Chapter 11
Expanding Westward:
Society and Politics in the “Age of the Common Man,”
1819–1832

Learning Objectives

After reading Chapter 11, you should be able to:

1. Understand Indian relocation policy in the United States during the Jackson Administration.
2. Discuss the special situation of the Cherokee Nation and how it retained its homeland while other tribes were removed.
3. Explain the skewed hierarchy of American society: white men held all political power while women, blacks, and Indians were virtually invisible.
4. Discuss the lure of fertile land in the West and the political problems western settlers faced.
5. Detail the growing incidents of slave revolts and rebellions of this period.
6. Understand the ways western immigrants maintained ties with family and friends “back east.”

Time Line

1818
General Andrew Jackson authorized to broaden his assault on the Seminole Indians

1819
United States consisted of 22 states
Territory of Missouri applied for statehood
Panic of 1819
Transcontinental treaty of 1819
McCulloch v. Maryland

1820
Missouri Compromise
Land Act of 1820
James Monroe reelected as president
1821
Spain approved petition of Moses Austin to move settlers into southeastern Texas
*Cohens v. Virginia*

1822
Andrew Jackson became first American governor of Florida territory

1823
Monroe Doctrine established

1824
John Quincy Adams elected president of the United States

1828
Andrew Jackson elected president of the United States
The “Tariff of Abominations”
The *Cherokee Phoenix* began publication in Georgia
Sarah Hale became first woman in America to edit a periodical: *Ladies Magazine*

1829
Discovery of gold in Georgia’s northern mountains: the “Great Intrusion”
*Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, David Walker

1830
Indian Removal Act passed by Congress
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints founded by Joseph Smith

1831
Nat Turner’s Revolt

1832
*Confessions of Nat Turner*, Thomas Gray
President Jackson sent troops to Georgia to begin removal of the Cherokee Nation
Nullification Proclamation
Jackson vetoed renewal of Second Bank of the United States
Bad Axe River incident of the Black Hawk War
Black Hawk and White Cloud surrendered to federal troops

1835
*Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville
Chapter Overview

One of the most important political, economic, and social changes in the period of the early Republic was the opening up of the western lands for settlement. This process changed the political dynamics of the young nation and redefined conceptions of democracy. This chapter includes a particularly important discussion of the rise of Andrew Jackson as the symbol of his age.

I. The Politics behind Western Expansion

A. The Missouri Compromise

The right of territories to become states was established by the Northwest Ordinances of 1785 and 1787. In 1819, when the 22 states of the United States were evenly divided between slave and free states, Missouri applied for statehood as a slave state. The heated debate that followed finally ended in compromise in 1820, with Maine admitted as a free state to balance Missouri, and an agreement that in the future slavery above latitude 36 ‘30’ in the Louisiana Territory would be prohibited. Congressmen breathed a sigh of relief, but the Missouri Compromise only delayed the eventual conflict over slavery that was destined to erupt.

B. Ways West: The Erie Canal

Congress encouraged European Americans to push west and south by financing new methods of transportation and sale of cheap land. The number of steamboats on the Mississippi increased dramatically as canals linked western producers with eastern consumers and vice versa. In 1825, the completion of the 363-mile Erie Canal linked the New York cities of Troy and Albany with Buffalo on the tip of Lake Erie.

The canal was a marvel in engineering, financial and social terms. New York received a vast return on its investment. By making inexpensive manufactured goods accessible to people in rural New York and the Midwest, the canal raised the standard of living. Still, some opposed the changes as destroying traditional communities and bringing in unruly travelers who frequented places selling strong drink.

C. Spreading American Culture—and Slavery

The promise of the West continued to draw settlers to populate new lands. Settlers from the slave states crossed the Appalachian Mountains into Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The wealthier of these settlers traveled with their human property, intending to establish slavery anywhere they went. New planter elites settled in the area and used slaves to drain swamps, to build levees to control the seasonal flood waters, and to plant and harvest cotton.
Newly independent Mexico granted 200,000 acres in the fertile river bottoms of the Mexican territory of Texas to Moses Austin, who accepted the responsibility of developing the area, bringing settlers who agreed to be law-abiding Mexican citizens.

