The “Rowdy Inauguration” of 1828

“Cut glass and china to the amount of several thousand dollars had been broken in the struggle to get the refreshments, whiskey punch and other articles had been carried out in tubs and buckets, but had it been in hogsheads it would have been insufficient...Ladies fainted, men were seen with bloody noses, and such a scene of confusion took place as is impossible to describe...”
The “Rowdy Inauguration” of 1828

- The election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 gave rise to a new era in American politics.

- Jackson - who was previously upset in the controversial 1824 election, due to the “corrupt bargain” between Clay and JQA, was a man of the people. Nicknamed “King Mob”

- Jackson’s election to office was due in large part to a growing trend in American politics of loosening suffrage laws for white men.

- As urban centers grew, many states removed property ownership as a requirement for voting rights. Voting participation increased from 27 to 58% (1824-1828)
Jackson’s Early Life

- Roots trace back to the back country of the Carolinas

- Father died prior to his birth

- Mother raised him with a strict protestant upbringing (hard working mentality) She died of cholera when Andrew was only 15

- Family was poor and Andrew received a very sporadic education

- Enlisted in the Colonial Army for the Revolutionary War at age 13 with his two older brothers. Both died because of the war.

- Jackson’s hatred of the British was further increased after being gashed in the face by a British officer after he defiantly refused to clean his boots
Jackson’s Early Life

- After the Rev. War, Jackson went to school and studied law and passed the bar exam in N. Carolina.

- He moved to Nashville, TN where he worked as a lawyer, and later a state representative and senator to congress. Jackson also served as a judge on the state supreme court.

- Met Rachel Donelson (married to Lewis Robards) in 1789 and entered a relationship in 1790 while Rachel was still married.

- Jackson protected Rachel from the very beginning of their relationship, one considered bigamous, and he was a passionate defender of her honor - reportedly 13 duels in her name alone.

- Two sons - including an adopted son from an indian tribe Jackson had conducted military assaults against.
Jackson's Military Career

- Jackson's loyalties and political views were strongly tied to the western territories where he grew up and lived.

- In the territories primary concerns were protection from Indians, issues with the Spanish and later British in the Mississippi and Florida.

- Concern and mistrust of the urban Federalists elites.

- The war of 1812 solidified in Jackson's mind the weakness of the Federalist party and the need to remove Indians away from white society. Joined the TN militia and led a successful campaign against the Red Stick Creeks at Horseshoe Bend in 1814 and later against the British at New Orleans. Nicknamed "Old Hickory".

- After the war, Jackson rose to national prominence on a scale not seen since Washington. He championed equality (despite owning several hundred slaves) and was known for his short temper (100 duels). Above all, he cherished the preservation of the Union (strict constructionist).
The Era of the Common Man
The Rise of Mass Politics

- Although Jackson sees himself as a follower of Jefferson - he is far from a Jeffersonian Republican. In fact, Jefferson remarked that Jackson was unfit for office.

- Jefferson “Government for the People” = republic (group of educated elites with good intentions)

- Jackson “Government by the People” = direct democracy (popularity contest/mob power)

- Jackson is the first of the modern “democrats” - he was labeled an ill-tempered jackass by opponents; he kept the animal as party symbol
Upon assuming office, Jackson implements the “spoils system” which is replacing existing public officials based solely on party loyalty rather than merit (emergence of party politics).

Jackson also moves to end congressional caucuses to allow more input from the people.

Jackson’s support comes from: the frontier, southern planter elite, state appointed loyalists and immigrants.

“To the victors belong the spoils” - William Marcy
Attacking the Empire of Entrenched Elites

- Jackson sought to limit federal power in Washington as he viewed it as elitism.
- He held great faith in the “common man”
- **John C. Calhoun and Nullification:** Calhoun, sees the Tariff of 1816 as the main culprit in the stagnate economy.
- He therefore suggests the notion of Nullification which argues that the Union, being made up by the states, is therefore subject to review by the states. *i.e.* the states get the final say on constitutionality.
(meanwhile...) The Peggy Eaton Affair

- Peggy Eaton, wife of Jackson’s Sec. of War, John Eaton was rumored to have had an affair as a younger women that caused the death of her first husband.

- While never proved, it led to many discrediting her and she was socially isolated by the other wives in Washington DC

- Jackson (remembering what Rachel went through) demanded his cabinet members force their wives to include Peggy.

- John Calhoun sided with his wife leading to a bigger rift between the two rivals and Calhoun was eventually replaced.
Nullification Crisis Continues

- **1828 Tariff of Abominations** by government angers S. Carolina legislature.

