

Andrew Jackson – The Peoples President

Andrew Jackson was born in 1767 on the South Carolina frontier. His father died before he was born, leaving the family in poverty. Jackson's childhood ended at the age of 13 when he joined the local militia and was captured by the British during the American Revolution. When ordered to polish a British officer's boots, Jackson refused, earning a sword slash



that left lifelong scars. After the war, Jackson decided to become a lawyer. He went to work in a law office in North Carolina, where he quickly became known as “the most roaring, rollicking, game-cocking, horse-racing, card-playing, mischievous fellow” in town. In 1788, Jackson headed west to practice law in Nashville, Tennessee, then a tiny frontier settlement of rough cabins and tents. The town grew quickly, and Jackson's practice grew with it. He soon earned enough money to buy land and slaves, setting himself up as a gentleman farmer.

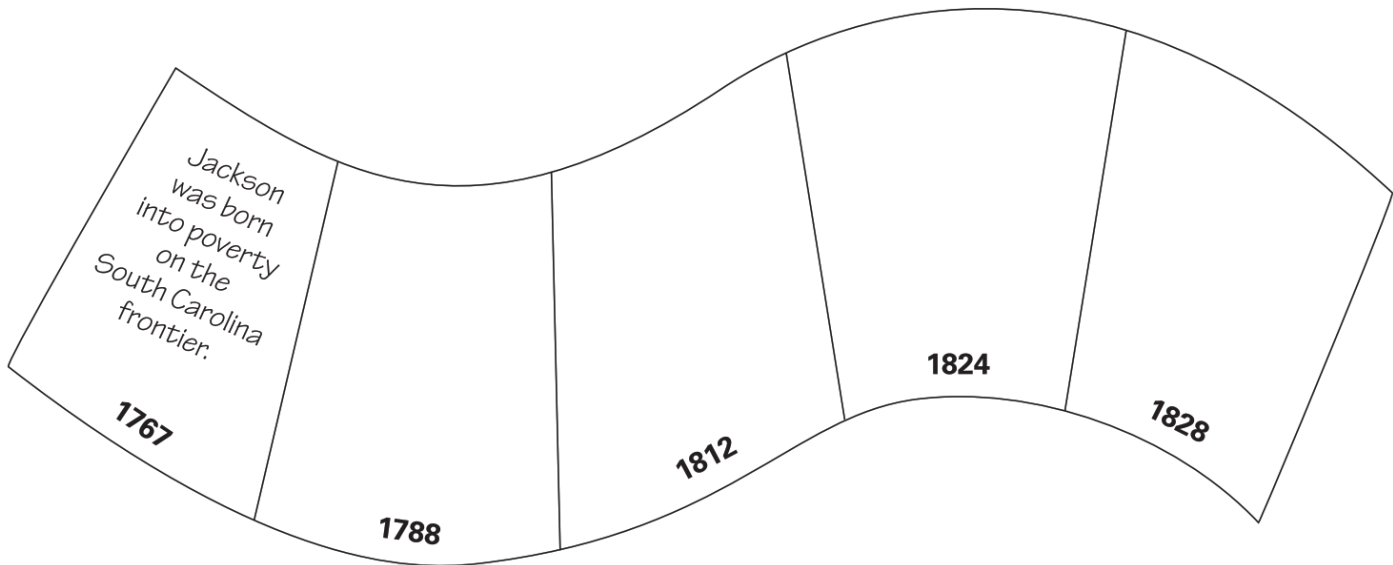
The People's Choice - Jackson entered politics in Tennessee, serving in both the House and Senate. However, he did not become widely known until the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, where his defense of the city made “Old Hickory” a national hero. In 1824, Jackson ran for president against three other candidates: Henry Clay, William Crawford, and John Quincy Adams. Jackson won the most popular votes as well as the most electoral votes but did not have enough electoral votes for a majority. When no candidate has an electoral majority, the House of Representatives chooses a president from among the three leading candidates. Clay, who had come in fourth, urged his supporters in the House to vote for Adams. That support gave Adams enough votes to be elected president. In return, Adams chose Clay to be his secretary of state. Jackson's supporters accused Adams and Clay of making a “corrupt bargain” to rob their hero of his rightful election. Jackson's supporters used the time between elections to build a new political organization, the Democratic Party, which promised to represent ordinary farmers, workers, and the poor. In the election of 1828, Jackson's supporters worked hard to reach the nation's voters. They organized parades, picnics, and rallies, where supporters sang “The Hunters of Kentucky,” the nation's first campaign song, and cheered for Old Hickory. The result was a great victory for Jackson and for the idea that common people should control their government, a belief that became known as **Jacksonian Democracy**.

