant hostility to the blacks and an indiscriminate persecution of all whose skins were darker than those of their enlightened fellow citizens" (Doc. E). Clearly, those people were not a part of the "common man" (such as himself) for whom he fought so hard to help defend their individual liberties.

Equal economic opportunity was something Jacksonian Democrats defended well. An example of this is the case of Charles River Bridge v Warren Bridge in 1837. Two bridges were given charters to be built on the same river connecting the same two cities, Boston and Cambridge. The first bridge, the Charles River Bridge was given rights in 1785 by Massachusetts's legislation to be built and collect tolls. In 1828, the Warren Bridge was chartered, set to be built within a close proximity of the Charles River Bridge and was not charging tolls. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a Jacksonian Democrat, ruled in

favor of the Warren Bridge, saying that while the Charles River Bridge were allowed to maintain their bridge and charge their tolls, “ there is no exclusive privilege given to them over the waters of Charles River,” meaning they could not monopolize the area (Doc. H). This granted a chance at economic success, not only to the proprietors of the Warren Bridge, but also to the community using the bridges who had to pay the tolls. Furthermore, Jacksonian Democracy’s effects on the economy did not go unnoticed beyond just a court case. When Harriet Martineau visited the United States in 1834, she reported, “ The striking effect upon a stranger of witnessing, for the first time, the absence of poverty...cannot be exaggerated in description” (Doc. D). Her observations, however, were rendered unfitting during the time of publication, 1837, because at that time the United States had entered a depression.

At this time, Jacksonian Democrats had dubbed themselves guardians of the United States Constitution. Andrew Jackson himself did his best when it came to acting like a guardian of the United States Constitution, but for the most part he only upheld it when it benefitted him, his popularity, or was in accordance to his own beliefs. In 1832, President Jackson signed the Tariff of 1832 into law. This tariff was to compromise for the Tariff of 1828, and it gained the support of most northerners and half of the southerners in Congress. South Carolina, however, was not pleased with the reduction and declared, through the Nullification Ordinance, that the Tariffs of 1828 and 1832 be nullified in South Carolina because they were unconstitutional.

When the vice president at the time John Calhoun voiced his support for South Carolina's uprising, saying that himself and others felt the tariff unfairly targeted the southern states, and that the states were not obligated by the U. S. Constitution to follow the law, negotiations began to calm the storm. Eventually, Jackson loosened the tariff to make it more favorable for the South. This illustrated his attempt to uphold the federal powers outlined in the Constitution and prevent individual states from claiming rights not granted to them. South Carolina repealed its Nullification Ordinance in 1833. This was not the last time South Carolina would be ready and willing to deny enforcement of any federal law or the upholding of any constitutional right that negatively affected their state, the next issue being slaveholding-related, and only 2 years after the Nullification Crisis (Doc. F).

All and all, Jacksonian Democrats upheld their title self-proclaimed title of guardians of equality of economic opportunity, individual liberty, and the United States Constitution, in the loosest sense of the word. Where the economy was concerned, under Jackson the United States was prosperous until the very end, when Jackson made the decision to eliminate the national bank because “ the present Bank of the United States...enjoys an exclusive privilege of banking...almost a monopoly of the foreign and domestic exchange”(Doc. B) and led the nation into the Panic of 1837. Where individual liberties were concerned, Jacksonian Democrats favored white males, as long as they were not immigrants. Nevertheless, they did all that was in their power to make sure they were given the greatest amount of liberties as constitutionally possible. Where the United States Constitution was concerned, Andrew Jackson made decisions that would reflect well upon

their political party, usually resulting in an appeasement of some kind. But, within that appeasement was peace. Andrew Jackson was always worried about the common man and their rights, which is why he was a very liked president.