

2 Jackson in the White House

BEFORE YOU READ

Reading Focus

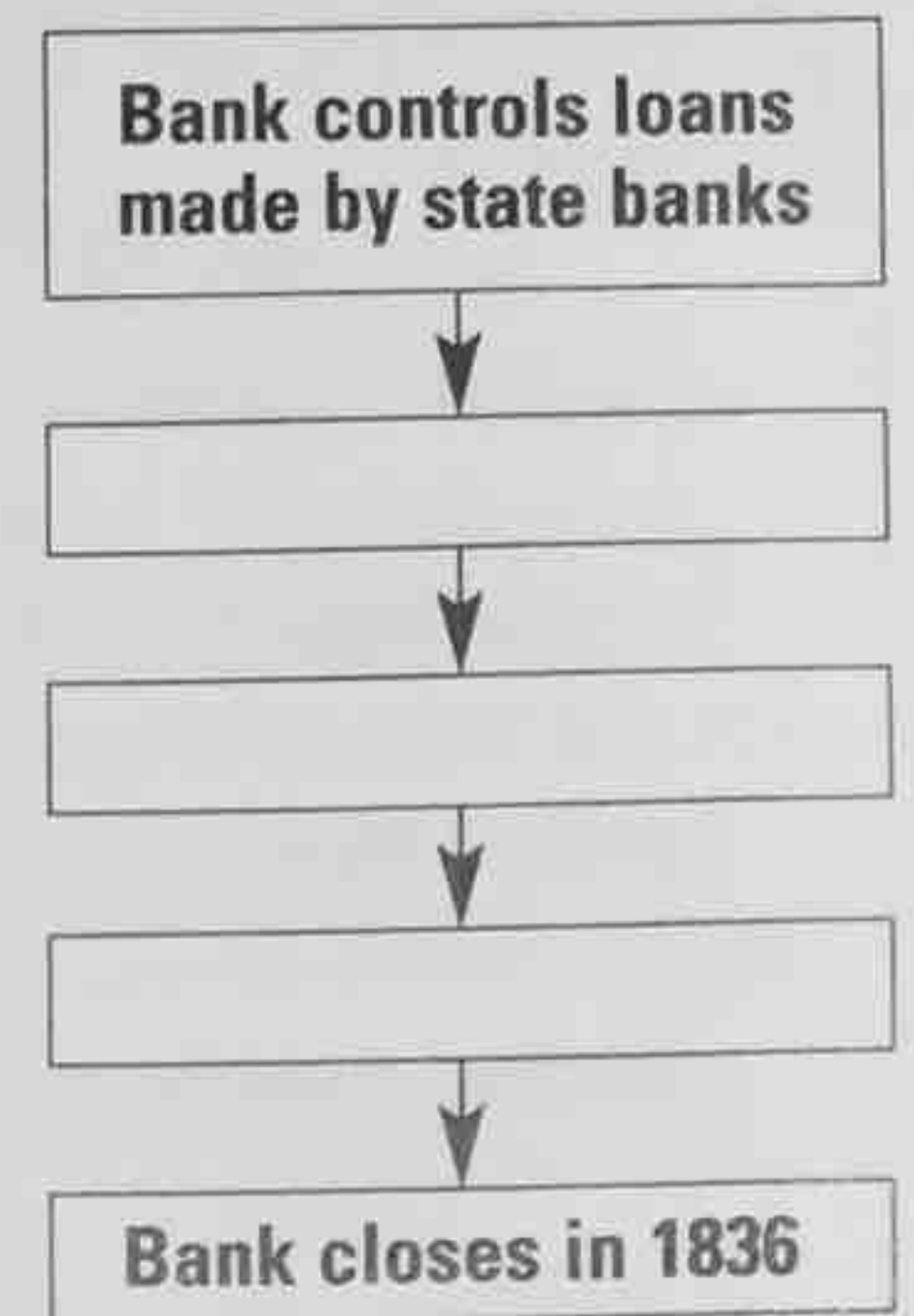
- What qualities helped Andrew Jackson succeed?
- What was the spoils system?
- Why did President Jackson fight the Bank of the United States?

Key Terms

spoils system
"kitchen cabinet"

Taking Notes

Copy this flowchart. As you read, fill in the boxes with the events that led to the closing of the Bank of the United States in 1836. The first and last boxes have been completed for you. Add as many boxes as you need.



Main Idea President Jackson showed the strength of his will in his fight with the Bank of the United States.

