Cornell Notes- Andrew Jackson

Background Information Reading
Andrew Jackson

Andrew Jackson was America’s first frontier president. He came to office with great popular support. His supporters viewed him as a president of the people. His enemies saw him as a president hoping to become a king.

Personal Background:

Jackson was considered the first “self-made man” to occupy the White House. He was born in 1767, on the South Carolina frontier. His father died before he was born, leaving Jackson, his mother, and two brothers in poverty. The American Revolution ended Jackson’s childhood. When he was just 13, Jackson joined the local militia and was captured by the British. One day, a British officer ordered Jackson to polish his boots. “Sir,” he replied boldly, “I am a prisoner of war and demand to be treated as such.” The outraged officer lashed out with his sword, slicing the boy’s head and hand. Jackson carried the scars to his grave. Because of this incident, Jackson was known to have had a “hot temper” and would “pick a fight at the drop of a hat.”

After the war, Jackson decided to become a lawyer. After going to work in a local law office in North Carolina, he quickly became known as “the most roaring, rollicking, game-cocking, horse-racing, card-playing, mischievous fellow” in town. In 1788, Jackson headed west to Nashville, Tennessee to practice law. The undeveloped town of Nashville grew quickly, and Jackson’s law practice grew with it. He soon earned enough money to buy land and slaves and set himself up as a gentlemen planter.

Despite his success, Jackson never outgrew his hot temper. A slave trader named Charles Dickinson found this out when he called Jackson a “worthless scoundrel” and insulted his wife, Rachel. Enraged, Jackson challenged Dickinson to a duel (fight) with pistols, even though the slave trader was said to be the best shot in Tennessee. Dickinson shot first, hitting Jackson in the chest. Jackson stiffened, raised his pistol, and fired a single shot. Dickenson fell to the ground dead. The

frontier- a region just beyond, or at the edge of a settled area

Self-made man- achieving wealth or influence through one’s own effort rather than being born into a privileged family.

gentlemen planter- a gentlemen of the upper class who owns or manages a plantation

Duel- A prearranged, formal combat between two persons, usually fought to settle a point of honor.
bullet that hit Jackson was lodged so close to his heart that doctors were not able to remove it. He received the nickname “Old Hickory” because of his toughness and aggressive personality, fighting in as many as 13 duels.

Jackson: The People’s Choice

Jackson entered politics in Tennessee after serving in both the House and the Senate. But he did not become widely known until he became a national hero after defeating the British at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812.

In the Election of 1824, the “hero of New Orleans” ran for president against three other candidates- Henry Clay, William Crawford, and John Quincy Adams. Jackson won both the most popular votes and electoral votes, but (because of the number of candidates) did not have enough electoral votes for a majority. (When no candidate has an electoral majority, the House of Representatives chooses a president from the three leading candidates.) Clay, who had come in fourth, urged his supporters in the House to back John Quincy Adams. That support gave Adams enough votes to become president. Adams then chose Clay to be his Secretary of State. Jackson’s supporters accused Clay of making a “corrupt bargain” to rob their hero of his rightful election. And they promised revenge in 1828.

Jackson’s supporters used the time between elections to build a new political organization that came to be called the “Democratic Party”, the name it still wears today. This new party, they promised, would represent ordinary farmers, workers, and the poor, not the rich and well born who had taken control of the Republican Party. Jackson’s supporters worked feverishly to reach the nation’s new voters. They organized huge parades, picnics, and rallies. At these events, supporters sang “The Hunters of Kentucky”- the nation’s first campaign song- and cheered for “Old Hickory.” They wore badges, carried hickory sticks, and chanted catchy campaign slogans like “Adams can write, but Jackson can fight.”

During the election of 1828, the United States experienced a growth in democracy. In this election, the common people could vote for the first time. Before this, only white property owners could vote. The result was a “Old Hickory”- from the hard, tough, heavy wood of the Hickory tree

Battle of New Orleans- the final major battle of the War of 1812

War of 1812- a military conflict fought between the forces of the United States of America and those of the British Empire.

popular votes- the vote for a candidate, issue, etc., made by the qualified voters, as opposed to a vote made by elected representatives.

electoral votes- the vote cast in the electoral college of the U.S. by the representatives of each state in a presidential election.
great victory for Jackson. But it was also a victory for the idea that the common people should control their government. This idea became known as “Jacksonian Democracy.”

