

Election Fever

“The election fever which is constantly raging through the land . . . engrosses every conversation, it irritates every temper, it substitutes party spirit for personal esteem. . . .”

—Frances Trollope, comments on the election of 1832

◀ Supporters of Andrew Jackson were proud of his military exploits and elected him President.

The Age of Jackson

Objectives

Discuss the conflict between Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams over the election of 1824.

Explain how the right to vote expanded in the United States.

Describe Andrew Jackson’s victory in the election of 1828.

Reading Skill

Identify Short-Term Effects Some events have effects that take place shortly after the event. Other events create changes that last only a short time. Both of these types of effects are short-term effects. As you read Section 3, look for examples of short-term effects of events.

Key Terms and People

Andrew Jackson	nominating convention
suffrage	spoils system
caucus	

Why It Matters The Constitution had established a system based on representative government. But not all citizens could fully participate in the early American republic. During the Age of Jackson, however, the democratic spirit grew and more Americans played an active role in government.

Section Focus Question: How did the people gain more power during the Age of Jackson?

Adams and Jackson in Conflict

Andrew Jackson served two terms as President, from 1829 to 1837. His presidency marked the opening of a new and more democratic era in American political life. So great was his influence that the twenty-year period after he became President is often called the Age of Jackson.

Andrew Jackson was a wealthy man by the time he became President. However, he began life with very little. Born in a log cabin on the border of North and South Carolina, he was an orphan by the age of 14. Jackson was ambitious, brave, and tough. He survived smallpox as a child and severe gunshot wounds as an adult.

During a difficult march with his troops in 1812, one soldier described him as “tough as hickory.” Hickory trees are extremely strong, and their wood is very hard. The description fit Jackson so well that it stuck as a nickname. Jackson became known as Old Hickory.

Jackson stood for the idea that ordinary people should participate in American political life. As a general and later as President, Andrew Jackson was deeply loved by millions of ordinary Americans. They loved him for his humble beginnings and his firm leadership.

Vocabulary Builder

react (ree AKT) *v.* to act in response to another action

The Election of 1824 Jackson first ran for President in 1824. His opponents were John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and William H. Crawford of Georgia. Jackson received the most electoral votes, but not a majority. According to the Constitution, the House of Representatives would have to decide the election.

The choice was between Jackson and Adams, the two who had received the most votes. As Speaker of the House, Clay had great influence. He told his supporters to vote for Adams. The House then elected Adams on the first ballot.

Jackson reacted with fury. He had won the most popular votes and the most electoral votes, but still had lost the election. When Adams appointed Clay secretary of state, Jackson's supporters claimed the two men had made a "corrupt bargain."

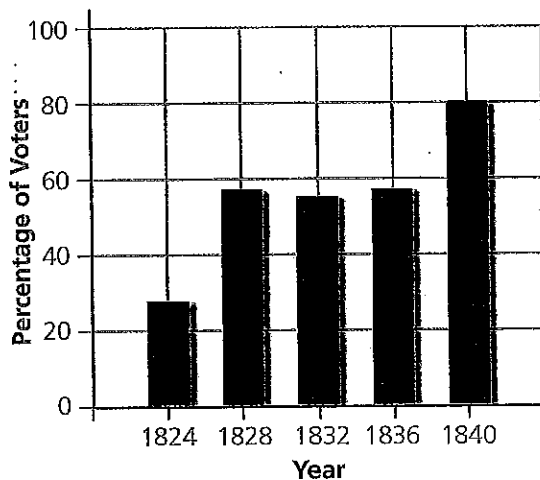
The Presidency of John Quincy Adams Adams was burdened by the charges of a secret deal. He accomplished little, even though he had ambitious plans for the nation. He supported Clay's American System and wanted the federal government to play a larger role in supporting the American economy.

Adams proposed a national program to build roads and canals and a high tariff to protect industry. He also planned to set up a national university and an observatory for astronomers in Washington, D.C. However, he lacked the political skill to push his programs through Congress. Adams never won the trust of the American people. As a result, he served only one term.

● INFOGRAPHIC

Democracy in Action

Voter Participation in Presidential Elections, 1824-1840



The Age of Jackson saw the first stirrings of democracy in action in the United States. More men could and did vote, and many more people joined political parties and participated in election campaigns.

It would be many years until women and African Americans also gained the right to vote. However, the kinds of political contests that are familiar to Americans today had their beginnings in the presidential elections of the 1820s and 1830s. **Critical Thinking:** *Draw Conclusions* Why would people become more actively involved in political campaigns as the right to vote was extended to new groups?

Despite his failures, Adams was an eloquent supporter of what he saw as America's special place in the world. He stated his ideas in a Fourth of July speech in 1821. He said the United States had no designs on the territory of other nations:

“Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her [America's] heart, . . . and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all.”

