

CHAPTER 12

Reform and Politics in the Age of Jackson, 1824–1845

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Having examined the social, political, and economic characteristics of the South in Chapter 10 and of the North in Chapter 11, we now look more closely at the variety of ways in which Northerners responded to the changes brought by industrialization and urbanization in the early nineteenth century.

The religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening was the response of people who perceived a spiritual breakdown within society. This response, which was evangelistic and emotional in character and perfectionist in orientation, provided the catalyst for myriad reform movements, all of which had the goal of perfecting the human condition. Some of the reform movements, i. e., the American Female Moral Reform Society and the temperance movement, were attempts to perfect the human condition by cleansing society of perceived moral evils and, by doing so, hasten the Second Coming. Others, such as the utopian communities associated with the era, attempted to create a sense of community in an increasingly impersonal society. Whether the sexual abstention of the Shakers or the transcendentalism of Brook Farm, the philosophies of these communities were usually a mix of old and new values and emphasized cooperation over competition. The search for belonging also led in new spiritual and religious directions, i.e., the Mormon movement. In addition, those associated with the penitentiary movement and the asylum movement wanted to create a system by which the victims of a turbulent and unstable society could be rehabilitated.

Cities also began to provide education to their citizens through public schools. Because of the reform work of Horace Mann, who advocated equality of educational opportunity, the school curriculum became more secular in orientation and, therefore, more appropriate to would-be workers in a market-oriented economy. The public school curriculum no longer included direct religious indoctrination, but it did include indoctrination in moral values deemed important by the Protestant political leaders who controlled urban government and urban schools. Such indoctrination, undertaken with the intent of creating a society of like-minded citizens, was one response to the divergent belief systems brought by newcomers to the urban environment.

The reform impulse caused some Americans to redefine the ideal of equality and resulted in the abolitionist movement and the feminist movement. We contrast the characteristics and goals of early abolitionists with those of the “new” abolitionists of the 1830s. In the process we discover that “new” abolitionism, which advocated an immediate end to slavery, was, like so many of the moral reform movements of the age, built on the base of evangelical Christianity. We also find that abolitionism during the 1830s became, especially for women, a bridge between reform and activism in the public arena and between reform and politics.

After discussing the emergence of the women's movement, we turn to the impact of change in other aspects of American society on the political process. The Antimason movement, the end of the caucus system, the trend toward choosing presidential electors by popular vote, and the election of Andrew Jackson as president all signaled the beginnings of a more open political system in which party organization and party politics were the most important ingredients in the acquisition of political power. Jackson's acquisition of power brought with it an attempt to solve the nation's problems through restoration of traditional republican values and through return to Jeffersonian concepts of limited government. It is within this context that the nullification crisis and the controversy over the rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States took place. In the former, President Jackson and Congress reaffirmed the supremacy of the federal government over what Jackson perceived to be special state privilege. In the latter, the concept of limited government was reaffirmed over what the Jacksonians perceived to be special economic privilege. However, Jackson's antibank and hard-money policies led to economic hard times, with which his successor, Martin Van Buren, was unable to deal.

Jackson's policies, his transformation of the executive branch into a more powerful arm of government, and the inching of reformists and evangelicals into politics led to the emergence of a loyal opposition in the form of the Whig party and to the emergence of the second party system. As the democratization of American society caused an expansion of the electorate, the two parties took shape and began to compete in local, state, and federal elections. In the process, disagreements between Democrats and Whigs on the fundamental issues of the age energized the political process and caused more people to become politically active. Nevertheless, the main determinants of party membership were religion and ethnicity. In the 1840 election, the Whigs capitalized on the economic hardships of the Van Buren years to capture the presidency. However, President William Henry Harrison died within a month of having taken office and was replaced by John Tyler, who was more a Democrat than a Whig. Tyler's achievements were confined to the area of foreign policy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the causes, characteristics, and consequences of the Second Great Awakening.
2. Indicate the ideas, leaders, and contributions of the following reform movements in early nineteenth-century American society.
 - a. The anti-prostitution movement
 - b. The movement to reform penitentiaries
 - c. The movement to reform treatment of the mentally ill
 - d. The temperance movement
3. Discuss the spread of public education in American society in the early nineteenth century, and explain the impact of Horace Mann's educational philosophy on the public school curriculum.
4. Examine the interest in and the emergence of utopian communities in American society during the early nineteenth century, and discuss the ideas associated with these communities.
5. Discuss the growth of the antislavery movement, the differences between gradualists and immediatists, and the impact of this movement on American society during the first half of the nineteenth century.
6. Discuss the reasons for the emergence of the women's rights movement in American society during the first half of the nineteenth century, indicate the leaders of the movement, and examine

the extent to which those involved in the movement were able to achieve their objectives.