Setting the Scene During the 1828 election campaign, many stories about Andrew Jackson spread. One recalled his days as a judge in Tennessee. A frontiersman named Russell Bean was supposed to appear before Jackson's court, but he refused to come inside. Jackson came roaring out of the courthouse. "Surrender, you infernal villain," he shouted, "or I'll blow you through." Bean looked into Jackson's blazing eyes and quietly surrendered. The iron will that made Russell Bean surrender also made Jackson a powerful President.

Andrew Jackson

Like many who admired him, Jackson was born in a log cabin on the frontier. His parents had left Ireland to settle in the Carolinas. Both died before Jackson was 15. Young Andrew had to grow up quickly.

A Self-made Man Although he was lean, he was a strong fighter. A friend who wrestled with him recalled, "I could throw him three times out of four, but he would never stay throwed."

Always determined, Jackson showed his toughness at 13 when he joined the Patriots during the American Revolution. He was captured by the British. When a British officer ordered the young prisoner to clean his boots, Jackson refused. The officer took a sword and slashed the boy's hand and face. The memory of that attack stayed with Jackson for the rest of his life.

After the Revolution, Jackson studied law in North Carolina. Later, he moved to Tennessee and set up a successful law practice. He became very wealthy by buying and selling land in Georgia and Alabama. While still in his twenties, he was elected to Congress.

Jackson won national fame for his achievements during the War of 1812. He led American forces to a major victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans. He also defeated the Creek Indians and forced them to give up vast amounts of land in Georgia and Alabama.



AS YOU READ

Andrew Jackson confronts Russell Bean

Draw Inferences What does this story tell you about Jackson and Bean?

A Man of Many Qualities Andrew Jackson was a complex person. He had led a violent and adventurous life. He was quick to lose his temper, and he dealt with his enemies harshly. When he became President, his opponents sarcastically called him “King Andrew.” Jackson intended to be a strong president by expanding the powers of the presidency.

At the same time, Jackson’s supporters admired his ability to inspire and lead others. They considered him a man of his word and a champion of the common people.

To the Creek Indians, however, Jackson was an enemy who showed no mercy. After defeating them in battle during the War of 1812, Jackson threatened to kill their leaders if they did not give up lands guaranteed them by earlier treaties. As a result, the Creeks had no affection for Jackson. Their name for him was “Sharp Knife.”

The Spoils System

In 1828, President Jackson knew that Americans wanted change. “The people expected reform,” he said. “This was the cry from Maine to Louisiana.”

Reward for Victory After taking office, Jackson fired many government employees. He replaced them with his own supporters. Most other Presidents had done the same, but Jackson did it on a larger scale. He dismissed more than 200 previous presidential appointees.

Critics accused Jackson of rewarding Democrats who had helped elect him instead of choosing qualified men. Jackson replied that he was serving democracy by letting more citizens take part in government. According to Jackson, this would prevent a small group of wealthy men from controlling the government. He felt that ordinary Americans could fill government jobs. “The duties of all public officers are . . . so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance,” he said.

A Jackson supporter explained the system another way. “To the victor belong the spoils,” he declared. Spoils are profits or benefits. From then on, the practice of rewarding supporters with government jobs became known as the **spoils system**.

The “Kitchen Cabinet” Jackson rewarded a number of his supporters with Cabinet jobs. However, few of them were qualified for the positions. Only Secretary of State Martin Van Buren was truly qualified for his position.