The Mexican constitution prohibited slavery but supported debt peonage, providing a legal window for white Americans to use slave labor. During the 1820s, Moses’s son Stephen Austin brought 1,300 settlers to the region. However, an additional 4,500 uninvited white squatters also moved into Texas. Most of these were genuine settlers who developed the land with the expectation that they would eventually be accepted as citizens by the Mexican government and awarded title to their lands.

D. Migration and Its Effects on the Western Environment

By clearing land for planting and hunting animals, westward migrants like Davy Crockett had altered the backwoods ecology. By 1800, beavers were in danger of becoming extinct east of the Mississippi. New York and New England farmers and loggers caused a chain reaction by destroying the habitat of the bark-eating porcupine which in turn was a food source for the fur bearing fisher, much prized for its fur. When rivers were dammed and ponds and swamps drained, the places where animals lived were destroyed. Squirrels and passenger pigeons depended on nuts from trees that disappeared as forests were leveled. Some Americans, like naturalist John Godman, understood the long-term effects of settlement on the natural environment, while John James Audubon’s watercolors of bird and mammals showed the diversity of the nation’s wildlife.

E. The Panic of 1819 and the Plight of Western Debtors

In 1819, the Second Bank of the United States required greater financial responsibility from the hundreds of local “wildcat” banks that had extended credit to struggling farmers. Those unable to make regular mortgage payments faced foreclosure, loss of land, equipment, and crops, causing a market scare and subsequent depression known as the Panic of 1819. With fewer crops for the eastern market, food prices skyrocketed. Without the usual volume of trade and access to credit, many small businesses folded. Faced with the reduction in consumer spending and unable to access credit, even the elite plantation owners faced foreclosure.

F. The Monroe Doctrine

James Monroe won reelection in 1820 despite the Panic and depression of 1819. At this time, some of the European powers were claiming land and promoting territorial rights near the American border. Especially worrisome for the government was the Spanish presence on its southern and western borders. In 1818, the president authorized General Andrew Jackson to step up assaults on the Seminole Indian tribe in Florida territory. Suspecting Florida of harboring runaway slaves for the past two years, Jackson used this opportunity to seize the Spanish fort
at Pensacola and demand that Spain either suppress the Seminole population or sell the territory of east Florida to the United States. The Transcontinental Treaty of 1819 gave America the Spanish domains of both Florida and the Oregon territory.

Fearful of the devastation that an alliance of the European powers could mean for the United States, President Monroe devised a policy that thrust America forward as a power unto itself. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 forbade all foreign powers to intervene politically or militarily in the realm of the Western Hemisphere.

G. Andrew Jackson’s Rise to Power

The election of 1824 produced no majority in the popular vote, and a close finish in the Electoral College threw the election to the House of Representatives. John Calhoun won the ballot for vice-president and promptly withdrew, changing his support from Andrew Jackson to John Quincy Adams, who the House subsequently elected. The Jackson camp charged Adams with corrupting the electoral process and making sinister deals behind the backs of Americans.

Adams faced Jackson again in the 1828 election, and this time events swung the other way. In an amazingly mean-spirited race, Jackson won a landslide victory. In office, Jackson immediately instigated a national spoils system which rewarded loyal supporters during a president’s campaign with administration jobs, while tossing out the preceding president’s appointed staff. This practice is still in use today.

II. Federal Authority and Its Opponents

A. Judicial Federalism and the Limits of Law

In a series of landmark cases, Chief Justice John Marshall and the Supreme Court sought to limit the powers of the states within their own boundaries. McCulloch v. Maryland (1819) supported the Congressional decision to grant the Second Bank of the United States a 20-year charter. The state of Maryland had issued a high tax on the notes issued by the bank; this action was ruled unconstitutional by the Court in the first demonstration of federal judicial review, restated in Cohens v. Virginia (1821).

