Andrew Jackson
— A New Chapter in Presidential Leadership

Student Activity: Honor in a Life of Violence and Misfortune
Student Activity: Andrew Jackson — a Comparison and Contrast
Student Activity: Andrew Jackson in Today’s Post
Further Reading: “Trump called Andrew Jackson ‘a swashbuckler.’ The Cherokees called him ‘Indian killer.’”
This special issue, presented by The Washington Post’s Newspaper In Education (NIE) program and Digital Department, has been created for use with The Post’s “Presidential” podcast series. It particularly focuses on the episode "Andrew Jackson: The violence, the fight."

“Presidential” is a series of 44 podcasts, one for each president, hosted by Post reporter Lillian Cunningham. For every episode, she interviewed historians, biographers, reporters and other experts who were uniquely positioned to explain and explore the presidents’ lives and their time periods, the influences on their personalities and skills, and the contributions each made to presidential leadership.

Some of the suggested activities indicate time markers; others do not. We have provided approximate times to begin and end listening to certain segments. The exact time can vary depending on the device used or the length of ads served on different streaming sites. Transcripts for all podcasts are also available at wapo.st/presidential.

Some teachers have 45-minute class periods, others much longer blocks. Some of you will use the podcasts with KidsPost readers, others with high-school or college students. We have tried to vary the questions, activities and reprints to give you flexibility for in-class and homework assignments and discussion. They will serve as springboards as you use the 44 “Presidential” podcasts to meet your educational goals. Students can listen to the episodes referenced in this guide at wapo.st/presidential.
“Andrew Jackson: The Violence, The Fight” is the seventh episode in the "Presidential" podcast. In it, Lillian Cunningham, host of the series, interviews NPR journalist Steve Inskeep, Library of Congress historian Barbara Bair and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Jon Meacham. Listen to the podcast as they explore the seventh president’s enduring dark legacy and the way that violence — done to him, and by him — dramatically influenced his leadership style and a new type of presidency.

1. Andrew Jackson was born on the Ides of March. Look up what other famous event (also involving a political leader) happened on this day in history. What associations does the Ides of March have?

2. What difficult experiences had Jackson experienced by the age of 14?

3. Historian Barbara Bair speculates on how these early events influenced his outlook. What effect does she think they might have had?

4. Think about places where children today face conflict, loss of family and violence. What influence do you think this has on their lives? How might it change their potential outlook as adults?

5. What later events in Jackson’s life reinforce this view of the world?

6. Biographer and journalist Steve Inskeep describes how Jackson’s life reflects, in some ways, the values and culture of America in the 1700s. In what ways is Jackson a man of his time?

7. How does Jackson’s sense of honor express itself as both gentlemanly and as vengeful?

8. Later in the interview, Inskeep describes the importance of a political candidate having a narrative — a personal story — that appeals to people. What is Jackson’s narrative? And which voters admired and voted for him in 1828?

9. Describe Jackson’s military experience. How does it shape his character and influence his leadership style?
10. Summarize the ways in which Jackson was a self-made man.

   a) What are the qualities of the hickory stick that he shares?
   b) In what ways did he exemplify those qualities?
   c) How is this expressed during his presidency?

12. The experts in the podcast episode depict Jackson as a man who could show both great love and violent hatred. Give an example of how each emotion could steer his actions.

13. Jon Meacham, near the end of the podcast, states that Jackson’s “legacy has shifted through time.”
   a) Which aspects of Jackson’s personality do you see as positive?
   b) Which aspects of Jackson’s personality do you see as negative?

14. Which decision(s) that Jackson made during his presidency do you think had the greatest impact on changing expectations of presidential leadership?

15. Inskeep states (listen from approx. 40 to 42 minutes):

   “We are increasingly conscious that we’re in a very diverse country that’s becoming more diverse all the time. And it’s a development that underlies a lot of the news of our era, and certainly most of the politics of our era. It's there in the background on issue after issue after issue. When we study Jackson's time of almost a couple centuries ago, you realize that the United States was very diverse then and that there were many different kinds of people then. And so that question isn’t new. They also came up with a terrible, terrible answer to that question.”

   a) Summarize Inskeep’s statement.
   b) If you could speak to Inskeep, what questions would you ask him about his conclusion?
   c) Do you see parallels to today’s America?
Andrew Jackson — A Comparison and Contrast

The seventh episode of the "Presidential" podcast focuses on Andrew Jackson.