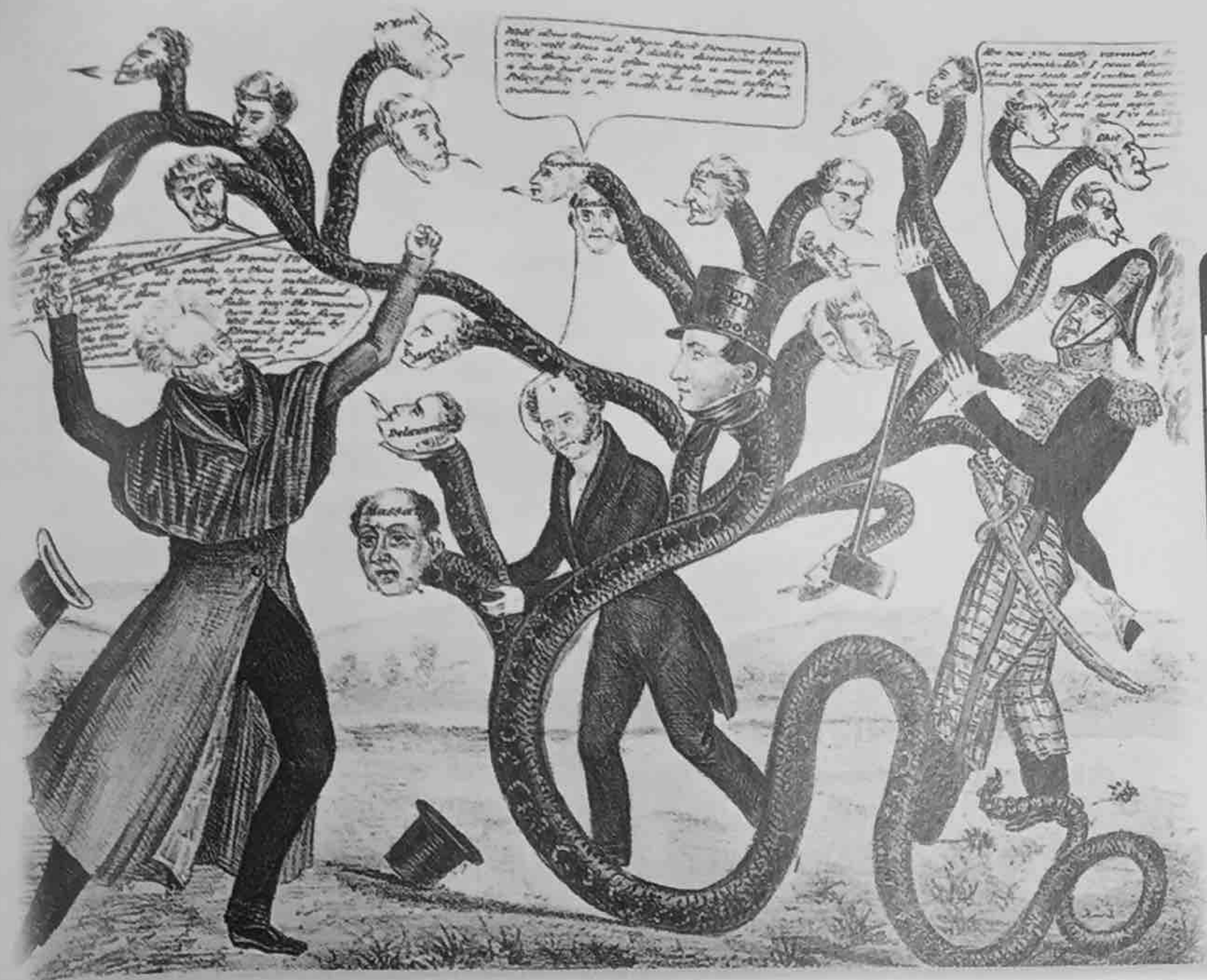
As a result, Jackson seldom met with his official Cabinet. Instead, he relied on a group of unofficial advisers. They included Democratic leaders and newspaper editors. These men had a good sense of the nation’s mood. Because Jackson met with them in the White House kitchen, the group became known as the **“kitchen cabinet.”**

The Bank War

President Jackson waged war on the Bank of the United States. Like many westerners, he thought that it was too powerful.

AS YOU READ

Find Main Ideas After you read this section, make sure you understand the issues involved in the Bank dispute.



Mr. Biddle's Bank The Bank of the United States had been a subject of dispute since its early days. The Bank had great power because it controlled loans made by state banks. When the Bank's directors thought that state banks were making too many loans, they limited the amount these banks could lend. The cutbacks angered farmers and merchants who borrowed money to buy land or finance new businesses.

President Jackson and other leading Democrats saw the Bank as undemocratic. Although Congress created the Bank, it was run by private bankers. Jackson condemned these men as agents of "special privilege" who grew rich with public funds. He especially disliked Nicholas Biddle, president of the Bank since 1823.

Biddle came from a wealthy Philadelphia family. He was well qualified to run the bank, but he was also arrogant and vain. Jackson felt that Biddle used the Bank to benefit only the rich. He also resented Biddle's influence over certain members of Congress.

The War Begins Biddle and other Whigs worried that the President might try to destroy the Bank. Two Whig senators, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, thought of a way to save the Bank and defeat Jackson at the same time.

The Bank's charter was not due for renewal by Congress until 1836. However, Clay and Webster wanted to make the Bank an issue in the 1832 election. They persuaded Biddle to apply for renewal early.