- **1830 - Webster-Hayne** debate fuels discussion over whether or not states can nullify federal laws.
  - Webster - “Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.”
  - Jackson responds “Our Federal Union - it must be preserved”
  - Calhoun (at the annual Jefferson Day dinner) “The Union, next to our liberty, most dear”

- In 1832, S.C. votes to nullify tariffs led by Robert Hayne and John Calhoun. Jackson threatens to invade S.C. with military to enforce compliance. A “compromise” of gradual tariff reduction was brokered by Henry Clay in 1833
Indian Removal Policy

- Jackson’s view of Indians was different from many of his contemporaries. He felt they were incapable of living near white settlements; “untamed savages”
- Indian Removal Act, 1830 - allowed president to negotiate treaties to buy tribal land
- Treaty of New Echota, 1835 - Jackson negotiates with a fraction of the “Five Tribes” which is then forcibly applied to entire group.
Indian Removal Policy

- “Five Civilized Tribes” - Cherokee
- Cherokee Nation v. Georgia 1831 and later Worcester v. Georgia 1832 - Marshall court rules that “the relationship of the national gov’t to the indian tribes is one of a ward to its guardian” and that they were “subject to the protection of the federal gov’t from the states”
- “John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it.”
- In 1838, Pres. Van Buren forced the movement of over 17,000 Cherokee to the Oklahoma terr.
  - Only 8,000 natives survived the forced march
Jackson nullifies Maysville Road, 1830

- **Maysville Turnpike Road** was a project that both Henry Clay and John Calhoun had long been connected with.
- The proposed project was completely within the state of Kentucky.
- Jackson - still angry over the Eaton Affair - and starkly opposed to using Federal funds for local projects vetoes the bill.
- Because the road lay only in Kentucky he viewed it as a state project.
- While not significant at the time, Jackson’s policy of vetoing state road and railways set in motion a precedent of all railroads being privately funded up until 1850 - which will result in a few wealthy owners monopolizing the industry in the mid to late 1800s.
Jackson saw the National Bank as a concentration of power for the wealthy.

Argued: Concentration of wealth into single institution, exposed gov’t to foreign investment, served only the wealthy, corrupted Congress and favored NE states over others.

The bank’s mismanagement earlier had led to the Panic of 1819, something Jackson remembered well.

“I am ready with the screws to draw every tooth and then the stumps” - A. Jackson
Jackson and the Bank Monster

- Jackson attacks Biddle (head of the Bank)
- Veto’s the 1832 renewal of bank charter. Jackson also removes federal funds from the National Bank and moves them to the state banks to be distributed at the local level.
- Local banks produce too much paper currency causing inflation
- In 1836, Jackson mandates specie circular; backfires causing a deep depression and hurting the poor
Assassination Attempt

- Jackson’s war against the bank led to the first assassination attempt against a US president.

- Richard Lawrence blamed the lack of money and the poor economy on Jackson’s hard currency policy.
  
  - On Jan 30, 1835, Lawrence discharged two separate pistols both misfired due to moisture in the air.

- Added to the Jacksonian aura of a tough no-nonsense leader.
Assessing the Jackson Era

- Jackson and his supporters hoped to create an America in the Jeffersonian vision - limited federal gov’t with republican virtues of equality.
- In the Jacksonian view, the alliance of government and business was always an invitation to special favors and eternal corruption (National Bank) He felt a National Bank would only support the wealthy elites and that the common man would be restricted from opportunity
- Therefore, Jackson sought to end any special privileges to the wealthy and instead allow free competition to determine the marketplace; *free market capitalism*
Assessing the Jackson Era

- However, Jackson’s “free market” policy has unintended consequences.
- By removing the Federal Bank and encouraging a “laissez-faire” attitude, Jackson removed any form of government oversight which results in an unrestrained environment for a new wealthy elite to form and reshape economic power.
- In his attempt to remove restraints against the common man, Jackson instead made it easier for the wealthy elites to increase holdings and dominate future policy.
- Additionally, the economic standing of the “common man” did not increase under Jackson and many of the most disenfranchised (women, slaves, natives) saw no change at all.
- Finally, Jackson saw himself as a defender of democracy for the common man. Yet his actions often contradicted his beliefs. While the union was protected and political participation was opened up, Jackson often solidified power under himself to make changes.
Questions to consider

- Did Jacksonians defend the principles of the Constitution, democracy, equality and liberty?
- How do we view Jackson as a president? Defender or destroyer of democracy?
- **The Jacksonian Era has been included on the AP US History exam as an essay prompt more than any other presidential era.**