**Question 1:**

The nature of the American Revolution has been a subject of debate among historians for decades. Two of the most influential and contrasting viewpoints in this debate are those of Gordon S. Wood and Howard Zinn. While Wood argues that the Revolution was a radical and transformative event that created a new society based on republican principles and egalitarian values, Zinn believes that the Revolution was an elitist movement that preserved the interests and power of the wealthy at the expense of the majority. Although both historians present compelling cases, I believe Zinn's argument presents a more critical interpretation of the Revolution that challenges the common narrative of American history and encourages us to reconsider and review our understanding of American society.

One of the main arguments that Howard Zinn made in his book, *A People's History of the United States*, was that the American Revolution was not a social revolution, but rather a way for the colonial elite to gain more power at the expense of the common folk. In order to project his message, Zinn tells the narrative of the Revolution from the perspective of oppressed and marginalized groups, such as the poor, the slaves, the women, and the Native Americans; the men and women who did not benefit from the war as much as the wealthy and powerful. He shows how the leaders of the war used propaganda and violence to manipulate and control the masses and to deflect their anger towards England. Zinn argues that one of the major concerns of the colonial elite before and during the war was social control. They feared that the poor masses would rise up in rebellion against them and challenge their authority and privilege. To prevent this, they found a strategy to channel their discontent towards England and its loyalists, who were portrayed as the enemy and the oppressors. In order to back his claims, Zinn provides evidence in the form of many rebellions that occurred in colonial America by stating,“Starting with Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia, by 1760, there had been eighteen uprisings aimed at overthrowing colonial governments. There had also been six black rebellions… (Zinn 243)” He then goes on to show how these rebellions were expressions of class conflict and resistance to exploitation and injustice. Zinn also analyzes how propaganda was used to persuade the neutral portion of the colonists to join the patriots. He focuses on two influential and widely regarded documents; Common Sense by Thomas Paine and the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson. He argues that these documents used simple and appealing language to convince the people that independence was necessary and inevitable and also made promises that were not fulfilled after the war. Zinn claims that these documents were designed to serve the interests of the elite and to justify their domination over the rest of society. His argument as a whole seems to be based on a critique of the social and racial inequalities that have existed prior to and following the Revolution and his belief that the Revolution was not a genuine revolt of the people, but a manipulation by the colonial elites who feared losing their privileges under British rule is a viable alternative to the familiar narrative we have all heard.

Gordon S. Wood is another historian who, in his piece titled *The War for Independence Was a Social Revolution*, argues that “The American Revolution was a transforming event that greatly altered the lives of all Americans (Wood 256).” In order to push this claim, Wood points out that the event is often considered one of the greatest and most successful revolutions the world has seen. As a matter of fact, he states that the American Revolution is hardly a revolution at all when compared to other modern revolutions because of how different the conditions after the revolution were from would have been expected. He uses this very argument, comparing the American Revolution to other revolutions, in order to continually put the idea of class conflict out of the picture. Wood also brings up that the ideals proposed in the Declaration of Independence, although not initially implemented into the constitution by the founding fathers, were later implemented into the living document. This perfectly leads to Wood’s belief that the American War for Independence was responsible for the greatest social change in American history because it unleashed equality, liberty, and democracy while marking the end of special privilege, hereditary rights, and privilege. His main claim seems to be that the Revolution was not just a war against Britain, but a struggle to create a new kind of nation that rejected tyranny and corruption. He emphasizes the role of participation from the population and common sense in shaping the revolutionary movement and its outcomes and highlights the emergence of a new American identity.

While both historians present compelling cases for their interpretations, I think Zinn presents the better case when he challenges the common narrative of the Revolution and reveals a darker side to the story. He shows how the Revolution failed to fulfill its promises of equality and justice for all and does not deny the positive aspects of the Revolution, instead putting them in perspective and questioning their imporatance. Wood on the otherhand, seems to try and uphold the pre-existing narrative by hiding behind the distinctness of the American Revolution and the fact that the American situation eventually ended up improving; something that I believe should be accredited to the incredible people who fought for their future despite the discrimination they faced in the process.