The Inauguration of Andrew Jackson - On March 4, 1829, more than 10,000 people from every state crowded into Washington, D.C., to witness Andrew Jackson's inauguration. Local hotels were overwhelmed, with visitors sleeping five to a bed. “I never saw such a crowd here before,” observed Senator Daniel Webster. “Persons have come five hundred miles to see General Jackson, and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from some dreadful disaster!” Many people flocking to the capital were first-time voters. Until the 1820s, voting was limited to white men with property. However, new western states challenged this, believing all men—rich or poor—should share the same rights, including the right to vote. Voting laws were changed, giving over one million Americans the right to vote in 1828, more than three times the number who voted in 1824. While African Americans, American Indians, and women were still excluded, many new voters felt they had rescued the country from corrupt “monied interests.” After Jackson was sworn in, a huge crowd followed him to the White House, where the celebration turned into chaos. “Ladies fainted, men were seen with bloody noses, and such a scene of confusion took place as is impossible to describe,” wrote an eyewitness, Margaret Bayard Smith.

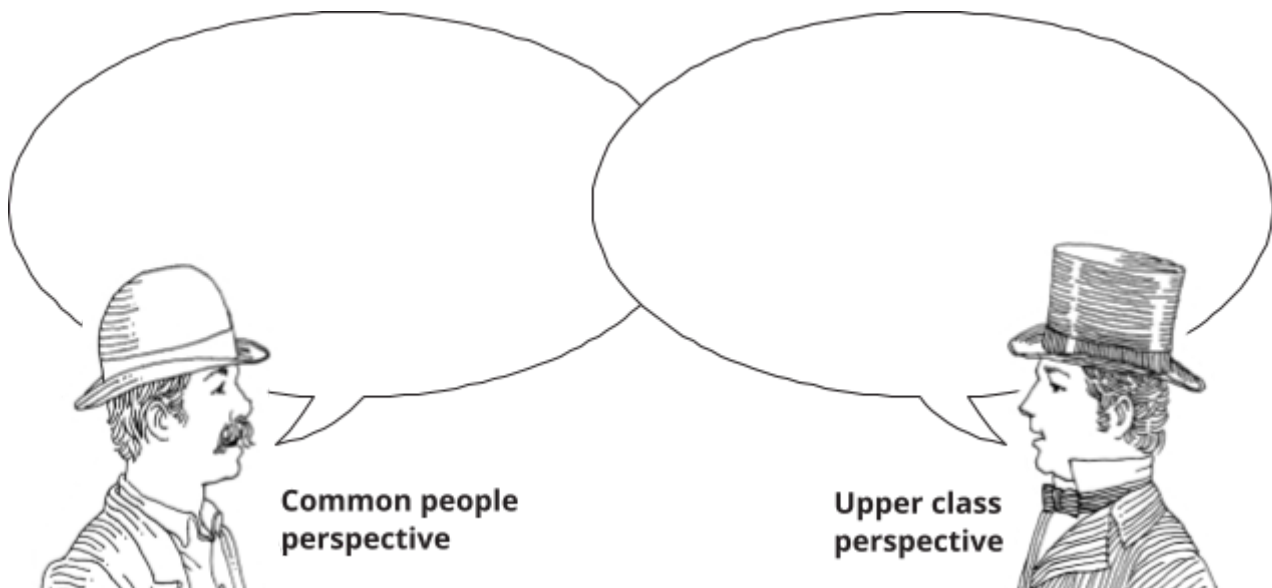


Jackson's Approach to Governing - Andrew Jackson approached governing much as he had leading an army: he listened to others but did what he thought was right. Instead of relying solely on his cabinet, Jackson often sought advice from trusted friends and political supporters, known as his “kitchen cabinet.” Wealthy elites viewed this group with suspicion, claiming they were unfit to influence government decisions. Jackson ignored the criticism and continued to rely on those he trusted. Jackson replaced many Republican officeholders with loyal Democrats. He believed rotating officeholders was more democratic, allowing more people the chance to serve. Critics called this the spoils system, from the saying “to the victor belong the spoils of war.”

1. Complete this road map of Andrew Jackson's journey from the frontier to the White House. In each space, write a sentence explaining the date's significance.



2. How did voting change in the election of 1828?
3. Add dialogue in the speech bubbles to reflect what the common people and the upper class might have thought about Andrew Jackson. Use these words in your dialogue: Democratic Party, Jacksonian Democracy. Underline the words in each speech bubble.



4. What is the "spoils system"?