7. Examine the issues in the presidential elections of 1824, 1828, 1832, and 1836, and explain the outcome of each.
8. Examine how the political, social, and economic ideology of the Jacksonian Democrats was translated into policy during the terms of President Jackson and President Van Buren, and explain the impact of these policies on the United States.
9. Discuss the causes and consequences of the Nullification Crisis, and explain the controversy over the rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States.
10. Explain the Antimasonry movement, and indicate its impact on American politics.
11. Describe the characteristics of the second party system, and compare and contrast the political, social, and economic philosophies of the Jacksonian Democrats and the Whigs.
12. Examine the issues in the presidential election of 1840, and explain the election's outcome.
13. Identify the domestic failures and the foreign policy accomplishments of the Tyler administration.

IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

After studying Chapter 12 of *A People and a Nation*, you should be able to identify *and* explain fully the historical significance of each item listed below.

- Identify each item in the space provided. Give an explanation or description of the item. Answer the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
- Explain the historical significance of each item in the space provided. Establish the historical context in which the item exists. Establish the item as the result of or as the cause of other factors existing in the society under study. Answer this question: *What were the political, social, economic, and/or cultural consequences of this item?*

1. The American Colonization Society

2. William Lloyd Garrison

3. The *Liberator*

4. Gradualists vs. immediatists

5. The American Anti-Slavery Society

6. The gag rule

7. Women abolitionists

8. The Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments

9. Presidential election of 1824

10. President John Quincy Adams

11. Presidential election of 1828

12. President Andrew Jackson

13. The Tariff of Abominations

14. Nullification

15. The Second Bank of The United States

16. The Whig Party

17. President William Henry Harrison

18. President John Tyler

IDEAS AND DETAILS

Objective 1

1. The Second Great Awakening bred reform because it taught that
 - a. the perfection of earthly society could speed the Second Coming.
 - b. all people were evil and would burn in the fires of everlasting Hell.
 - c. God was no longer active in human affairs.
 - d. Jesus had returned to Earth and had begun the Last Judgment.

Objectives 1 and 2

2. The work of the American Female Moral Reform Society demonstrates that the Second Great Awakening
 - a. was antifemale in orientation.
 - b. theologically supported the concept of women's rights.
 - c. was instrumental in leading women into the public and political arenas.
 - d. was antiforeign in its orientation.

Objectives 1 and 2

3. Which of the following is true of the temperance movement?
- The movement had little impact on the consumption of alcoholic beverages.
 - Leaders of the movement simply wanted to regulate the sale of alcoholic spirits.
 - Few women were involved in the movement.
 - The movement was often supported by employers.

Objectives 1 and 3

4. Although short-lived, Antimasonry is important because it
- led to the abolition of the electoral college.
 - was the vehicle used by Andrew Jackson to gain grassroots support.
 - demonstrated to future political candidates that moral crusades had no place in American politics.
 - was a bridge between reform and politics.

Objectives 1 and 4

5. Which of the following positions on slavery would William Lloyd Garrison most likely have endorsed?
- Colonization
 - Immediate emancipation
 - Compensated emancipation
 - Free-soil

Objective 4

6. Both the Lovejoy murder and the gag rule served to
- cause dissension within the antislavery movement.
 - increase Northern support for the antislavery movement.
 - mobilize national support for the temperance movement.
 - increase national support for government regulation of industry.

Objective 5

7. The 1828 election was important because it
- demonstrated that issues were more important than personalities in presidential elections.
 - led political reformers to charge that the electoral college was obsolete.
 - demonstrated that party organization could be very important in presidential elections.
 - led to literacy tests for voters.

Objective 6

8. Which of the following statements best expresses Jacksonian beliefs?
- Strong central government is the enemy of individual liberty.
 - Public education is essential in a democratic society.
 - Government should be active in the economic life of the state.
 - A strong, powerful president is to be feared.

