Who Counts as People?

Voting, parties, and the limits of Jacksonian democracy

SS24.US1.6a "Describe the changes in political culture during the Age of Reform, including the concept of Jacksonian democracy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline two changes in political participation, circle groups denied equal political power, and number two ways parties sought voters' support. These marks will help you describe both the growth and the limits of Jacksonian democracy.

A Louder Political World

1 At a polling place in the 1820s, a farmer without land might cast a ballot that his father could not have cast in the same state. During the early republic, many states had required men to own property to vote. By the 1820s and 1830s, most states had removed that requirement for white men. More white men entered politics, and election turnout climbed sharply. Supporters called this wider voting a step toward government by ordinary people. Yet expanding the vote for white men did not mean equal political rights for everyone.

2 Candidates no longer depended mainly on small circles of officeholders to gather support. In the 1828 presidential election, Andrew Jackson's supporters held rallies, printed campaign newspapers, and praised him as a champion of the common man. Rival parties soon used similar tactics to win votes. Jacksonian democracy joined broader white male voting with the belief that elected leaders should answer to those voters, not just wealthy elites. After winning office, Jackson rewarded some loyal supporters with government jobs, a practice called patronage. Critics argued that party loyalty could matter more than skill and that the president claimed too much power.

3 The phrase “the people” had sharp limits. Women could not vote in national elections, and many states barred free Black men from voting or took away rights they had held. Native nations faced an even harsher challenge: Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, and federal pressure forced many Native people west of their homelands. Reformers challenged other limits of American life. Abolitionists organized against slavery, while women organized petitions and public meetings about slavery and their own rights. The Age of Reform thus brought more mass participation in politics alongside fierce disputes over who counted as an equal citizen.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did voting rules change from the early republic to the 1830s, and who gained political power as a result?

2. How did parties change the way candidates sought support? Use two examples from the passage.

3. How could Jackson's use of patronage conflict with the ideals of Jacksonian democracy?

4. Why was the meaning of “the people” disputed during the Age of Reform? Use evidence about two groups from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word newspaper editorial as an observer in the 1830s. Compare politics with the early republic, then argue whether “government by the people” fits your time, using one campaign detail, one excluded group, and one reformers' action from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Who Counts as People?

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.6a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline two changes in political participation, circle groups denied equal political power, and number two ways parties sought voters' support. These marks will help you describe both the growth and the limits of Jacksonian democracy. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did voting rules change from the early republic to the 1830s, and who gained political power as a result?	**Most states removed property requirements for white men, allowing more white men to vote and increasing their political power.**
2	How did parties change the way candidates sought support? Use two examples from the passage.	**Parties sought broad voter support through tactics such as rallies and campaign newspapers instead of relying mainly on small circles of officeholders.**
3	How could Jackson's use of patronage conflict with the ideals of Jacksonian democracy?	**Jacksonian democracy held that leaders should answer to ordinary white male voters, but critics argued that patronage rewarded party loyalty over skill.**
4	Why was the meaning of "the people" disputed during the Age of Reform? Use evidence about two groups from the passage.	**Political participation grew for white men, but others lacked equal power. For example, women could not vote in national elections, while many free Black men were barred from voting or lost voting rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Readers, our elections are no longer the quiet business of property-owning men and officeholders. In many states, white farmers without land now vote, and parties rally crowds and print newspapers to win their support. Yet calling this government by all the people hides its limits. Women cannot vote in national elections, while Native nations face forced removal from their homelands. Abolitionists organize against slavery, showing that people are demanding deeper change. We should judge our democracy not only by its louder campaigns but also by whose rights it protects.

Accept other accurate comparisons and supported judgments. For the editorial, check for a clear argument, all three requested types of evidence, and a length of 75 to 100 words.