In 1832, a case involving the encroaching cotton production into the homelands of the Cherokee Nation in north Georgia aimed the Court on a collision course with President Jackson. The Cherokee Nation had undergone tremendous change in adapting to European ways of life. They did this in hope of retaining their traditional homeland. The discovery of gold in the heart of the Cherokee lands in 1829 led to the “Great Intrusion” of the whites. The Cherokees, who considered themselves a sovereign nation, reached out to the federal government for justice in the
face of this veritable invasion, but President Jackson considered the very existence of the Cherokee Nation an affront to his authority. In fact, Jackson favored the removal of the Cherokees to open up the gold fields to unchallenged mining.

With Congressional backing, the Indian Removal Act became law in 1830. This Act provided for the removal of Indians to designated areas west of the Mississippi River. Outraged, the Cherokees refused to sign the removal treaties required by the federal government, and took their case to the U.S. Supreme Court, hoping the Court would uphold the idea of the Cherokees as a sovereign nation. In two decisions, the Court declared Indian nations to be independent of the states in which they were based, but dependent on the government of the United States. President Jackson and the Governor of Georgia ridiculed the Court’s presumption of judicial authority. In 1832, Jackson sent federal troops to Georgia to begin forced relocation of the Cherokee people.

B. The Tariff of Abominations

The Tariff of 1828 (the Tariff of Abominations in the South) increased taxes on foreign products and raw material, thereby continuing the “protection” of American industry. Foreign governments retaliated with high tariffs of their own. In the wake of the Panic of 1819, this measure was economically damaging to the South, which had to trade its cotton on the world market to survive. Revived four years later, South Carolina declared the 1832 tariff “null and void” in the state. Jackson rejected the “nullifiers’” action as usurping federal power, issued a terse Nullification Proclamation, and proceeded to send troops to force South Carolina to alter its position. Henry Clay, a senator from Kentucky, brokered a compromise and both parties retreated for the time being.

C. The “Monster Bank”

Andrew Jackson vetoed rechartering the Second Bank of the United States which was due to expire in 1836, claiming that his view of the Bank as a tool for the enrichment of the wealthy represented the majority opinion of the nation. Economic chaos followed as local and state banks proliferated. Convinced the bank veto would spell Jackson’s political downfall, his opponents seized the issue and pushed Henry Clay into the race for president in 1832.

Clay and his supporters were shocked to learn the Supreme Court had upheld Jackson’s veto, stealing much of the thunder from Clay’s campaign. Also key was the introduction of an anti-Masonic candidate into the race that further drew away anti-Jackson voters from Clay. Jackson’s landslide victory surprised no one.
III. Real People in the “Age of the Common Man”

A. Wards, Workers, and Warriors: Native Americans

In the 1820s, Native Americans, blacks, and women comprised 70 percent of the American population. Consequently, universal white male suffrage provided political power to only one-third of the nation. Political decisions increasingly dehumanized Indians and ridiculed the idea that they had rights that must be respected. The so-called Five Civilized Tribes east of the Mississippi formed their own schools, published newspapers in their native languages, domesticated animals, established farms and plantations, and perfected craft and trade skills that showcased their degree of “civilization.” In the Old Northwest, tribes like the Peorias moved in response to increased white pressure on their land. Winnebagos, Sauks, and Fox tribes united under the Sauk chief Black Hawk and clashed with federal troops repeatedly in an unsuccessful attempt to keep tribal lands.

B. Slaves and Free People of Color

The decade of the 1820s saw a natural increase in the slave population of 25 percent, or 500,000 people. The free black population in the North made a similar percent increase, due more to manumissions, while the southern free-black population increased more slowly. Although the number of free blacks was insignificant, white southerners feared their lifestyle and attitudes would inspire slave rebellions. The reaction to rumors regarding the freed black man Denmark Vessey in 1822 demonstrated the depth of white fear. These rumors about intended rebellion led to arrests, torture, and eventually the hanging of 35 black men and the exile of 18 others. Witness testimony was contradictory, and historical evidence suggests no reliable proof ever existed that any kind of rebellion was planned.