Objectives 6 and 7

9. In the Webster-Hayne debate, Webster argued that
- the doctrine of nullification would result in a society made up of warring states.
 - the Union was a collection of sovereign, independent states.
 - the Union was created by God and given as a gift to His special people, the American people.
 - abolitionists sought to destroy the South.

Objective 7

10. As a result of the nullification crisis,
- federal authority was weakened because of the disagreement between Jackson and Congress.
 - the South accepted the idea of secession.
 - neither the federal government nor South Carolina won a clear victory.
 - Jackson demonstrated his unwillingness to compromise.

Objective 7

11. In his veto message concerning the rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States, Jackson
- admitted that the bank was constitutional.
 - denounced the bank as undemocratic.
 - delivered a personal attack against the bank's president.
 - attacked the bank for its tight money policies.

Objectives 1 and 6

12. A person's political affiliation in the 1830s and 1840s was most closely associated with the person's
- social class.
 - religious beliefs.
 - occupation.
 - gender.

Objective 8

13. After ascending to the presidency upon the death of President Harrison, President Tyler
- turned the reins of government over to Secretary of State Daniel Webster.
 - proclaimed his opposition to Senator Calhoun's nullification theory.
 - committed himself to the creation of an activist federal government.
 - opposed the economic program put forward by his own party.

Objective 9

14. The expansionist sentiment of the 1840s emerged for which of the following reasons?
- The absence of threats by foreign powers caused Americans to think in expansionist terms.
 - Such sentiment served as a release for internal conflicts caused by the economic problems of the 1840s.
 - Spanish tyranny throughout the West was repugnant to Americans.
 - Americans believed that it was their duty to carry their superior American civilization to inferior peoples.

Objective 10

15. James K. Polk's election to the presidency in 1844 was in large part due to
 - a. fear among the voters that Henry Clay's American System would lead the nation to war.
 - b. the support given him by Martin Van Buren.
 - c. the presence of the Liberty Party candidate on the ballot.
 - d. Polk's stand against the expansion of slavery.

ESSAY QUESTIONS**Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4**

1. Discuss the characteristics of the Second Great Awakening, and explain the impact of this religious revival on American society in the early nineteenth century.

Objectives 1 and 4

2. Discuss the similarities and differences between "old" abolitionism as expressed through the American Colonization Society and "new" abolitionism as expressed through William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Objectives 2 and 4

3. Discuss the role of women in American society in the early nineteenth century, and explain the emergence, growth, goals, and achievements of the women's rights movement that emerged during that time.

Objectives 6 and 7

4. Discuss the social, political, and economic views of the Jacksonian Democrats, and explain how those views manifested themselves in the nullification crisis and in the controversy over rechartering the Second Bank of the United States.

Objective 9

5. Examine the expansionist sentiment that emerged in American society in the 1830s and 1840s.

Multiple-Choice Answers

1.
 - a. Correct. Leaders of the revival movement taught that perfection of earthly society would lead to the Second Coming. Therefore, evangelical Protestants became involved in reform movements that they believed were associated with the forces of good.
 - b. No. Although preachers of the Second Great Awakening taught that all people were sinners, they preached that anyone could achieve salvation.
 - c. No. The Second Great Awakening, based on evangelical Christianity, taught that God was an active force in the world.
 - d. No. Although the evangelists associated with this religious movement believed in the Second Coming and in the creation of God's kingdom on Earth, they preached neither that Jesus had already returned nor that the Last Judgment had begun.