The Spoils System

Jackson approached governing much as he had approached leading an army. He listened to others, but then he did exactly what he thought was right. Unlike earlier presidents, Jackson did not rely on his cabinet for advice. He made most of his decisions with the help of trusted friends and political supporters. These advisors were said to meet him in the White House kitchen. For this reason they were known as the “kitchen cabinet.”

Jackson’s critics were even more upset by his decision to replace many Republican office holders with loyal democrats. Most of these civil servants viewed their posts as lifetime jobs. Jackson disagreed. He believed rotating people in office was more democratic than lifetime service, because it gave people a chance to serve their government. Jackson’s opponents called the practice of rewarding political supporters with jobs the spoils system. This term came from the saying: “to the victor belong the spoils [prizes] of war.”

Nullification Crisis

In 1828, Congress passed a law raising tariffs, or taxes, on imported goods such as cloth and glass. The idea was to encourage growth and manufacturing. Higher tariffs meant higher prices for imported goods. American manufacturers could then outsell their foreign competitors.

Northern states, humming with new factories, favored the new tariffs. But, southerners opposed them for several reasons: tariffs raised the prices they paid for factory goods, tariffs discouraged trade amongst nations, tariffs would hurt cotton sales, and it favored the North more than the South. Based on this belief, Jackson’s own Vice President; John C. Calhoun of South Carolina called on the Southern states to declare the tariff “null and void,” or illegal and not to be honored.

“Jacksonian Democracy.”

Civil servants- employees of the government

Rotating people in office- change of tenure of civil servants; either through elections or appointments.

Spoils System- the practice of rewarding political supporters with government jobs.

Nullification- the act of cancelling something.

Tariff- a tax or duty to be paid on a particular class of imports or exports.
While Jackson did sign a new law to lower tariffs, it was not enough to satisfy the most extreme supporters of States Rights in South Carolina. Led by Calhoun, South Carolina proclaimed its right to nullify, or reject, both the 1828 and 1832 tariff laws. Such an action was called nullification. South Carolinians took the states rights issue even further when they threatened to secede from the Union if the federal government tried to enforce tariff laws.

Jackson called on Congress to pass the Force Bill, which allowed him to use the federal army to collect the tariffs if needed. At the same time, Congress lowered tariffs even further. Faced with strong opposition from the Jackson and the federal government, South Carolina backed down and the nullification crisis ended. However, tensions between the North and South would increase in the years ahead.

**Jackson and the Bank War**

Jackson saw himself as a champion of the people, and never more so than in his war with the Second Bank of the United States. The Bank was partly owned by the federal government, and it had a monopoly on federal deposits. Jackson thought that the bank benefitted the rich Eastern investors at the expense of farmers and workers as well as smaller state banks. He felt the powerful Bank stood in the way of opportunity for hopeful capitalists in the West and other regions. He also distrusted the Bank’s president, Nicholas Biddle, who was everything that Jackson was not—wealthy, well born, highly educated, and widely travelled.

The Bank’s charter was due to come up for renewal in 1836, and Jackson might have waited until then to “slay the monster”, as he called it. But, Henry Clay, who planned to run for president against Jackson in 1832, decided to force the issue. Clay pushed a bill through Congress that renewed the Bank’s charter four years early. Jackson vetoed the re-charter bill. Even though the Supreme Court had ruled that the Bank was constitutional, Jackson called the Bank an unconstitutional monopoly that existed mainly to make the rich richer. The voters seemed to agree. A large majority reelected Jackson in 1832. In addition to vetoing the Bank’s re-charter bill, Jackson “starved the bank to death” by ordering the Secretary of the Treasury to remove all the Bank’s deposits and put the money in state banks. Jackson’s enemies called these banks “pet banks” because the president’s supporters ran them. Slaying the bank, Jackson believed, was a victory for economic democracy.
Jackson’s Indian Policy- (Indian Removal Act of 1830)

As a frontier settler and famous Indian fighter- Native Americans called him “Sharp Knife” – Jackson had little sympathy for Indians. During his presidency it became national policy to remove Native Americans from the East by force.

Since colonial times, the American government had tried to settled conflicts with Native Americans through treaties. Typically, treaties drew boundaries between areas claimed for settlers and areas that the government promised to let the Indians have forever. In exchange for giving up their old lands, Indians were promised food, supplies, land, and money. Despite these treaties, Native Americans continued to be pushed off their land. By the time Jackson became president, only 125,000 Indians still lived east of the Mississippi River. Jackson was determined to remove the remaining Indians to a new Indian Territory in the West.