Nat Turner’s Rebellion of 1831, which resulted in the deaths of 60 whites, prompted similar reactions and served to reinforce white fears. Slave owners subsequently implemented policies meant to fully control the slave and free black populations. Northern free blacks also dealt with white suspicions and restrictions on their freedom. Some became active in advocating the end of slavery, a few suggested leaving the country to settle in Africa, some advocated separation from whites, while others urged integration as the best means of protecting themselves and building a future. After the Nat Turner Rebellion a widely read biography of Turner shocked readers in the South. Portrayed as a thoughtful, religious man born and raised under the rule of a kind master, Turner did not fit the stereotype of the dangerous slave. This incident and the resulting hysteria served to solidify the institution of slavery until the American Civil War.

C. Legal and Economic Dependence: The Status of Women

Regardless of what region they lived in, Indian women and slave women had virtually no rights under either U.S. or Spanish law. A white woman also remained subordinate to the law and her husband, having no legal control over property, wages, her children, or herself. She could not
make contracts, vote, or serve on a jury. In contrast, a married woman in the Spanish southwest had many more rights.

Few white women worked outside their homes for wages and there were few respectable jobs available, though most made unappreciated contributions to family welfare through housework and child rearing. Well-to-do women redefined their role as managers of servants and the creators of a comfortable home environment for their husbands and children, becoming consumers rather than producers.

In Spanish settlements, women took the responsibility of household production of goods for the family. Indian women had long been traditionally responsible for the efficient operation of the tribe through manual labor.

Though few women worked for actual wages, one exception was in the New England textile mills that were constantly in need of labor due to the scarcity of slaves. Women lived together in boarding houses and followed the strict rules of the company towns.

IV. Ties That Bound a Growing Population

Seeking new opportunities often meant leaving hometowns, families, friends, and the network of one’s neighbors. The realm of politics provided one form of continuity for white males. Religion provided many with comforting answers as well as social networks that could fill the need for kin and friends. Increased literacy produced connections through common ideas and imagery. Newspapers, books, and pamphlets also promoted values claiming to represent the best individuals, reinforcing or creating gender roles, defining appropriate family relationships, and providing the rationale for or against slavery.

A. New Visions of Religious Faith

The turbulence of the times produced new methods of expressing religious faith, as chaos usually does. During the Indian Wars of the Old Northwest, a Winnebago prophet named White Cloud joined forces with Sauk Chief Black Hawk to bring together a coalition from several tribes. A medicine man and respected mystic, White Cloud sermonized against the white Americans and encouraged his Indian brethren to take action and defend some aspects of their way of life through submission before it was too late. White Cloud and Black Hawk surrendered together to federal troops in 1832 in an act of spiritual unity against the oppression of whites.

In the northern states, a Second Great Awakening prompted spiritual revivals and multitudes of new converts. A respected lawyer-turned-clergyman, Charles Finney preached a message of an independent relationship with God buttressed by works through political organizations. In the
South, white clerics turned away from their traditional role in the conversion of slaves and looked for the favor of the plantation/well-to-do class of followers. In 1830, Joseph Smith founded what would become The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

B. Literate and Literary America

A former hat maker and amateur writer in Boston blazed new ground for women in 1825 by becoming the first woman in America to edit a periodical. In *Ladies Magazine*, Sarah Hale hoped to better educate American women in the realms of motherhood, piety, and self-sacrifice. Hale and many other women writers believed in the silent, powerful influence women could have on the affairs of the world.

Sentimental poetry and fiction comprised the bulk of literature targeting women in this era. Men, however, began a literary tradition in America of regional histories, landscapes, and heroic struggle. Newspapers, books, and magazines began to flourish, all working to define and describe the quintessential traits of American character. Hard work, attention to family, and adherence to specific core moralistic values were the ideals of Americans as well as the Victorians of England.

