

## NINETEENTH-CENTURY POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The development of the modern presidency in the United States began with Andrew Jackson, who swept to power in 1829 at the head of the Democratic Party and served until 1837. During his administration he immeasurably enlarged the power of the presidency. "The president is the direct representative of the American people," he lectured the Senate when it opposed him. "He was elected by the people, and is responsible to them." With this declaration, Jackson redefined the character of the presidential office and its relationship to the people.

During Jackson's second term, his opponents had gradually come together to form the Whig Party. Whigs and Democrats held different attitudes toward the changes brought about by the market, banks, and commerce. The Democrats tended to view society as a continuing conflict between "the people"—farmers, planters, and workers—and a set of greedy aristocrats. This "paper money aristocracy" of bankers and investors manipulated the banking system for their own profit, Democrats claimed, and sapped the nation's virtue by encouraging speculation and the desire for sudden, unearned wealth. The Democrats wanted the rewards of the market without sacrificing the features of a simple agrarian republic. They wanted the wealth that the market offered without the competitive, changing society; the complex dealing; the dominance of urban centers; and the loss of independence that came with it.

Whigs, on the other hand, were more comfortable with the market. For them, commerce and economic development were agents of civilization. Nor did the Whigs envision any conflict in society between farmers and workers on the one hand and businesspeople and bankers on the other. Economic growth would benefit everyone by raising national income and expanding opportunity. The government's responsibility was to provide a well-regulated economy that guaranteed opportunity for citizens of ability.

Whigs and Democrats differed not only in their attitudes toward the market but also about how active the central government should be in people's lives. Despite Andrew Jackson's inclination to be a strong president, Democrats as a rule believed in limited government. Government's role in the economy was to promote competition by destroying monopolies<sup>1</sup> and special privileges. In keeping with this philosophy of limited government, Democrats also rejected the idea that moral beliefs were the proper sphere of government action. Religion and politics, they believed, should be kept clearly separate, and they generally opposed humanitarian legislation.

The Whigs, in contrast, viewed government power positively. They believed that it should be used to protect individual rights and public liberty, and that it had a special role where individual effort was ineffective. By regulating the economy and competition, the government could ensure equal opportunity. Indeed, for Whigs the concept of government promoting the general welfare went beyond the economy. In particular, Whigs in the northern sections of the United States also believed that government power should be used to foster the moral welfare of the country. They were much more likely to favor social-reform legislation and aid to education.

In some ways the social makeup of the two parties was similar. To be competitive in winning votes, Whigs and Democrats both had to have significant support among farmers, the largest group in society, and workers. Neither party could win an election by appealing exclusively to the rich or the poor. The Whigs, however, enjoyed disproportionate strength

among the business and commercial classes. Whigs appealed to planters who needed credit to finance their cotton and rice trade in the world market, to farmers who were eager to sell their surpluses, and to workers who wished to improve themselves. Democrats attracted farmers isolated from the market or uncomfortable with it, workers alienated from the emerging industrial system, and rising entrepreneurs who wanted to break monopolies and open the economy to newcomers like themselves. The Whigs were strongest in the towns, cities, and those rural areas that were fully integrated into the market economy, whereas Democrats dominated areas of semisubsistence farming that were more isolated and languishing economically.

1. **monopolies:** Companies or individuals that exclusively own or control commercial enterprises with no competitors

**Directions:** Now answer the questions.

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1. According to paragraph 1, the presidency of Andrew Jackson was especially significant for which of the following reasons?
  - (A) The president granted a portion of his power to the Senate.
  - (B) The president began to address the Senate on a regular basis.
  - (C) It was the beginning of the modern presidency in the United States.
  - (D) It was the first time that the Senate had been known to oppose the president.

## PARAGRAPH 2

During Jackson's second term, his opponents had gradually come together to form the Whig Party. Whigs and Democrats held different attitudes toward the changes brought about by the market, banks, and commerce. The Democrats tended to view society as a continuing conflict between "the people"—farmers, planters, and workers—and a set of greedy aristocrats. This "paper money aristocracy" of **bankers and investors** manipulated the banking system for their own profit, Democrats claimed, and sapped the nation's virtue by encouraging speculation and the desire for sudden, unearned wealth. The Democrats wanted the rewards of the market without sacrificing the features of a simple agrarian republic. They wanted the wealth that the market offered without the competitive, changing society; the complex dealing; the dominance of urban centers; and the loss of independence that came with it.

2. The author mentions "**bankers and investors**" in the passage as an example of which of the following?
- (A) The Democratic Party's main source of support
  - (B) The people that Democrats claimed were unfairly becoming rich
  - (C) The people most interested in a return to a simple agrarian republic
  - (D) One of the groups in favor of Andrew Jackson's presidency

## PARAGRAPH 3

Whigs, on the other hand, were more comfortable with the market. For them, commerce and economic development were agents of civilization. Nor did the Whigs envision any conflict in society between farmers and workers on the one hand and businesspeople and bankers on the other. Economic growth would benefit everyone by raising national income and expanding opportunity. The government's responsibility was to provide a well-regulated economy that guaranteed opportunity for citizens of ability.

