

DBQ**JACKSON AND THE CONSTITUTION**

CHAPTER 9

Directions: The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents A-H *and* your knowledge of the period referred to in the position. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period. Some of the documents have been edited, and wording and punctuation have been modernized. Be sure to:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

Question: Jacksonian Democrats viewed themselves as the guardians of the United States Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty, and equality of economic opportunity. In light of the following documents and your knowledge of the 1820s and 1830s, to what extent do you agree with the Jacksonians' view of themselves?

Document A

Source: George Henry Evans, "The Working Men's Declaration of Independence" (December 1829)

"We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; .that to secure these rights" against the undue influence of other classes of society, prudence, as well as the claims of self defence, dictates the necessity of the organization of a party, who shall, by their representatives, prevent dangerous combinations to subvert these indefeasible and fundamental privileges. "All experience hath shown, that mankind" in general, and we as a class in particular, "are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves," by an opposition which the pride and self interest of unprincipled political aspirants, with more unprincipled zeal or religious bigotry, will wilfully misrepresent. "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations" take place, all invariably tending to the oppression and degradation of one class of society, and to the unnatural and iniquitous exaltation of another by political leaders, "it is their right, it is their duty," to use every constitutional means to reform the abuses of such a government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Document B

Source: Andrew Jackson's veto message (July 10, 1832)

I sincerely regret that in the act before me I can perceive none of those modifications of the bank charter which are necessary, in my opinion, to make it compatible with justice, with sound policy, or with the Constitution of our country. . . . The present Bank of the United States . . . enjoys an exclusive privilege of banking, . . . almost a monopoly of the foreign and domestic exchange.

It appears that more than a fourth part of the stock is held by foreigners and the residue is held by a few hundred of our own citizens, chiefly of the richest class.

Of the twenty-five directors of this bank five are chosen by the Government and twenty by the citizen stockholders It is easy to conceive that great evils to our country and its institutions might flow from such a concentration of power in the hands of a few men irresponsible to the people.

Is there no danger to our liberty and independence in a bank that in its nature has so little to bind it to our country?

It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes.

Document C

Source: Daniel Webster's reply to Jackson's veto message (July 11, 1832)

[This message] extends the grasp of executive pretension over every power of the government. . . . It appeals to every prejudice which may betray men into a mistaken view of their own interests, and to every passion which may lead them to disobey the impulses of their understanding. It urges all the specious topics of State rights and national encroachment against that which a great majority of the States have affirmed to be rightful and in which all of them have acquiesced. It sows, in an unsparing manner, the seeds of jealousy and ill-will against that government of which its author is the official head. It raises a cry that liberty is in danger, at the very moment when it puts forth claims to powers heretofore unknown and unheard of. It effects alarm for the public freedom, when nothing endangers that freedom so much as its own unparalleled pretences. This even, is not all. It manifestly seeks to inflame the poor against the rich; it wantonly attacks whole classes of the people, for the purpose of turning against them the prejudices and the resentments of the other classes. It is a state paper which finds no topic too exciting for its use, no passion too inflammable for its address and its solicitation.

Document D

Source: Harriet Martineau, a British author, reporting on her 1834 visit to the United States in *Society in America* (New York, 1837)

I had been less than three weeks in the country and was in a state of something like awe at the prevalence of not only external competence but intellectual ability. The striking effect upon a stranger of witnessing, for the first time, the absence of poverty, of gross ignorance, of all servility, of all insolence of manner cannot be exaggerated in description. I had seen every man in the towns an independent citizen; every man in the country a landowner. I had seen that the villages had their newspapers, the factory girls their libraries. I had witnessed the controversies between candidates for office on some difficult subjects, of which the people were to be the judges.

With all these things in my mind, and with evidence of prosperity about me in the comfortable homesteads which every turn in the road and every reach of the lake brought into view, I was thrown into painful amazement by being told that the grand question, of the time was “whether the people should be encouraged to govern themselves, or whether the wise should save them from themselves.”

Document E

Source: Philip Hone, a New York City businessman and Whig politician, describing riots in eastern cities during the 1830's, in *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851* (New York, 1927)

Thursday, April 10.—Last day of the election; dreadful riots between the Irish and the Americans have again disturbed the public peace. I happened to be a witness of the disgraceful scene which commenced the warfare. . . . A band of Irishmen of the lowest class came out of Duane Street from the Sixth Ward poll, armed with clubs, and commenced a savage attack upon all. . . . There was much severe fighting and many persons were wounded and knocked down. . . . In a few minutes the mob returned with a strong reinforcement, and the fight was renewed with the most unrelenting barbarity.

Friday, August 22, 1834.—Riot in Philadelphia. The spirit of riot and insubordination to the laws which lately prevailed in New York has made its appearance in the orderly city of Philadelphia, and appears to have been produced by causes equally insignificant—hostility to the blacks and an indiscriminate persecution of all whose skins were darker than those of their enlightened fellow citizens. . . . Several houses were pulled down and their contents destroyed on Tuesday of last week; the police were attacked and several of the police officers badly wounded .

Document F

Source: Acts and Resolutions of South Carolina (1835)

3. Resolved, That the legislature of South Carolina, having every confidence in the justice and friendship of the non-slaveholding states, ... earnestly requests that the governments of these states will promptly and effectually suppress all those associations within their respective limits purporting to be abolition societies, and that they will make it highly penal to print, publish, and distribute newspapers, pamphlets, tracts and pictorial representations calculated and having an obvious tendency to excite the slaves of the southern states to insurrection and revolt.

7. Resolved, That the legislature of South Carolina regards with decided approbation the measures of security adopted by the Post Office Department of the United States in relation to the transmission of incendiary tracts. But if this highly essential and protective policy be counteracted by Congress, and the United States mail becomes a vehicle for the transmission of the mischievous documents, ... [we] expect that the Chief Magistrate of our state will forthwith call the legislature together, that timely measures may be taken to prevent [such mail] traversing our territory.

Document G

Source: Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma



Document H

Source: Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's opinion in Supreme Court case *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge* (1837)

The interests of the great body of the people of the state, would, in this instance, be affected by the surrender of this great line of travel to a single corporation, with the right to exact toll, and exclude competition, for seventy years. While the rights of private property are sacredly guarded, we must not forget, that the community also have rights, and that the happiness and well-being of every citizen depends on their faithful preservation .

. . . The charter of 1785 to the proprietors of the Charles River bridge . . . confers on them the ordinary faculties of a corporation, for the purpose of building a bridge; and establishes certain rates of toll, which the company are authorized to take. . . . There is no exclusive privilege given to them over the waters of Charles River, above or below their bridge; no right to erect another bridge themselves, nor to prevent other persons from erecting one; no engagement from the state, that another should not be erected; and no undertaking not to sanction competition, nor to make improvements that may diminish the amount of its income.

Referencing the Documents:

1. John Smith, in *History of Virginia*, said: “. . .”
2. In Document A, John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony agreed with. . .
3. In the Wage and Price Regulations in Connecticut, . . . (Document E).