The experts who join host Lillian Cunningham — Library of Congress historian Barbara Bair, biographer and NPR Morning Edition co-host Steve Inskeep, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jon Meacham — discuss the many dimensions of the man known as Old Hickory, hero of the Battle of New Orleans, and populist president.

In the interviews, each expert compares and contrasts Jackson with other presidents. Select one of the following comparisons, listen to the podcast and write a comparison/contrast with specific examples.

◆ indicates areas in which comparison and contrast can naturally be made

- Andrew Jackson and George Washington
  Historian Barbara Bair of the Library of Congress makes several comparisons between Jackson and George Washington (approx. 38- to 39-minute marker). How are they alike and how do they differ?
  ◆ frontier experience, involvement in battles and wars, leadership style

- Andrew Jackson and the six presidents who came before him.
  Begin with Jackson biographer Jon Meacham’s statement in Presidential episode 7, “Andrew Jackson: The Violence, the Fight” (approx. 32- to 34-minute marker):

  “The vividness of his character, and his capacity to be subtle and strong while projecting an image of hawkishness, and the journey he made from obscurity to being the president of the United States. The first six presidents were either Virginia planters or Adamses from Massachusetts. Jackson, as the seventh president, was the first self-made man to reach the pinnacle -- and that was intrinsically dramatic.”

  Draw more specific comparisons and contrasts between Andrew Jackson and the first six presidents.
  ◆ education and government experience, involvement in battles and wars, leadership style

- Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams
  Lillian Cunningham and Barbara Bair, Library of Congress historian, discuss the elections of 1824 and 1828 between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson (listen from approx. 37 to 39 minutes). These men are a study of contrasts. Compare their differences.
  ◆ family, education, experience in battle and governing, supporters and the 1824 and 1828 elections, and leadership style

- Andrew Jackson and Donald Trump
  Just as Ronald Reagan did, President Trump chose to hang a portrait of Andrew Jackson in the Oval Office. Trump said Jackson was a “swashbuckler” and “a very tough person.” How are the two presidents similar? How are the two presidents different?
Andrew Jackson in Today’s Post

Journalism is often said to be the first draft of history. On any given day, you might read news stories reporting on local happenings (meetings with city officials, neighborhood crimes, high-school game scores), state events (legislative and executive decisions, annual fairs and athletic championships, statewide storm damage), and national and international decisions (presidential meetings abroad, natural disasters, peace treaties).

The Washington Post also often brings the past into its coverage of the present -- it offers readers new assessments of old actions, commentary on changes in culture and reminders of who we were. The “Retropolis” section connects today’s news with our history. The Post has been recording history on its front pages since 1877. Its archives serve as a resource (as do Washington’s museums, libraries and historians) for the Retropolis blog and print column.

Retropolis

Hunting down runaway slaves: The cruel ads of Andrew Jackson and ‘the master class’

BY DENEEN L. BROWN

“Stop the Runaway,” Andrew Jackson urged in an ad placed in the Tennessee Gazette in October 1804. The future president gave a detailed description: A “Mulatto Man Slave, about thirty years old, six feet and an inch high, stout made and active, talks sensible, stoops in his walk, and has a remarkable large foot, broad across the root of the toes — will pass for a free man....”

Jackson, who would become the country’s seventh commander in chief in 1829, promised anyone who captured this “Mulatto Man Slave” a reward of $50, plus “reasonable” expenses paid.

Jackson added a line that some historians find particularly cruel.

It offered “ten dollars extra, for every hundred lashes any person will give him, to the amount of three hundred.”

The ad was signed, “ANDREW JACKSON, Near Nashville, State of Tennessee.”

The runaway slave ad placed by Andrew Jackson ran in the “Tennessee Gazette,” on Oct. 3, 1804. The ad was published on Page 3, column 4.
Retropolis

Andrew Jackson was called ‘Indian killer.’ Trump honored Navajos in front of his portrait.

BY ELI ROSENBERG

The prominent placement of an Andrew Jackson portrait during an event meant to honor a group of Native Americans at the Oval Office on Monday has raised questions about the White House’s message.

Jackson is known for his harsh treatment of Native Americans as president, famously signing the Indian Removal Act, which led to thousands of Native American deaths as tens of thousands were forced to relocate. Some observers thought the juxtaposition of his portrait during the event with the stated purpose of honoring three Navajo code talkers was strange.