**Identification**

*Explain the significance of each of the following:*

1. The Missouri Compromise:

2. The Land Act of 1820:

3. coffles:

4. American canal system:

5. Moses and Stephen Austin:

6. The Panic of 1819:

7. “wildcat” banks:
8. Davy Crockett:

9. James Monroe:

10. General Andrew Jackson:

11. The Transcontinental Treaty of 1819:

12. The Russo-American Treaty of 1824:

13. The Monroe Doctrine:

14. John Quincy Adams:

15. Henry Clay’s “American System”:

16. spoils system:

17. McCulloch v. Maryland (1819):

18. The “Great Intrusion”:

19. The Indian Removal Act:

20. Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831)

21. The “Tariff of Abominations”: 
22. Nullification Proclamation of 1832:

23. Henry Clay:

24. Alexis de Tocqueville:

25. Sequoyah:

26. Bad Axe River Incident:

27. Denmark Vesey:

28. American Colonization Society:

29. Nat Turner:

30. Joseph Smith:
Multiple Choice Questions

1. The Chief Justice of the United States most responsible for carving out the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was
   A. James Madison.
   C. John Jay.
   D. James Monroe.
   E. Andrew Jackson.

2. The event that led to the forced removal of the Cherokee from Georgia was
   A. a legal challenge to tribal sovereignty.
   B. the murder of a settler family.
   C. a slave uprising in the Georgia low country.
   D. treaty violations by rum-soaked war parties.
   E. the discovery of gold.

3. The high tariff rates caused a great controversy in the southern states and led to the
   A. secession of South Carolina.
   B. expansion of the cotton empire.
   C. collapse of the Second Bank of the United States.
   D. Nullification crisis.
   E. Wall Street panic of 1819.

4. The politician who sought to exploit the discontent raised by Jackson's veto of the bank bill was
   A. Henry Clay.
   B. John C. Calhoun.
   C. William Wirt.
   D. Daniel Webster.
   E. Martin Van Buren.

5. The Cherokee responsible for crafting the famous syllabary was
   A. William Holland Thomas.
   B. Broken Arrow.
   C. Sequoyah.
   D. John Ross.
   E. Dragging Canoe.
6. The slave carpenter who was arrested and executed for plotting a rebellion in Charleston in 1822 was
   A. Gabriel Prosser.
   B. Nat Turner.
   C. Frederick Douglass.
   D. Denmark Vesey.
   E. Osceola.

7. The American Colonization Society was dedicated to
   A. American expansion into Texas.
   B. the return of freed blacks back to Africa.
   C. the transport of antislavery settlers westward.
   D. the return of territory to Canada.
   E. an American conquest of Cuba.

8. The black militant responsible for the pamphlet *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* was
   A. Gabriel Prosser.
   B. Maria Stewart.
   C. Denmark Vesey.
   D. Nat Turner.
   E. David Walker.

9. One of the major leaders in the spread of religious enthusiasm of the Second Great Awakening was
   A. Joseph Smith.
   C. Charles Grandison Finney.
   D. William Lloyd Garrison.
   E. Rev. Billy Sunday.

10. The author of the so-called “Leather-stocking Tales” was
    A. James Fenimore Cooper.
    B. Henry David Thoreau.
    C. Washington Irving.
    D. Herman Melville.
    E. John Greenleaf Whitter.

**MAP QUESTION:**

After studying Map 11.3, explain why the intricate system of canals was built in the northern United States and not in the South.
CONNECTING HISTORY

In your opinion, why has the United States allowed the communist regime of Fidel Castro to continue in Cuba, even after the breakup of the Soviet Union? Should the Monroe Doctrine apply in this case?

INTERPRETING HISTORY

Why does the author feel the *partido* way of tending sheep to be so rewarding? Why would a system like this not work everywhere in the United States regardless of the product?

Answers to Multiple Choice Questions

1. B
2. E
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. D
7. B
8. E
9. C
10. A