The changing character of American Political life – increasing participation in the “age of the common man”.

VUS.6d
Characteristics of the “Age of the Common Man”

- Heightened emphasis on equality in the political process for adult white males
- The rise of interest group politics and sectional bias
- A changing style of campaigning to appeal to the “common man”
- Increased voter participation at the state and national level
The corrupt bargain—Election of 1824:

- Jackson won the popular vote among 4 candidates.
- There was no winner of a majority of electoral college votes.
- Clay withdrew allowing J.Q. Adams to be chosen by the House of Representatives.
- Clay became Secretary of State!
Election of 1828:

- Reflected greater suffrage and political activism.
- Delegates worked through nominating conventions.
- Americans were equal at the ballot box.
- Jackson won!
A New Democratic Spirit:

- Election of Andrew Jackson came at a time when the vast majority of American men participated in the electoral process.
- Suffrage was being extended.
- This replaced the previous aristocratic government of the United States, as the distinction between aristocrats and the common man were disappearing.

*This depiction shows how Jackson opened the White House to the public as he took office.*
Jackson’s Spoils System:

- Jackson hired political supporters to fill government jobs.
- “To the victor goes the spoils.”
- Increased involvement in government by ordinary people - but did lead to more levels of corruption.

Portraits courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.
Indian Removal:

- Jackson wished to force Indians to reservations FARTHER west across Mississippi.
- A Georgia eviction law was overturned by the Marshall Court. Jackson refused to enforce the decision, which led to “Trail of Tears” which forced tribes (Cherokee) out of Georgia. Many died!
- Jackson’s refusal to enforce a court ruling could have drawn impeachment, but he actually became MORE popular!
Jackson founded the Democratic Party which believed:

- Extending political powers (suffrage).
- Opposition to the National Bank.
- Opposition to the American System (Henry Clay).
- Support Indian Removal and expansion.
- Undecided on the issue of tariffs.
Federalists disappeared, but new parties opposed the Democrats!

- **Whigs**: strongly opposed Jackson as a “tyrant”, taking too much power by opposing the bank, the American System and his actions against the Indians. Notable members were Henry Clay and Daniel Webster!

- **Know-Nothings**: formed in the 1850’s, strongly opposed to immigrants
Legacy of Jackson:

- Extension of democratic participation - Suffrage and the Spoils System
- Strengthening of presidential power using public opinion
- Use of the VETO forces Congress to consider President’s views when passing laws
- Removal of Indians to reservations
- Economic crisis caused by Jackson’s banking policies