3. According to paragraph 3, Whigs believed that commerce and economic development would have which of the following effects on society?
- (A) They would promote the advancement of society as a whole.
  - (B) They would cause disagreements between Whigs and Democrats.
  - (C) They would supply new positions for Whig Party members.
  - (D) They would prevent conflict between farmers and workers.
4. According to paragraph 3, which of the following describes the Whig Party's view of the role of government?
- (A) To regulate the continuing conflict between farmers and businesspeople
  - (B) To restrict the changes brought about by the market
  - (C) To maintain an economy that allowed all capable citizens to benefit
  - (D) To reduce the emphasis on economic development

## PARAGRAPH 4

Whigs and Democrats differed not only in their attitudes toward the market but also about how active the central government should be in people's lives. Despite Andrew Jackson's inclination to be a strong president, Democrats as a rule believed in limited government. Government's role in the economy was to promote competition by destroying monopolies<sup>1</sup> and special privileges. In keeping with this philosophy of limited government, Democrats also rejected the idea that moral beliefs were the proper sphere of government action. Religion and politics, they believed, should be kept clearly separate, and they generally opposed humanitarian legislation.

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5. According to paragraph 4, a Democrat would be most likely to support government action in which of the following areas?
- Ⓐ Creating a state religion
  - Ⓑ Supporting humanitarian legislation
  - Ⓒ Destroying monopolies
  - Ⓓ Recommending particular moral beliefs

## PARAGRAPH 5

The Whigs, in contrast, viewed government power positively. They believed that it should be used to protect individual rights and public liberty, and that it had a special role where individual effort was ineffective. By regulating the economy and competition, the government could ensure equal opportunity. Indeed, for Whigs the **concept** of government promoting the general welfare went beyond the economy. In particular, Whigs in the northern sections of the United States also believed that government power should be used to foster the moral welfare of the country. They were much more likely to favor social-reform legislation and aid to education.

6. The word "**concept**" in the passage is closest in meaning to
- Ⓐ power
  - Ⓑ reality
  - Ⓒ difficulty
  - Ⓓ idea
7. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 5 about variations in political beliefs within the Whig Party?
- Ⓐ They were focused on issues of public liberty.
  - Ⓑ They caused some members to leave the Whig Party.
  - Ⓒ They were unimportant to most Whigs.
  - Ⓓ They reflected regional interests.



In some ways the social makeup of the two parties was similar. To be competitive in winning votes, Whigs and Democrats both had to have significant support among farmers, the largest group in society, and workers. Neither party could win an election by appealing exclusively to the rich or the poor. The Whigs, however, enjoyed disproportionate strength among the business and commercial classes. Whigs appealed to planters who needed credit to finance their cotton and rice trade in the world market, to farmers who were eager to sell their surpluses, and to workers who wished to improve themselves. Democrats attracted farmers isolated from the market or uncomfortable with it, workers alienated from the emerging industrial system, and rising entrepreneurs who wanted to break monopolies and open the economy to newcomers like themselves. **The Whigs were**

**market economy, whereas Democrats dominated areas of semisubsistence farming that were more isolated and languishing economically.**

8. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- (A) Whigs were able to attract support only in the wealthiest parts of the economy because Democrats dominated in other areas.
  - (B) Whig and Democratic areas of influence were naturally split between urban and rural areas, respectively.
  - (C) The semisubsistence farming areas dominated by Democrats became increasingly isolated by the Whigs' control of the market economy.
  - (D) The Democrats' power was greatest in poorer areas, while the Whigs were strongest in those areas where the market was already fully operating.

During Jackson's second term, his opponents had gradually come together to form the Whig Party. **(A)** Whigs and Democrats held different attitudes toward the changes brought about by the market, banks, and commerce. **(B)** The Democrats tended to view society as a continuing conflict between "the people"—farmers, planters, and workers—and a set of greedy aristocrats. **(C)** This "paper money aristocracy" of bankers and investors manipulated the banking system for their own profit, Democrats claimed, and sapped the nation's virtue by encouraging speculation and the desire for sudden, unearned wealth. **(D)** The Democrats wanted the rewards of the market without sacrificing the features of a simple agrarian republic. They wanted the wealth that the market offered without the competitive, changing society; the complex dealing; the dominance of urban centers; and the loss of independence that came with it.

9. **Directions:** Look at the part of the passage that is displayed above. The letters **(A)**, **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)** indicate where the following sentence could be added.

**This new party argued against the policies of Jackson and his party in a number of important areas, beginning with the economy.**

Where would the sentence best fit?

- Ⓐ Choice A
- Ⓑ Choice B
- Ⓒ Choice C
- Ⓓ Choice D

10. **Directions:** An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage. **This question is worth 2 points.**

**The political system of the United States in the mid-nineteenth century was strongly influenced by the social and economic circumstances of the time.**

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**Answer Choices**

- ☐ **A** The Democratic and Whig Parties developed in response to the needs of competing economic and political constituencies.
- ☐ **B** During Andrew Jackson's two terms as president, he served as leader of both the Democratic and Whig Parties.
- ☐ **C** The Democratic Party primarily represented the interests of the market, banks, and commerce.
- ☐ **D** In contrast to the Democrats, the Whigs favored government aid for education.
- ☐ **E** A fundamental difference between Whigs and Democrats involved the importance of the market in society.
- ☐ **F** The role of government in the lives of the people was an important political distinction between the two parties.