

Using Political Cartoons in the American History Classroom: Andrew Jackson and the Bank War

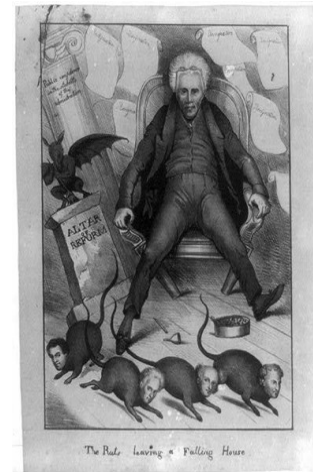
Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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Grade Level: 8th grade

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Introduction:

This lesson plan uses primary sources from the Tennessee State Library and Archives to analyze issues, effects, and opinions concerning Andrew Jackson's Bank War. It can also be used as an introduction to using political cartoons in the classroom, as well as available resources in both the National Archives and Tennessee State Library and Archives. It is intended for 8th grade students. This lesson is intended for three to five days, depending on how much time is spent on the introduction and background info. The assumption is made that classes have already covered basic information on Andrew Jackson's presidency.

Guiding Questions:

- What were the major social, political, and economic trends of the early 19th century?
- What were some of the most important points in Andrew Jackson's presidency?
- What were President Jackson's thoughts on the role of the bank in American society?
- How were political cartoons used in history?

Curriculum Standards:

8.46 Examine President Andrew Jackson's actions regarding the Bank of the U.S. and the Nullification Crisis, and analyze the effects of these events on the nation.

Materials Needed:

Primary Sources:

["Explosion of Biddle and Company's Congress water fount"](#)

["King Andrew the first"](#)

["The Kitchen Cabinet"](#)

["The golden age or how to restore pubic\[sic\] credit"](#)



Worksheets/Sources Analysis Sheets:

[National Archives analysis worksheet for cartoons](#)

Background Information:

[Andrew Jackson and the Bank War](#)

Author: Roberta McCutcheon

Source: GilderLehrman.org

[Andrew Jackson](#)

Author: Harold D. Moser

Source: Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture

[The Bank War](#)

Source: [Tennessee Electronic Library](#). Student Resources In Context, Gale, 2009.

Online Exhibits from the National Archives:

https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/text/page9_text.html

https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/page_9.html#

Tennessee State Library & Archives

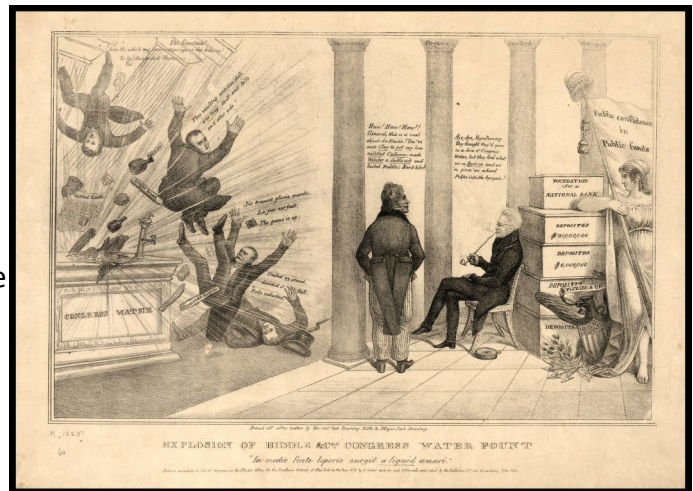
Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett

Lesson Activities - Introduction

1. Introduce (or review if topic has already been largely introduced) President Andrew Jackson and his Bank War, with emphasis on the creation and demise of the institution. Use the summary of the book, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War: A Study in the Growth of Presidential Power* by Robert Vincent Remini as a background source. Also use one of the articles in the [Tennessee Electronic Library](#) on the Bank War, such as "[The Bank War](#)" from *Student Resources in Context*, Gale, 2009.
2. Have students visit the National Archives site "Treasures of Congress: Conflict with the Executive - The Bank War" at https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/page_9.html# and especially the text link "READ MORE" on the right for a basic summary. Also on this site are several text primary sources related to the Bank War that could be used to expand the lesson or create a Document Based Question.

Lesson Activities: Cooperative Research

1. Guided Practice – Have students look at the first political cartoon listed under **Archives Primary Sources:** "[Explosion of Biddle and Company's water fountain.](#)"
2. Demonstrate for students how to enlarge and then zoom into primary sources at the TSLA website. Point out to students the "Item Description" section at the bottom of each document page to help students with their conclusions. *If you would like students to draw their own conclusions, one suggestion would be to print or download the images, and then provide access to the Description information later.*
3. Give students the "[Cartoon Analysis Worksheet](#)" from the National Archives and with teacher's guidance, have them fill in answers using the "Explosion of Biddle..." political cartoon. Discuss together as an oral lesson activity. Discuss the significance of the cartoon as it applies to Andrew Jackson and the Bank War.



Lesson Activities Continued:

4. Individual/Group Practice -

Divide students into groups of four and assign each group one of the three remaining political cartoons under **Primary Sources** (on page 2). (**Note:** Since there are only three remaining sources, multiple groups will have the same political cartoon.) Students will then use the [National Archives Cartoon Analysis worksheet](#) to complete the questions with their individual group. Groups will share their findings after all have completed the assignment.

5. If time allows and further practice is needed, have students answer the following subject specific questions:

- 1) Is the cartoon creator pro- or anti- Jackson? What clues do you have?
- 2) Why do you think the cartoon was made?
- 3) What was the author's purpose?
- 3) Which of the issues surrounding the Bank War are expressed?

6. During discussion of each political cartoon, display cartoon as a visual to assist in understanding.

Conclusion Activities/Checks for Understanding

1. Compare these two different images of Jackson, with the first one (Andrew Jackson portrait) showing him in a heroic, positive light and the second one (The Rats Leaving a Falling House) showing him in a negative light. Using a few sentences, write down your opinions on each image.

[Andrew Jackson Portrait](#)

[The Rats Leaving a Falling House](#)

2. Teacher will select six panelists – three to speak in favor of the Bank and three to speak against it. Select a student moderator as well. The panelists will: a) Prepare an opening speech on the group's analysis of and position on the Second Bank of the United States. Each of the panelists should participate in the speech. The historical context and the group's position on the Bank should be included in the speech. b) Respond to questions about the Bank and the contents of their presentation.

Lesson Activities Continued:

The moderator will: a) Introduce the issue for the panel discussion. b) Prepare questions for panelists and deliver them after the presentations. c) Direct questions from the audience, which are all non-panelist members of the class, to the panelists.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/andrew-jackson-and-bank-war>

3. Use the additional written sources on the NARA Treasures of Congress with the cartoons and create a document based question: How was the Bank War a good example of Jackson's strengthening of Executive Branch powers?