**Question 2:**

During his contraversial tenure as the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson found himself in the midst some major crises; namely the Nullification Crisis, the Indian Removal Act, and his self inflicted war against the banks. These problems put his leadership skills and his commitment to preserving the Union to the test as he conquered them with varying levels of success.

Indian Removal was the policy of relocating Native Americans from their ancestral lands in the Southeast to western territories, and although it was morally and constitutionally questionable; it was still Jackson’s most successful response to any of the three major issues. During his time in office, Jackson supported this policy as a way of opening more land for white settlement and reducing conflicts between whites and Indians. This policy, however, was opposed by many Native Americans who understandably resisted being forced from their homes. In response to the pressure placed on them by the states, the Cherokee tribe decided to seek a legal path to maintain their claim on ancestral lands throught the court system. This was surprisingly marked as successful endevaor when the Supreme Court ruled that the Native Americans were “a distinct people with the right to maintain a separate political identity (Foner 394).” In response to this Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law, which authorized him to “negotiate treaties” with tribes for their removal, and declared that “John Marshall [the justice responsible for the decision] has made his decision… now let him enforce it (Foner 395).” The tragedy of the Cherokee’s situation doesn’t end their either, the tribe was then forcibly removed by the U.S. army in what became known as the Trail of Tears; a journey in which thousands of Cherokees died from disease, starvation, and exposure. While Jackson's Indian Removal policy was successful in terms of expanding white settlement, but it was also a humanitarian and constitutional disaster that violated the rights and dignity of Native Americans and the political structure outlined by the Constituition.

Worse that this, however, was Jackson’s handling of the Nullification Crisis, a conflict that arose over the issue of tariffs, or taxes on imported goods in South Carolina. When the federal government imposed tariffs to protect American manufacturing from foreign competition, tariffs proved to be very unpopular in the South, which relied on exporting cotton and importing manufactured goods. Eventually, John C. Calhoun, President Jackson's South Carolinian vice president, proposed the theory of nullification, an idea which declared that states had the right to nullify federal laws they deemed unconstitutional within their borders. In 1832, South Carolina passed the ordinance of nullification and declared the tariffs null and void within its territory. In response, Jackson wrote the actions of South Carolina off as treason and “persuaded Congress to pass a Force Act authorizing him to use the army and navy to collect customs duties (Foner 393).” The crisis was resolved when South Carolina repealed its ordinance of nullification after Congress passed both the compromise tariff and the Force Bill that authorized Jackson to use military action if necessary. Although Jackson's handling of the nullification crisis preserved the authority of the federal government over the states and prevented a possible civil war, it still planted some seeds of Northern hatred in the south; something that is made more evident with the realization that South Carolina was the first state to secede in the Civil War.

Jackson’s worst handling of an issue, however, was his war against the Bank of the United States. This was a political struggle that developed over the issue of rechartering the Second Bank of the United States, a federal institution that Jackson sought to destroy. Jackson distrusted the bank and saw it as a tool of the economic elite that favored the interests of the North over the South and West. He also questioned its constitutionality and its interference with state bank affairs. In 1832, Jackson vetoed a bill to recharter the Bank of the United States, which was due to expire in 1836. He argued that the Bank of the United States was "unauthorized by the Constitution, subversive to the rights of States, and dangerous to the liberties of the people". He then began a campaign to withdraw federal deposits from the Bank of the United States and distribute them among state banks. This provoked a fierce opposition from Nicholas Biddle, the president of the bank, who tried to defend his position by tightening credit and causing economic distress. Jackson's war against the bank ultimately crippled the Bank of the United States, but it also destabilized the banking system, contributed to a major depression in 1837, and gave him the monikor of King Andrew. It was simply the worst outcome for both himself and the country.

In conclusion, Andrew Jackson faced three major problems as President of the United States: Indian Removal, his war against the Bank of the United States, and the Nullification Crisis. He addressed these problems with determination and forcefulness, but his actions also had negative consequences for Native Americans, for economic stability, and for stability.