



**The History Channel® Presents:  
*Andrew Jackson*  
An original documentary**

*“As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of persons and of property, liberty of conscience and of the press, it will be worth defending.”-Andrew Jackson*

***Introduction***

The 43 commanding figures that have served the American people as president have divergent backgrounds, beliefs, and legacies in U.S. history. Andrew Jackson, the man whose face adorns the \$20 bill, was the nation’s 7<sup>th</sup> President, and is one of the most fascinating, controversial, and influential men to hold the highest office. This documentary follows Jackson’s life from his youth as an orphan in the Carolina backwoods, to his ascendancy as a military general, through his death in 1845. ***Andrew Jackson*** chronicles the triumphs and tribulations that transformed Jackson from a hardened youth to a keen and decisive president.

After revealing the story Jackson’s imprisonment by the British during the American Revolution, this program explains Jackson’s determination to avenge this history through his decisive role in the Battle of New Orleans. Tracing his military background, this documentary provides a pivotal bridge from his life as a general to his elevation as a political leader in the 1820s. Nicknamed “Old Hickory” for his fierceness in battle, Jackson was equally as tough as a senator and president. Today, he is remembered as a populist president for his campaign to reform the central banking system to benefit the “common man” and for his advocacy for “equal protection and equal benefits.” Yet Jackson is also regarded as a ruthless and callous leader for his unrelenting attacks against Native Americans, culminating in massive violence and the removal Indian populations throughout the U.S known as the Trail of Tears.

With commentary from historians, insights pulled from archival sources, and rich imagery, this documentary traces a narrative of Jackson’s life, helping explain how and why a man with such an unstable past could achieve the presidency. While many documentaries have explored aspects of Jackson’s career, this documentary offers a broad overview of his life, his personality and policies, and his controversial legacy. This program would be an insightful addition to course units on Jackson specifically, or on any aspect of U.S. history between the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Civil War era.

## **Curriculum Links**

*Andrew Jackson* would be useful for high school and middle school classes on United States History, Colonial History, Political Science and Civics. This documentary fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: (1) Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions, (2) Human Interaction with the Environment, (3) Patterns of Social and Political Interaction (4) Comparative History of Major Developments, and (5) Conflict and Cooperation.

## **Vocabulary**

Using the dictionary at [www.merriamwebster.com](http://www.merriamwebster.com), an internet resource such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

Copse	Juxtapose
Emaciate	Parapet
Emulsion	Reticent
Henry Clay	Steadfast
Jacksonian Democracy	Treatise

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. How did Jackson get a scar on his hand and a crease on his forehead? Did the experience that gave him his scar foreshadow any future events in his life?
2. What events in Jackson's early life do you think were most important in shaping his future career? Why?
3. Why was Jackson's marriage to Rachael Donelson controversial?
4. How did Jackson get the nickname Old Hickory? Why do you think this nickname stuck with him throughout his life?
5. Why was capturing New Orleans so vital to the British plan in the War of 1812? Why do you think this was regarded as a key moment in his career?
6. What convinced Jackson to run for president in 1824? How did he fair in that election?
7. Why was the campaign of 1828 considered dirty? Did anyone step above the fray so as to not slander other candidates?
8. What were Jackson's main goals of his presidency? Were his goals too ambitious?
9. What is the definition of "Jacksonian democracy"? What does this term reveal about the changes in American politics during Jackson's era?
10. How did Jackson fix the national debt during his presidency? What effects did his decisions regarding the national debt have on the country?
11. What was the Trail of Tears? Why did Jackson hold such hostilities toward Native American tribes? Do you think his actions tarnished his reputation beyond repair? Discuss.
12. If you were to list three of Andrew Jackson's most important and influential policies or contributions to U.S. history, either positive or negative, what would they be and why?

## **Extended Activities**

### **Running Your Own Campaign**

Andrew Jackson faced difficult challenges in running for president. He lost his first campaign in 1824 and suffered heated character attacks in 1828, but still managed to defeat his incumbent opponent, John Quincy Adams. Divide your class up into teams of 3 with each team having 1 presidential candidate, 1 vice presidential candidate and 1 campaign manager. Ask the groups to design posters, write speeches and/or create platforms on which to run for president as if it were 1828 (the candidates do not have to emulate Jackson or Adams). When finally ready to vote, the team should create a speech for its presidential candidate to read in front of the rest of the class or school. Conduct a vote to find the winner!

### **At War Against the Bank**

Andrew Jackson was the first president to wipe away the national debt, a truly astounding feat. He also waged a steady campaign against the Bank of the United States, the nation's key financial institution which was run by private bankers. The war against the bank is considered one of Jackson's most significant legacies. Ask students to research and review the history of the Bank of the United States and Jackson's efforts to defeat the bank. Then, have students write letters to the editor to argue for or against the "bank bill" of 1832.

### **The Trail of Tears**

The Trail of Tears was a bitter and violent campaign to force Native Americans to leave their homelands in the Southeast and relocate to a territory established by the United States government. The document which authorized the Trail of Tears was the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Online or at the library, ask students to locate a copy of this document. Then, have students write up 3 to 5 main points from this document and discuss them with the larger class or group. Students can then review a map of the Trail of Tears and discuss the ramifications of these policies for Native Americans, for the legacy of Andrew Jackson, and for U.S. history broadly.

### **Old Hickory Remembered**

From watching this documentary, students will discover the complexity of Andrew Jackson's life and career, and the many phases of his life. Ask students to create a mini-biography of 300 words or less which encapsulates Jackson's history and the various phases of his life. As an alternative, students can also write obituaries of Jackson's life, analyzing his career and the way he might be remembered in American history.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Books**

Borneman, Walter R. *1812: The War that Forged a Nation*. Harper Perennial, 2005.

Brands, H.W. *Andrew Jackson: The Life and Times*. Anchor, 2006.

Feller, Daniel. *The Jacksonian Era: America 1815 to 1840*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Jahoda, Gloria. *Trail of Tears*. Wings, 1995.

Remini, Robert V. *Andrew Jackson: The Course of American Empire, 1767-1821*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

### **Web sites**

Official biography of Andrew Jackson:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/aj7.html>

Official Cherokee Nation website: <http://www.cherokee.org/>

Official website of Henry Clay's Estate: <http://www.henryclay.org/>

Official website of The Hermitage: <http://www.thehermitage.com/>

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