—John Quincy Adams, Fourth of July 1821 Address

✓ **Checkpoint** Why did Jackson's supporters claim there had been a “corrupt bargain” in the election of 1824?

A New Era in Politics

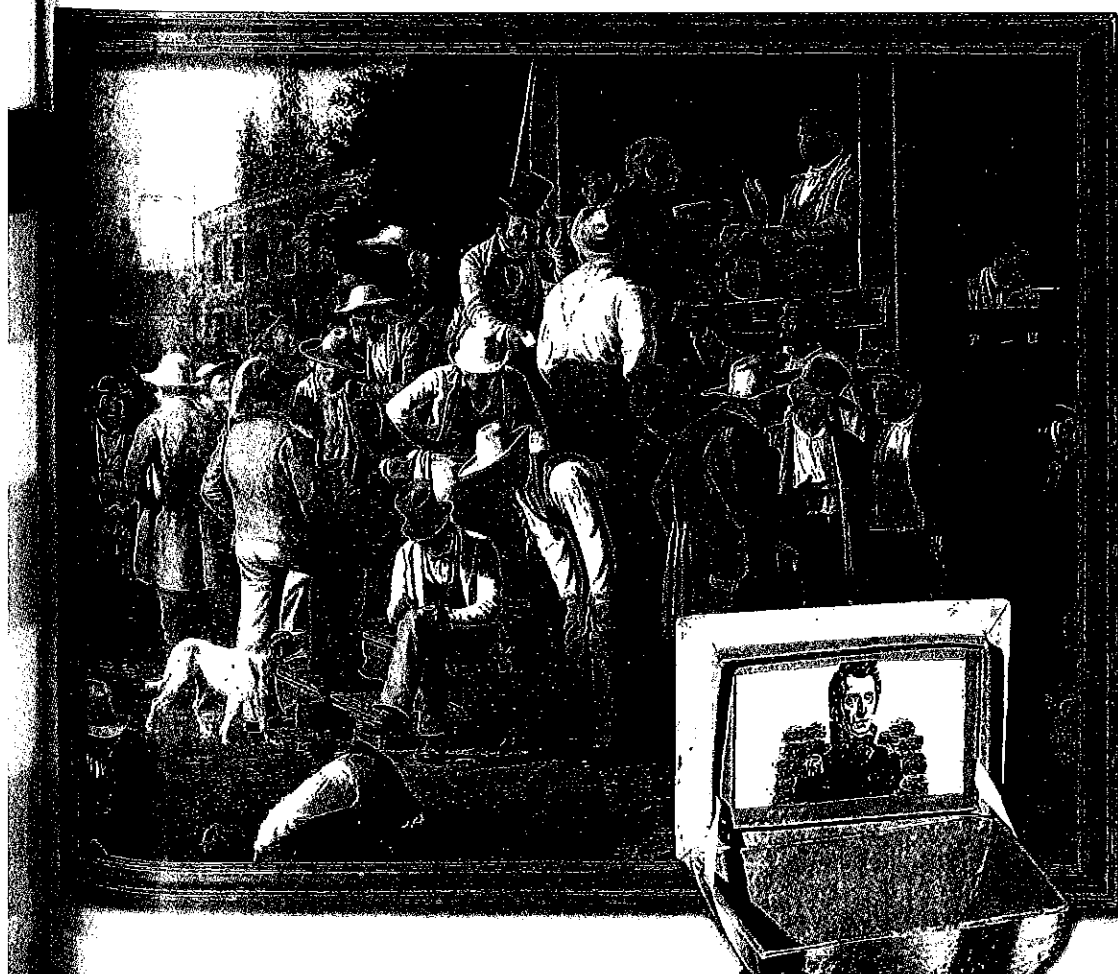
The election of 1824 disappointed Andrew Jackson and his followers. Still, that election began a new era in American politics.

Back in the 1790s, states had begun extending suffrage—the right to vote. Many states dropped the requirement that men had to own property to be able to participate in voting. Voting requirements varied slightly from state to state. However, almost all adult white males now could vote and hold office.

Vocabulary Builder

participate (pahɪ ˈtiːs əh ˈpeɪt)

v. to take part in; to share in an activity



◀ *The County Election*,
George Caleb Bingham

◀ Portrait of Andrew
Jackson shown inside
a souvenir box from
an early presidential
campaign.

Biography Quest

Andrew Jackson
1767–1845

Andrew Jackson was a Tennessee landowner, lawyer, and judge. His military campaigns against the British in the War of 1812 and against Native Americans in Florida made him a war hero. Political opponents called him a country hick. But supporters admired him as a self-made man who spoke out for ordinary people. His election as President was a sign that the United States was becoming a more democratic nation.

