

DBQ ESSAY QUESTION ONE

Sample Essay 1 (Outstanding – Score of 8)

With the victory in the Election of 1828, the Age of Jackson began. Supporters of the Democratic President were skilled at emotionalizing issues and rallying the support of the South and the West. However, their primary goals were not Constitutional justice and individual liberty, but instead Jacksonians' strived to suppress the Northeast and New England interests. In addition, Democrats wanted to weaken the Whig Party and preserve states' rights. Although the Common Man's Party gave the perception of being the guardians of Democracy, this political organization simply protected sectionalism and Andrew Jackson's inflated ego.

Andrew Jackson (despite allegations to the contrary by South Carolina and Tennessee) was born in North Carolina and grew up a son of the frontier. The hero of the Battle of New Orleans and a proven hothead (he flagrantly disobeyed orders and hanged a few of the enemy in the Seminole War), Jackson was also not what one would call an intellectual. Emotionalization of campaign issues got him elected in 1828 over a superior statesman, President John Q. Adams. Through an over-emotionalized revivalistic campaign style, Jackson's camp brought the common man out of the backwoods into the voting booth. (Records show that voter participation rose dramatically through the Jackson era). By exploiting the class difference between the urban Eastern industrialists and the South-and-Western agrarian, Jackson's aides turned "Old Hickory" into a symbol for the fight against the upper class and intellectualism. Henceforth it mattered little what Jackson did as president, as long as it was perceived as the will of the common man.¹

The Bank of the United States, under the direction of Nicholas Biddle, had, to an extent, become an agent by which "fat-cat" Northern merchants filled their money bags. The Bank was not good, however, for Western speculators who had borrowed a great deal of money from the bank and now, in the late 1820s, were feeling the crunch of leveling-off land prices. Because the Bank did not benefit Jackson's constituency (and because of a personal dislike for "Czar" Biddle), Jackson vetoed the bill for recharter of the Bank, proclaiming that was in the "hands of a few men irresponsible to the people." He of course meant the common individual. Intellectuals like Daniel Webster saw through this exploitation of industry/agrarian conflict. Webster's reply in Document C shames Jackson for turning a political issue into an emotional quandary.² (It should be noted, in fairness to Andrew Jackson, that Webster owed several thousand dollars to the B.U.S.). Still, Jackson claimed to be protecting the rights of individuals, instead of the interests of Western speculators.³ In Roger B. Taney's decision (Taney was a Southern and a Jacksonian) in the 1837 Charles River Bridge Case, business was overruled by the rights of the community and the individual, or was it? Taney's decision really set a precedent for state's right intervention in commerce, though it claimed to support the individual's liberty.⁴

¹ There is a wealth of outside information here and excellent discussion of attack on Eastern interests.

² Sophisticated use of document.

³ Good use of bank document and outside information.

⁴ Good interpretation of Taney case as states' rights.

Sometimes, however, it was Jackson's ego and not sectional favoritism that drove Jacksonian democracy. When Chief Justice John Marshall (a Federalist) ruled that the Cherokee nation had a right to its territory, Jackson declared, "Justice Marshall has made his decision now let him enforce it." Jackson claimed that the "common man" wanted the Indians removed and promptly sent the Cherokee down the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma. The move was actually fueled by Jackson's dislike for Marshall and his feeling that the executive branch superseded the Court. Jackson vetoed the Maysville Road project in Kentucky, claiming that the Constitution mandated internal improvements in intra-state areas be the responsibility of local government.⁵ He declined to mention that the road ran through the home district of his archrival, Whig Speaker of the House Henry Clay. In truth, Jacksonian Democracy did not protect individual rights, as evidenced by the mistreatment of blacks, Indians, and immigrants. Most Jacksonians were slaveholders, and until Jackson's individual pride was damaged by the nullification crisis of 1828 (Jackson resented upstart South Carolina and John C. Calhoun, due to the Eaton affair), Jackson was an advocate of slavery. The Cherokees were brutally mistreated by Jackson's removal policy. Irish immigrants were often the victims of big city riots in the East, which Andrew Jackson did nothing to prevent. These injustices were usually concealed from visitors like Harriet Martineau and Alexis De Toqueville.⁶

Jacksonian Democracy did little for individual liberty and constitutional justice, but instead hid behind emotionalized issues. Jackson's ego dictated policy, as did the needs of the South and West. Several examples of suppressed individual freedom occurred. Jacksonians were more the protectors of self interest, than the guardians of Democracy.