2. c. Correct. At first the revival movement seemed to reinforce the traditional view of the role of women in a republican society. But the commitment of women to “spread the word” led to their involvement in reform organizations and to more involvement in the public and political arena.
- a. No. This society, formed by concerned women, not only led the crusade against prostitution but extended aid to impoverished women and orphans as well. It was not antifeminist in its orientation.
- b. No. The evidence does not support the conclusion that this society theologically supported the concept of women’s rights.
- d. No. Originally formed as an organization against prostitution, this organization was not antiforeign in its orientation.
3. d. Correct. The habit of drinking could not be tolerated in the factory. As factory owners complained about workers taking “St. Monday” as a holiday, they supported the temperance movement.
- a. No. The temperance movement gained widespread support and by the 1840s had brought a decline in the amount of alcohol consumed in the United States.
- b. No. The key word in this choice is “regulate.” The temperance movement was an attempt to prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcoholic spirits—whiskey, rum, and hard cider. Therefore, it went beyond a mere attempt to “regulate” hard liquor.
- c. No. Women were at the vanguard of the temperance movement.
4. d. Correct. At heart, Antimasonry was a reform movement that emphasized moral conduct and the rights of ordinary citizens. As a moral crusade, it attracted people in New England, the mid-Atlantic states, and Ohio. When it was then taken up by politicians as a device to win popular support, it became a bridge between reform and politics.
- a. No. Antimasonry did nothing to affect the electoral college. The electoral college is still in existence and is the mechanism by which the nation’s president is elected.
- b. No. Andrew Jackson was a Mason and was opposed by the Antimasons, who supported John Quincy Adams in the 1828 election.
- c. No. Antimasonry was turned into a moral crusade as church leaders and evangelicals joined the movement. It then crossed over into politics and was eventually absorbed by the Whig Party. In the process, its crusading aspects helped to shape the political party system.
5. b. Correct. As said in the text, “[Garrison was] the most prominent and uncompromising immediatist. . . .”
- a. No. William Lloyd Garrison organized the American Anti-Slavery Society and was an outspoken proponent of equality for African Americans in American society. He did not support organizations like the American Colonization Society that called for the colonization of African Americans outside the United States.
- c. No. Garrison believed that slaveholding was a sin and that slaveholders were sinners. Abolishing slavery was, in his eyes, a moral imperative that took precedence over the monetary investment slaveowners had in their slaves. Therefore, Garrison did not believe that slaveowners should be compensated when slavery was ended.
- d. No. The Free Soil movement began after the United States acquired the Mexican Cession territory in 1848 as a result of the Mexican war. Free-Soilers wanted slavery prohibited in the Mexican Cession territory but were willing to allow slavery to continue to exist in the South. Garrison was not a Free-Soiler.

6. b. Correct. Many northerners perceived the murder of Elijah Lovejoy, passage of the gag rule, and censorship of the mail in the South as a southern attack on the constitutional rights of abolitionists. As a result, many northerners became more supportive of the antislavery movement.
- a. No. Although there was dissension within the antislavery movement, it was over the women's rights question and over involvement of abolitionists in politics. Neither the Lovejoy murder nor the gag rule caused dissension within the movement.
- c. No. Neither the murder of Elijah Lovejoy nor the passage of the gag rule by the House of Representatives was related to the temperance movement.
- d. No. Neither the Lovejoy murder nor the gag rule had any relation to government regulation of industry.
7. c. Correct. Jackson's victory was in large part due to his direct appeal to the voters through a well-organized and well-funded party organization.
- a. No. The issues were secondary in a campaign that became a personal conflict between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson.
- b. No. The election gave political reformers no reason to charge that the electoral college was obsolete. Jackson won 56 percent of the popular vote and won the electoral vote by a margin of 178 to 83.
- d. No. The Jacksonian era is synonymous with the expansion of democracy and the advent of a more open political system, and the 1828 election did not lead to the adoption of literacy tests for voters.
8. a. Correct. Out of the belief that strong central government was the enemy of individual liberty, Jacksonian Democrats returned to the Jeffersonian notion of limited government.
- b. No. Jacksonian Democrats generally opposed the educational reform movement of the early nineteenth century. They believed that public education was too secular in its orientation and interfered with parental responsibilities.
- c. No. The Jacksonians rejected active government involvement in the economic life of the state because they believed such intervention benefited the wealthy.
- d. No. Jacksonian Democrats supported the idea of a strong chief executive who embodied the will of the people and acted on their behalf.
9. a. Correct. Daniel Webster believed that the Union was an inviolable compact among the people of all the states. Therefore, he believed that states' rights, which was the issue at the heart of the nullification crisis, would lead to "states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched ... in fraternal blood!"
- b. No. Robert Hayne and John C. Calhoun, supporters of states' rights, viewed the Union as a collection of sovereign, independent states. Daniel Webster did not share that view.
- c. No. Although Daniel Webster probably believed that God smiled on the Union, he did not express the belief that the Union had been created by God.
- d. No. The Webster-Hayne debate dealt with the issue of nullification and the issue of states' rights, which was at the heart of the nullification crisis. In the debate, Webster did not argue that abolitionists sought to destroy the South.
10. c. Correct. In light of the outcome of the nullification crisis, which included Jackson's nullification proclamation, passage of the Force Act by Congress, and passage of a compromise tariff to appease South Carolina, one can logically conclude that neither side won a clear victory.