Biography Quest Online

How did Jackson gain a reputation as a supporter of ordinary people?

For: The answer to the question about Jackson

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Identify Short-Term Effects

What was the immediate effect of using nominating conventions to choose presidential candidates?

States also were changing how they chose presidential electors. Previously, state legislatures chose them. Now, that right went to the voters. In 1824, voters chose the presidential electors in 18 out of 24 states.

Of course, suffrage was still restricted in the United States. Women could not participate in government. Nor could enslaved African Americans, male or female. In most states, even free African Americans could not vote.

Democracy in the Age of Jackson

Extending the right to vote was part of a larger spread of democratic ideas. Supporters of Andrew Jackson believed that ordinary people should vote in elections, hold public office, and do anything else they had the ability to do. Jackson's supporters strongly opposed special privileges for those of high social status.

Wealthy observers were sometimes dismayed by this spirit of equality. One visitor complained, "the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the polite and the vulgar, all . . . feed at the same table."


Jackson and his supporters did not trust government. They believed it often favored the rich and powerful. The Jacksonians also were suspicious of banks, which they believed favored the rich.

New Political Parties The Age of Jackson

brought back the two-party system that had briefly ended during the Era of Good Feelings. During the 1824 election, the Republican Party split. Supporters of Adams called themselves National Republicans. Jackson's supporters used the name Democrats.

In 1831, the National Republicans nominated Henry Clay to run against Jackson. Jackson won easily, with strength in all parts of the country. However, by 1836, the anti-Jackson forces had formed a new party, the Whigs. From then until 1852, the Democrats and the Whigs were the country's two major political parties.

The new parties adopted a new way of choosing their presidential candidates. Previously, a party's members of Congress held a **caucus**—a meeting of members of a political party. These caucuses involved only a small group of people. Beginning in 1831, political parties started holding **national nominating conventions**—large meetings of party delegates to choose candidates for office. National conventions opened the nominating process to many more people and made it more democratic.

 **Checkpoint** Which groups did not benefit from increased suffrage in the United States?

Jackson Becomes President

Three times as many people voted in the election of 1828 as had voted in 1824. Most of these new voters supported Jackson, who easily defeated Adams.

The election revealed growing sectional and class divisions among American voters. Jackson did best in the West and the South, where planters and small farmers supported him. He also did well among small business people, artisans, and workers in cities and towns nationwide. Adams was most popular in his home region of New England.

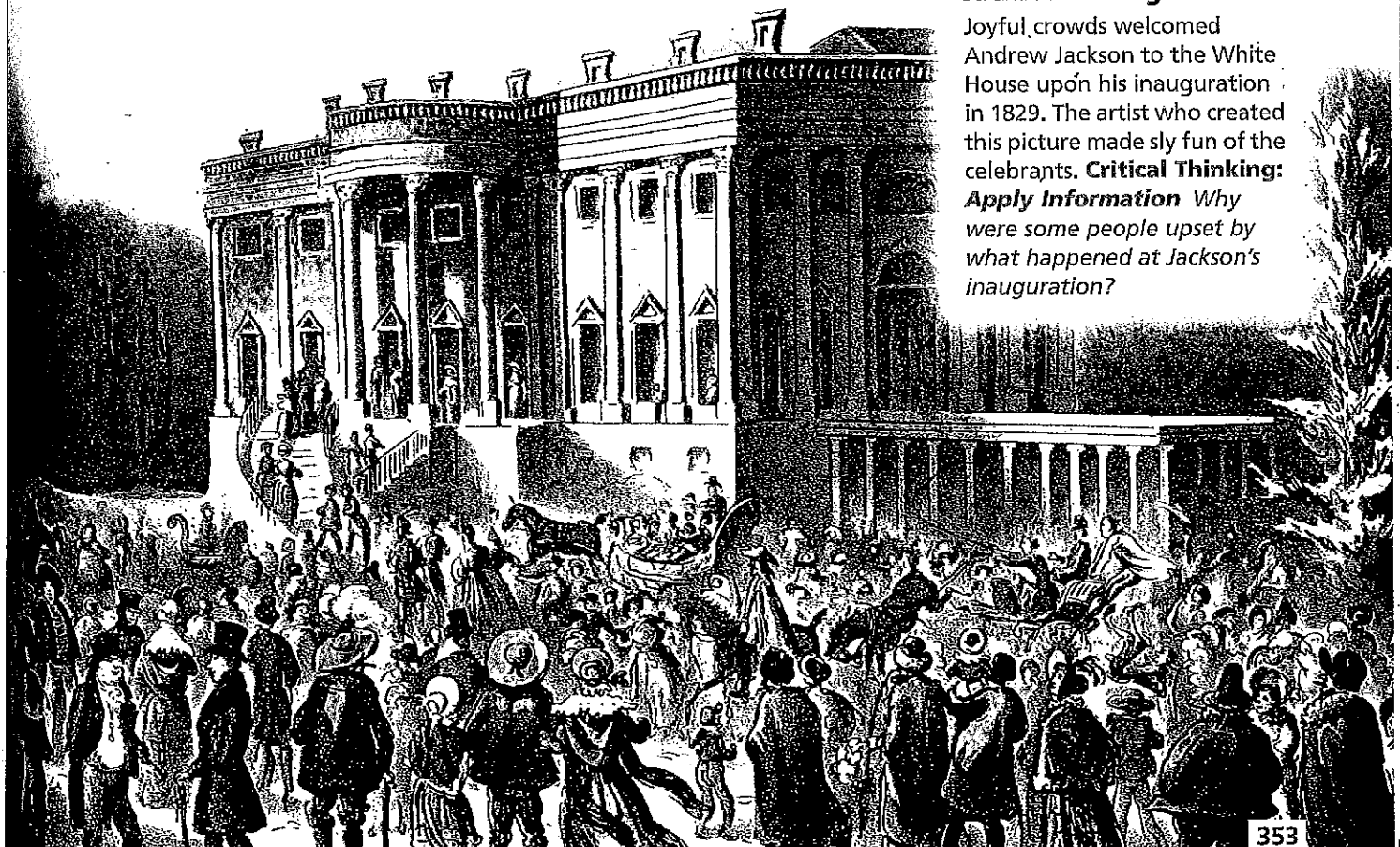
Jackson's Inauguration Jackson's supporters called the election a victory for the "common man." His inauguration in March 1829 showed what they meant. Thousands of ordinary working people jammed into Washington for the event. After the inauguration at the Capitol, Jackson rode a horse to the White House. A journalist described the scene:

