

## **Year 1:**

## **Unit 7**

# **Democracy for All? - The Ages of Jackson, Cotton, and Social Reform (1820 - 1850): Introduction**

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### **Unit Purpose: Why This Unit?**

Following the War of 1812, the United States entered an era of national prosperity. Beneath the surface, however, debates over slavery and citizenship increasingly divided the nation. President Andrew Jackson and Democratic populists worked to expand democracy to the “common man,” but their definition excluded African Americans, Native Americans, and women. The invention of the cotton gin, along with the increased demand for cotton, led to the growth of cotton plantations across the South and a boom in demand for slavery. In the North, men and women, black and white, grew more fervent in their opposition to slavery and brought the issue of abolition to national attention. The Second Great Awakening helped pave the way for abolition movements and the birth of a movement for women’s rights. It also inspired other attempts at social reforms aimed at fulfilling the nation’s democratic aspirations and, in reformers’ view, moral obligations to fellow citizens. At the same time, many of these very reformers worked hard to limit immigration to the United States, leading efforts that discriminated against immigrants as the bearers of social ills that would poison American society.

The antebellum United States was an era of contradictions: a society that in many ways grew increasingly just and concerned with the well-being of all Americans, while also further limiting the rights and destroying the livelihoods of native and enslaved peoples. The reform movements of this era, although many not immediately successful, would ultimately lay the groundwork for the success of these movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Furthermore, the divisions and conflicts over slavery that began to emerge at the time will only worsen, as this debate over slavery leads the nation ultimately to erupt into the greatest conflict in its history: the Civil War.

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# Unit 7 Learning Goals

## Essential Question

If you are successful in this unit, your scholars will be able to answer the Unit 7 Essential Question: *To what extent did the United States become more democratic by the mid-19th century?*

## Big Ideas

The Big Ideas, outlined below, help answer the Unit 7 Essential Question and reflect the key ideas scholars must master by the end of this unit. As you teach Unit 7, connect every lesson back to the Big Idea(s) that the lesson helps illustrate. The Unit 7 Big Ideas were adapted from the UCLA National History Standards United States Era 4.

- **Big Idea 1: While the Age of Jackson ushered in increased citizenship and political participation for poor white men in American government, the era also brought about a period of rapid westward expansion that diminished the rights and freedoms of other groups of Americans, especially enslaved African Americans and Native Americans.**
  - As the nation expanded westward, renewed debates over slavery and its expansion erupted. In order to avoid national division, Henry Clay led the passage of the Missouri Compromise, establishing a framework for the addition of new states to ensure a balance of power between slave and free states.
  - President Andrew Jackson was the champion of the common white man, granting increased suffrage and political rights to poor white men while pushing for democratic reforms to the government. His corrupt policies, significant use of executive power, and discriminatory policies — especially toward Native Americans — made his efforts to promote a democratic society more of an ideal than a reality.
  - The presidency of Andrew Jackson launched an era of Indian removal policies, culminating in the infamous Trail of Tears, which forcefully and often violently removed Native Americans from their ancestral homes and forced them onto reservations in the West.
  - The removal of Native Americans allowed for the increased cultivation of cotton in the South. The rise of “King Cotton” as a dominant cash crop — thanks to the invention of the cotton gin — further entrenched slavery in American society, as Southern economies depended on the labor of enslaved African Americans.
  - As conditions worsened on Southern plantations, enslaved African Americans began more forcefully resisting slavery, using both passive and active means of resistance to fight back against their desperate conditions.
- **Big Idea 2: Social and political change in the antebellum period was driven by a new wave of popular reform movements led by diverse leaders, granting many Americans greater access to the public sphere. Although many of these movements advocated for a more inclusive democracy, other movements used the spirit of reform to limit who could participate in American society.**
  - The Second Great Awakening sparked a renewed era of religion and morality in the United States, leading to an era of significant social reform in the United States. Major movements included temperance, prison reform, public education, abolition, and colonization, many of which were led by women or African Americans, who previously had had few opportunities to participate in the public sphere.

- The increased participation of women in social movements sparked a larger women's rights movement, which called for women's suffrage and increased political, economic, and social equality for women in society.
- During the mid-19th century, many immigrants began moving to the United States, drawn by the promise of opportunity while fleeing hardship at home. Many reformers, however, believed that these immigrants were bringing social ills — especially alcoholism and anti-democratic Catholicism — with them and poisoning American society. These reformers, known as Nativists, formed the Know-Nothing Party to limit immigration to the United States.
- Some of the social movements of the 19th century had an immediate impact on American society, improving the American public school system and reforming the nature of American prisoners, while others laid the groundwork for movements to come, such as women's suffrage, temperance, or abolition.

## Key Terms

**The following people, places, and events are foundational to understanding the Big Ideas of this unit. As these words are introduced in each lesson, add them to your word wall and hold scholars accountable for using them in discussion and writing throughout the unit.**

- Senator Henry Clay
- Senator John C. Calhoun
- Missouri Compromise
- President Andrew Jackson
- Second Bank of the United States
- Indian Removal Act
- The Trail of Tears
- Cotton gin
- Nat Turner
- Second Great Awakening
- William Lloyd Garrison
- Colonization movement
- Women's suffrage
- Seneca Falls Convention
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Susan B. Anthony
- Sojourner Truth
- Harriet Hunt
- Nativism
- Know-Nothing Party

## Geography

The following places are foundational to understanding the geographical context of the unit. As you teach Unit 7, continually reference maps in class not only to build scholar fluency with geography, but also to develop scholars' geographic reasoning skills as they grapple with the Big Ideas of the unit.