Most of the Indians living in the Southeast belonged to one of the Five Civilized Tribes: the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole. Hoping to remain in their homelands, these Indians had adopted white ways. Most had given up hunting to become farmers. Many had learned to read and write. The Cherokee even had their own written language, a newspaper, and a Constitution modeled on the U.S. Constitution.

While the Five Civilized Tribes hoped to live in peace with their neighbors, white settlers did not share this goal. As the “cotton kingdom” spread westward, wealthy settlers and poor planters alike looked greedily at Indian homelands and decided the Indians must go.

In 1830, urged on by President Jackson, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. This law allowed the president to make treaties in which Native Americans in the East traded their lands for new territory on the Great Plains. The law did not say that the Indians should be removed by force. In fact, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Indians had a right to their lands. But, an angry Jackson disagreed. Groups that refused to move West, were met by military force under Jackson’ orders. Some Chiefs fought the removal for up to two years. But, these conflicts ended in the slaughter of most Indian warriors.

Many whites were ashamed. Washington was flooded with protests over the treatment of Indians. Still the work of the removal continued. In 1836, thousands of Creeks in Alabama were rounded up and marched west in handcuffs. Two years later, under President Martin Van Buren, more than 17,000 Cherokee were dragged from their homes in Georgia were herded west by federal troops. Four thousand died during their long walk to Indian Territory as they suffered from exposure, disease, and starvation. Those who survived remembered the journey as the “Trail of Tears”.

Five civilized tribes- The term "Five Civilized Tribes" derives from the colonial and early federal period. It refers to five Native American nations—the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek (Muscogee), and Seminole.

Indian Removal Act- 1830 law that authorized the president to negotiate with southern Indian tribes for their removal to federal territory west of the Mississippi River in exchange for their ancestral homelands.

Trail of Tears- The route along which the United States government forced several tribes of Native Americans, including the Cherokees, Seminoles, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks, to migrate to reservations west of the Mississippi River in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s.
The Principles of Jacksonian Democracy

**Expanded Suffrage**
The Jacksonians believed that voting rights should be extended to all white men. By 1820, *universal white male suffrage* was the norm, and by 1850 nearly all requirements to own property or pay taxes had been dropped.

**Manifest Destiny**
This was the belief that white Americans had a destiny to settle the American West and to expand control from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and that the West should be settled by *yeoman* farmers.

**Patronage**
Also known as the *spoils system*, patronage was the policy of placing political supporters into appointed offices. Many Jacksonians held the view that rotating political appointees in and out of office was not only right but also the duty of winners in political contests. Patronage was theorized to be good because it would encourage political participation by the common man and because it would make a politician more accountable for poor government service by his appointees. Jacksonians also held that long tenure in the *civil service* was corrupting, so civil servants should be rotated out of office at regular intervals. However, it often led to the hiring of incompetent and sometimes corrupt officials due to the emphasis on party loyalty above any other qualifications.

**Strict Constructionism**
Like the Jeffersonians, Jacksonians initially favored a federal government of limited powers. Jackson said that he would guard against "all encroachments upon the legitimate sphere of State sovereignty." However, he was not a *States’ Rights* extremist; indeed, the *Nullification Crisis* would find Jackson fighting against what he perceived as state encroachments on the proper sphere of federal influence. This position was one basis for the Jacksonians’ opposition to the *Second Bank of the United States*. As the Jacksonians consolidated power, they more often advocated expanding federal power, presidential power in particular.

**Laissez-Faire Economics**
Complementing a strict construction of the Constitution, the Jacksonians generally favored a hands-off approach to the economy, as opposed to the *Whig* program sponsoring modernization, railroads, banking, and economic growth.

**Banking**
In particular, the Jacksonians opposed government-granted *monopolies* to banks, especially the national bank, a central bank known as the *Second Bank of the United States*. Jackson said, "The bank is trying to kill me, but I will kill it!" And he did so. The Whigs, who strongly supported the Bank, were led by Daniel Webster and Nicholas Biddle, the bank chairman. Jackson himself was opposed to all banks because he believed they were devices to cheat common people; he and many followers believed that only gold and silver should be money.

*universal white male suffrage*- a form of voting rights in which all adult males within a political system are allowed to vote, regardless of income, property, religion, race, or any other qualifications.

*Yeoman*- a man holding and cultivating a small landed estate; a freeholder.

*State’s Rights*- the rights belonging to the various states, especially with reference to the strict interpretation of the Constitution, by which all rights not delegated by the Constitution to the federal government belong to the states.