“We noticed,” said Jacqueline Pata, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians. “Andrew Jackson wasn’t necessarily a president who was respectful of tribal governments and Native Americans. This is one of those eras that is probably bleaker in terms of the relationship between Native Americans and the federal government.”

The portrait is visible for the entirety of the White House’s 17-minute broadcast of the event.
Trump called Andrew Jackson ‘a swashbuckler.’
The Cherokees called him ‘Indian killer.’

BY DeNEEN L. BROWN

Donald Trump has a portrait of Andrew Jackson hanging by his desk in the Oval Office. On Monday, in an interview with Salena Zito, the 45th president lauded the seventh president, calling Jackson “a swashbuckler” who could have prevented the Civil War.

The Cherokees had a different name for Jackson. They called him “Indian killer.” The Creek called him “Sharp Knife.”

On May 28, 1830, Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which Native Americans say was a form of legalized ethnic cleansing. The act forced more than 60,000 Native Americans from their lands in the Southeast United States, clearing the way for white pioneers. Native Americans were forced to walk hundreds of miles to resettle west of the Mississippi River. Historians believe more than 15,000 died on the difficult journey.

After Jackson left the White House in 1837, Cherokees were pushed off their land during the winter of 1838 and 1839. More than 4,000 Cherokees died from hunger, exposure and disease on their march west, which became known as the “Trail of Tears.”

Jackson, who was 61 when he became president in 1829, was considered a military hero who had defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. By then, “Old Hickory,” as Jackson was nicknamed, had already used troops against warring factions of the Creek Nation and imposed harsh terms during peace negotiations, according to the National Park Service, which operates a historic “Trail of Tears” route.

“His treaty punished both the Red Sticks and the Creek who had fought by his side with a cession of 23 million acres — nearly half of the Creek land,” according to the park service account. “His terms and unwillingness to negotiate earned him the Creek nickname of ‘Sharp Knife.’ ”

Jackson was born in South Carolina in 1767. His father, Andrew, an immigrant from northern Ireland, had died just days earlier. When he was 14, Jackson fought against the British in the Revolutionary War. According to historians, Jackson was taken prisoner by the British, and a soldier cut him with a sword when Jackson refused to polish his boots.
Jackson was tall, with a narrow head and piercing eyes—a slave owner with cruel streak. He had killed a man in a duel in Kentucky, in 1806, after the man made rude comments about Jackson’s wife, Rachel.

In 1813, Jackson, then a U.S. Army major general, led a massacre against Creek Indians in the Mississippi Territory. Jackson saw them as impediments to his desire for western settlement.

His assessment of the Cherokee? “Established in the midst of a superior race,” Jackson said, “they must disappear.”

A year after becoming the country’s first populist president, he laid out his Indian removal strategy in his Second Annual Message to Congress.

Gold had been discovered in northern Georgia, which was the territory of the Cherokee. The Indian Removal Act cleared the way for white gold prospectors to seize the land.

The U.S. Supreme Court had issued a ruling, attempting to prevent Georgia from removing the Cherokees. But Jackson, whose visage appears on the $20 bill, ignored the decision.

On Dec. 6, 1830, Jackson predicted in his written address to Congress that removal would relieve Mississippi and Alabama of Indian occupancy and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power.

Jackson said he believed that pushing Native Americans from their homelands would “enable them to pursue happiness in their own way, and under their own rude institutions.”

The Native Americans, under the “protection of the Government,” would be compelled “through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized and Christian community,” Jackson said. “These consequences, some of them so certain, and the rest so probable, make the complete execution of the plan sanctioned by Congress at their last session an object of much solicitude.”

Tribes including the Creek, Seminole, Choctaw and Chickasaw were marched hundreds of miles to what the government called “Indian Territory” in Oklahoma.

In 1836, Cherokee Chief John Ross, who led his people west, wrote in a letter that they had been stripped of their freedom.

“Our property may be plundered before our eyes; violence may be committed on our persons; even our lives may be taken away, and there is none to regard our complaints,” Ross wrote.

He added the Cherokee had been stripped of their humanity.

“Our hearts are sickened, our utterance is paralized, when we reflect on the condition in which we are placed, by the audacious practices of unprincipled men, who have managed their stratagems with so much dexterity as to impose on the Government of the United States, in the face of our earnest, solemn, and reiterated protestations.”