- a. No. Jackson and Congress stood together in strongly advocating the supremacy of the federal government in the Constitution.
- b. No. South Carolina's nullification ordinance implied that the state would secede if the federal government attempted to enforce the Tariff of 1832. But other southern states did not formally accept either the theory of nullification or the more extreme idea of secession.
- d. No. Although Jackson indicated his belief that the theory of nullification was repugnant to the Constitution and at odds with the preservation of the Union, he urged Congress to lower the tariff by choosing from among several compromise tariff bills under consideration.
11. b. Correct. Although Jackson declared the bank unconstitutional, his veto message focused on denouncing the bank as an undemocratic symbol of special privilege and undue concentration of economic power in the hands of the rich and powerful.
- a. No. Although Jackson's veto message was an emotional attack on the undemocratic nature of the bank, it also declared the bank unconstitutional.
- c. No. Although Jackson had certainly been known to attack his opponents on the personal level, he did not deliver a personal attack against the president of the Second Bank in his veto message.
- d. No. Although the Second Bank had tightened credit considerably during the Panic of 1819 and generally followed a tight money policy after the depression ended in 1823, President Jackson's veto message did not focus on that policy. Furthermore, Jackson himself followed such a policy, as may be seen with the Specie Circular.
12. b. Correct. Religion and ethnicity were the two major determinants of party affiliation in the 1830s and 1840s.
- a. No. Social class was not the main determinant of party affiliation in the 1830s and 1840s.
- c. No. Since manufacturers, merchants, laborers, and farmers could be found in both parties, it cannot be said that occupation was the main determinant of party affiliation in the 1830s and 1840s.
- d. No. Since only men could vote, gender was not a determinant of one's party affiliation in the 1830s and 1840s.
13. d. Correct. John Tyler withdrew from the Democratic Party in 1833 in opposition to Jackson's use of executive power and his egalitarianism. Even though he joined the Whig Party, he never accepted the Whig concept of an activist national government and opposed the Whig economic program.
- a. No. John Tyler was the first vice president to assume the office of the presidency because of the death of the president. Some questioned whether he should assume all the powers of the office, but Tyler did not question his right to do so and took the reins of presidential power firmly in his hands.
- b. No. Tyler spoke out against South Carolina's nullification ordinance in 1832 when he was a senator from Virginia. However, he also opposed Jackson's nullification proclamation, a stand that caused him to resign his Senate seat and withdraw from the Democratic Party in 1833.
- c. No. Although John Tyler withdrew from the Democratic Party in 1833, became a Whig, and ran as the Whig vice-presidential candidate in the 1840 election, at heart he was a strict constructionist and was devoted to the idea of limited government.

14. d. Correct. One aspect of Manifest Destiny, and one of the reasons for the expansionist sentiment of the 1840s, was the idea that it was the mission of America to carry its superior civilization to inferior peoples.
- a. No. Many Americans believed that foreign enemies, especially the British, posed a threat to the nation's security. Therefore, many supported expansionism in an effort to secure the nation's borders from this perceived threat.
- b. No. The depression of 1839 lasted until 1843, and the 1840s are considered to be a period of economic expansion. This expansion heightened national pride, which in turn was a reason for the expansionist sentiment of the 1840s.
- c. No. Spain was no longer a power in the North American West, having been ousted in 1821 as a result of the Mexican independence movement.
15. c. Correct. James G. Birney's presence on the ballot as the Liberty Party's candidate drew enough votes away from Henry Clay in the state of New York to give the state and the election to James K. Polk.
- a. No. When Henry Clay first proposed the American System in 1824, he called for protective tariffs and federally funded internal improvements. With the rise of the Jacksonian Democrats, these proposals met with disaster. In 1844 the main campaign issue concerned expansion, not the American System.
- b. No. Van Buren's stance in the 1844 presidential election did not decide the contest.
- d. No. Polk ran on a platform that called for the territorial expansion of the United States. He did not stand against the expansion of slavery into the territories.