AP Reader analysis:

This is a superbly written essay far surpassing the requirements for the top category. It contains a comprehensive, well-developed thesis that the Jacksonian Democrats acted for their political self-interest, not for constitutional justice and individual liberties. Information from the documents is woven throughout the essay and in some instances used implicitly. Throughout the essay, the thesis is consistently supported by information from the documents and outside evidence.

Sample Essay 2: Good (score of 6)

Since the founding of the Constitution, the leaders of the U.S. had preserved the supremacy of the federal government over local governments. However, during the 1820s and 1830s, the tide turned with the introduction of Jacksonian Democracy.⁷ Followers of Andrew Jackson believed they were the moral guardians of the constitution and used it to protect states rights. They believed in having as little government as possible. Their policies were aimed at the "common man" and sought to bring individual liberties to them. One area that they did not tolerate though, was foreign

⁵ Good use of Cherokee case and Maysville Road to illustrate Jackson's positions on the Constitution.

⁶Excellent paragraph on individual rights and sophisticated use of documents.

⁷ The thesis statement could be better focused. The main issue was not federal vs. state supremacy, but democratizing the federal government.

immigrants and the Indians.⁸ Jackson did not believe in giving them equal opportunity as given to the Americans.

Jackson himself had a humble upbringing as an orphan. Perhaps this led him to emphasize the common man's importance in society and bringing in opportunity. He wanted to achieve bringing the federal government down to the level of society. As a staunch state's rightist,⁹ he believed in localizing government. When he was elected, he used the spoils system, or rotation in office to allow for political diversity and compatibility in office.¹⁰ One Jacksonian Democrat, George Henry Evans created the Working Men's Declaration of Independence. It applied the beliefs of Jacksonian Democracy to the Declaration, our basis for forming the Constitution. Here, he shows how the Jacksonian Democrats believed in allowing individual liberty though the rights to reform government and guard the natural laws of society.

Also under Jacksonian Democracy came the new view of economics and society. The major dealing of Jackson was the defeat of the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson believed that since in the constitution, there was no justification to create such a bank, it was illegal. He also felt that having one large federal bank deprived state banks from a chance at survival. When the Bank's charter was up for renewal in 1832, Jackson naturally vetoed the recharter bill. He used his presidential veto quite freely. He states that the bank provides for the exclusive privilege of banking and concentration in the hands of few men. Eventually Jackson bled the bank dry of its funds and issued pet banks, similar to those proposed by the Jacksonian Democrats.¹¹

Jacksonian Democrats were challenged by the imminent nullification laws of South Carolina. Jackson immediately demanded that S. Carolina withdraw the bill and comply with the laws of the federal government. The Force Act was issued which allowed naval and armed troops to enter S. Carolina to enforce the laws.

One major area of dispute was the intolerance of foreigners by the Jacksonian Democrats. Jackson first had trouble with the Native Americans. He was undecided whether to expel the Indians or leave them alone on their reservations. It was obvious that Jackson did not tolerate the Indians. Most of the legislation passed under him went against the Indians. The painting from the Woolaroc Museum shows the migration of the Indians from their homeland to some other area. The Jacksonian Democracy did a great injustice to the native Americans. Also at the voting polls, great riots began between Americans and foreigners over the 1834 elections. Americans learned to not tolerate foreigners and came down on them with barbarity.¹²

The Jacksonian Democrats basically provided the U.S. with the development of the common man and a government working in favor of the people much like populism of

⁸ Shows some understanding that there are two sides to the question.

⁹ Error. Jackson opposed Calhoun's position on the Nullification Doctrine.

¹⁰ Good use of outside information in this paragraph.

¹¹ Good paragraph on Bank, using documents and outside information.