“As far as the eye could reach, the sidewalks of the Avenue were covered with people on foot . . . with . . . carriages and persons on horseback. . . For a full half hour, I stood waiting for the stream to run by; but like a never failing fountain people continued pouring forth.”

—Amos Kendall in the *Argus of Western America*,
March 29, 1829

Jackson's Inauguration

Joyful crowds welcomed Andrew Jackson to the White House upon his inauguration in 1829. The artist who created this picture made sly fun of the celebrants. **Critical Thinking:** **Apply Information** Why were some people upset by what happened at Jackson's inauguration?



Twenty thousand people crowded in and around the White House for a reception in Jackson's honor. They did not all behave well. Some broke furniture, spilled drinks, trampled rugs, and broke several thousand dollars worth of glassware and dishes. Officials finally lured the unruly crowd outside by moving the punch bowl onto the White House lawn.

Jackson's opponents were shocked. One member of the Supreme Court complained about the "reign of King Mob." A Jackson supporter saw things more positively: "It was the People's day, and the People's President, and the People would rule."

The Spoils of Victory Jackson began his term by replacing some government officials with his supporters. Previous Presidents had done the same thing. In fact, during his two terms Jackson replaced only about 20 percent of federal officeholders.

The difference was that Jackson openly defended what he was doing. He claimed putting new people into government jobs furthered democracy. One of his supporters put it more selfishly when he compared the process to a conquering army after a war, saying "to the victors belong the spoils [loot]." People quickly applied the term **spoils system** to the practice of rewarding government jobs to loyal supporters of the party that wins an election.

 **Checkpoint** How did Andrew Jackson justify the spoils system?

★ **Looking Back and Ahead** As President, Andrew Jackson supported the right of ordinary people to participate in government. Jackson's belief in equality, however, left out many, including Native Americans. In the next section, you will read how government policies denied basic rights to Native Americans.

Section 3 | Check Your Progress

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Recall** What was the "corrupt bargain"?
(b) **Evaluate Information** Who benefited from accusations of a "corrupt bargain"?
2. (a) **Recall** How did the United States become more democratic between the 1790s and the 1830s?
(b) **Draw Conclusions** How did these democratic changes contribute to Jackson's election in 1828?

Reading Skill

3. **Identify Short-Term Effects**
What was the immediate effect when Henry Clay told his supporters to vote for Adams?

Key Terms

Read each sentence below. If the sentence is true, write YES. If the sentence is not true, write NO and explain why.

4. By 1828, suffrage had been extended to white women and African Americans.
5. In 1824, a nominating convention chose John Quincy Adams to run for President.

6. Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens showed up for the caucus celebrating Jackson's victory.

Writing

7. Using vivid, specific words will make your writing livelier and more accurate. Rewrite these sentences using more specific, colorful words. **Sentences:** Many people liked Andrew Jackson, and he was very popular. People liked Jackson better than John Quincy Adams. They felt Jackson was a man of the people and Adams was not a man of the people.