- **The five tribes of the Mississippian culture:** Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole
- **The Missouri Compromise line and the route of the Trail of Tears**
- **Free and slave states admitted to the United States between 1820 and 1848:**
  - **Free states:** Maine, Michigan, Iowa, and Wisconsin
  - **Slave states:** Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, and Texas
- **International borders and territories in 1848:** Oregon Territory, Minnesota Territory, British Canada, Mexico, and Indian Territory

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## Intellectual Preparation

**Class Materials** Once you have internalized the Big Ideas of the unit, to be successful you must study all scholar documents and materials before you teach the first lesson:

- All documents in the [Unit 7 Sourcebook](#)
- All scholar and teacher materials in the [Unit 7 Workbook](#)

**Additional Resources** These resources provide additional historical background for the content covered in Unit 7:

- Read the overview essay and review the timeline for “National Expansion and Reform, 1815–1860” on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History\* website.
- Read the following essays: “Slavery and Anti-Slavery,” “The First Age of Reform,” and “The Age of Jackson” on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History\* website.
- Study the Smithsonian’s Expansion and Reform page and Khan Academy’s Politics and Society outlines.
- Watch the following Crash Course History videos: “The Market Revolution,” “Slavery,” “Age of Jackson,” and “19th Century Reforms” on YouTube.

\*To access these readings and more free American History content and resources, create an account on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website.

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## Unit 7 Lesson Sequence

**Essential Question:** To what extent did the United States become more democratic by the mid-19th century?

The first five lessons introduce scholars to the Age of Jackson and the complex meaning of democracy during his presidency. Lesson 1 provides background to the era, as scholars will

examine the rapid westward expansion occurring in this era and its impact on national politics and divisions over slavery. In Lessons 2 through 4, scholars will dive into the presidency of Andrew Jackson and will assess the extent to which Jackson, with the expansion of white male suffrage and his Indian removal policies, truly was a champion of democracy in American society. Scholars will dive more deeply into the meaning and impact of these Indian removal policies in Lesson 5 and will examine how Native Americans responded to and attempted to resist their removal from their ancestral lands. By the end of Lesson 5, scholars will understand the contradictions of the meaning of democracy during the Age of Jackson and will be prepared to explore the experience and actions of enslaved African Americans during this era.

#### **Lesson 1: The Missouri Compromise (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** Why did the Missouri Compromise fail to end the national debate over slavery?

#### **Lessons 2–4: Jacksonian Democracy (DBQ Writing)**

- **Central Question:** To what extent did President Andrew Jackson promote democratic values?

#### **Lesson 5: American Indian Removal and Resistance (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** How did Native Americans respond to federal Indian removal policies?

The next two lessons focus specifically on the evolution of slavery during the Age of Jackson. In Lesson 6, scholars will study the evolving cotton economy of the 19th century; following the invention of the cotton gin, cotton picking became increasingly efficient, leading it to become the South's major cash crop. As a result, the South grew even more dependent on enslaved labor, and American slavery grew harsher as it became further entrenched in American society. In response to the intensification of slavery in the American South, in Lesson 7, scholars will study how enslaved African Americans responded to and resisted their enslavement, using religion, violent rebellions, and even the legal process to combat slavery. By the end of Lesson 7, scholars will understand how the Age of Jackson worsened the experiences and conditions of enslaved African Americans, and will be prepared to consider the Americans who began to challenge this, and many other, injustices in antebellum society.

#### **Lesson 6: King Cotton and American Slavery (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** How did the cotton economy change American slavery in the 19th century?

#### **Lesson 7: Enslaved People's Resistance (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** How did enslaved African Americans resist slavery throughout the 19th century?

The final five lessons introduce scholars to the “First Age of Reform” in American society and the leaders and movements that both promoted and threatened democratic values as a result. In Lesson 8, scholars will consider a number of major reform movements — abolition, colonization, public education, prison reform, and temperance — movements that all sought to make the United States a more democratic place, but succeeded to varying degrees. In Lesson 9, scholars will dive deeply into the women's rights movement that emerged during this era of social reform. Women were at the helm of a number of major social movements, playing roles in public society previously unheard of for women and encouraging women to fight for their own rights in society, as well. Lesson 10 considers the darker side of this reform movement; in their efforts to make American society a more democratic place, many reformers adopted nativist policies that

discriminated against immigrants to the United States, believing that immigrants posed a threat to the stability of American democracy. In Lessons 11 and 12, scholars will consider the lasting impact of these movements — for better or for worse — on American society. By the end of these lessons, scholars will understand the complicated meaning of democracy during this era and will be able to assess the extent to which the Age of Jackson established a more democratic United States.

**Lesson 8: The First Age of Reform (Gallery Walk)**

- **Central Question:** How did social movements during the “First Age of Reform” hope to change 19th-century society?

**Lesson 9: Women’s Rights (Jigsaw)**

- **Central Question:** Why did American women begin fighting for their rights in the mid-19th century?

**Lesson 10: Immigration and Nativism (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** Why did the American nativist movement rise in the mid-19th century?

**Lessons 11–12: The Legacy of the Age of Reform (PBL)**

- **Central Question:** How did 19th-century reform movements and their leaders influence American society?