¹² Two good examples of the limits of Jacksonian democracy.

the 19th century, these movements believed in crushing elitism in society. As Harriet Martineau states, the people were the judges and this allowed for the formation of the U.S. as a better society for almost everyone.

AP Reader analysis:

The thesis here is not focused clearly on the issues and therefore doesn't guide the essay as well as it might. The essay does use the documents and outside information in arguing the strengths and limitations of the Jacksonians. More analysis of the documents and a sharper thesis statement would have improved this essay.

Sample Essay 3: Unsatisfactory (score of 3)

Jacksonian Democrats, which were found in the 1920's and 1930's,¹³ believed in strict interpretation of the Constitution, individual freedoms, equal opportunity, strong government in the states, and equality of white men and women.¹⁴ Many people did not agree with Andrew Jackson or his methods of getting things done. Jackson was a racist. He did nothing for the slaves, and harassed the Indians. Jackson always used his poor background as a stand, that even the common man can become president.¹⁵

Jacksonian Democrats stressed that individuals had rights above the whole. Any man, no matter what his background had the rights of happiness, life, and liberty (Document A). Harriet Martineau, a British author could not believe that in America every man was an "independent citizen". He even wondered if people governing themselves was very safe (Document D).¹⁶

Jacksonian Democrats may have viewed themselves as giving more power to the people, but that did not hold to be completely true. Jackson did a few good things to give people a choice. Jackson vetoed the Bank of the United States because he felt it gave the people no choice. If the bank had control over the nation's money, then neither the government or the people could decide where they wanted their money placed (Document B).¹⁷ Many people disagreed with Jackson's so-called patriotism. Daniel Webster, who was for the Bank of the United States, felt that Jackson was being unreasonable. Webster thought that since freedom was not truly endangered, that Jackson was being too passionate about it (document C).¹⁸ Jackson felt that if people were denied even simple freedoms, that over the course of time larger and more important freedoms would be taken away.

Jackson continually supported laws or passed laws that denied rights. In Document E riots are described. The riots were a direct result of Jackson's laws.¹⁹ Jackson seemed to completely disregard the rights of immigrants and anyone else who was not white Protestant. States in the North were opposed to slavery, wrote literature, and mailed

¹³ This misdating is a minor error.

¹⁴ What evidence is there that Jacksonians supported equality for women?

¹⁵ This paragraph has some good information in it, but it needs to be better organized.

¹⁶ Harriet Martineau was a woman. This shows misunderstanding of her praise for American society.

¹⁷ This misinterprets Jackson's bank veto message.

¹⁸ This does not correctly interpret Webster's concern.

¹⁹ Error. There is no evidence in the document that the riots resulted from any Jackson policy.

things to slaves to get them to consider freedom as an alternate lifestyle. South Carolina asked the Northern states to halt all writing about abolishing slavery, they did not their slaves to get restless (Document E). Jackson supported this stand.

The worst thing that Jackson did against another society was move the Indians. He had thousands of Indians forcefully moved from their homes. He had Indians murdered, thrown out, and even tortured. Only a few Indians wanted their people to be relocated, and those were the only ones he even tolerated. The trek he sent the Indians on was known as the "Trail of Tears" (Document G). Over 1/3 of the Cherokee nation died on that trip, and mostly because of Jackson's selfishness.²⁰

On the whole Jacksonian Democrats had good ideas. They wanted people to have choices, as shown in "Charles River Bridge vs. Warren Bridge" (Document H), and they gave power to the people. Jackson truly felt that he was representing the whole when he had Indians moved, and condoned slavery. Jackson may have once been a "common man", but when he was president he didn't listen to the "common man" any longer. Hopefully the United States will never have another president that was so openly prejudiced. It would be nice to think that people would have better judgment than to reelect another Andrew Jackson.

AP Reader analysis:

This essay conveys the idea that Jackson's policies tended to favor one group, White Americans, at the expense of Native Americans and African Americans, but it does not connect the ideas. Documents are used in a superficial and descriptive manner or are misread. There is little outside information to support the generalizations.

²⁰ What specific evidence is there of Jackson's selfishness?