The Whigs believed that most Americans supported the Bank of the United States. If Jackson vetoed the bill to renew the charter, they felt sure that he would anger voters and lose the election. Clay pushed the charter renewal bill through Congress in 1832. Jackson was sick in bed when he heard that Congress had renewed the Bank's charter. "The Bank . . . is trying to kill me," Jackson fumed, "but I will kill it!"

POLITICAL CARTOON Skills

Andrew Jackson Battles the Bank of the United States In this cartoon, President Jackson battles the Bank of the United States and its branches (represented by the multiple heads).

- 1. Comprehension**
Read the cane Jackson is holding. What does it say?
- 2. Understanding Main Ideas** How does Jackson fight the bank?
- 3. Critical Thinking Identifying Bias** How do you think the cartoonist felt about the Bank of the United States?

Civics 

Jackson's Veto In an angry message to Congress, Jackson vetoed the Bank bill. He gave two reasons for his veto. First, he declared the Bank unconstitutional, even though the Supreme Court had ruled in the Bank's favor. Jackson believed that only states, not the federal government, had the right to charter banks. Second, Jackson felt that the Bank helped aristocrats at the expense of the common people. He warned:

“When the laws undertake . . . to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of the society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of [getting] like favors for themselves . . . have a right to complain of the injustice of their government.”

—Andrew Jackson, Veto Message, July 10, 1832

As planned, the Whigs made the Bank a major issue in the election of 1832. They chose Henry Clay as their candidate to run against Andrew Jackson. The counted votes showed that Jackson had won a stunning election victory. The common people had surprised the Whigs by supporting Jackson and rejecting the Bank of the United States.

The Bank Closes Without a new charter, the Bank would have to close in 1836. Jackson refused to wait. He ordered Secretary of the Treasury Roger Taney to stop putting government money in the Bank. Instead, Taney deposited federal money in state banks. They became known as pet banks because Taney and his friends controlled many of them. The loss of federal money crippled the Bank of the United States. Its closing in 1836 contributed to an economic crisis.

AFTER
YOU
READ

Section 2 Assessment

Recall

1. **Identify** Explain the significance of (a) “King Andrew,” (b) Nicholas Biddle.
2. **Define** (a) spoils system, (b) “kitchen cabinet.”

Comprehension

3. Why was Andrew Jackson called a self-made man?
4. Explain the impact of Andrew Jackson's election on the spoils system.
5. Why did Jackson veto the bill to extend the charter of the Bank of the United States?

Critical Thinking and Writing

6. **Exploring the Main Idea** Review the Main Idea statement at the beginning of this section. Then, analyze the characteristics that made Andrew Jackson a strong leader.
7. **Evaluating Information** Why might one argue that Jackson was not serving democracy with the spoils system? Write your answer in a paragraph.

ACTIVITY



Take It to the NET Connecting to Today

In the 1800s, the Bank of the United States loaned money to banks and individuals. Today, the Federal Reserve Bank is the central bank of the United States. Use the Internet to find out how the Federal Reserve system works. Then, list four facts about it. Visit *The American Nation* section of www.phschool.com for help in completing the activity.



Distinguishing Facts From Opinions

To understand history, it is important to be able to distinguish facts from opinions. A fact is something that can be proved or observed. An opinion is a judgment that reflects someone's feelings or beliefs. An opinion is not necessarily true.

In the following letter, Andrew Jackson writes about his political supporters:

“The most disagreeable duty I have to perform is the removals and appointments to office. It appears that all who possess office do so as a result of political reward. Thousands who are pressing for office do it upon the ground that they are starving, and say that their families will perish unless they can be relieved by receiving some political office.

These hungry office-seekers, as well as those who are now in office, are dangerous contestants for the public purse. When it is so easy for men seeking these offices to get good recommendations, it requires the greatest skill and judgement to pick men of honesty and integrity.

We have, as you shall see from the newspapers, begun to reform. We are trying to remove those with no ability from office and expose to view the corruption of some of the office-holders appointed by the previous administration.”

—Andrew Jackson

Learn the Skill To distinguish fact from opinion, use the following steps:

- 1. Identify the facts.** What information could be proved or observed in some way?
- 2. Distinguish facts from opinions.** Look for phrases such as “I think,” “I believe,” or “I feel” and for emotion-packed words, which may signal opinions.
- 3. Note how facts and opinions are mixed.** A combination of facts and opinions in a statement can be a clue to the writer's point of view. Are opinions supported by facts?
- 4. Identify points of view.** How does the writer feel about this topic?

Practice the Skill Use the letter to answer the following questions:

- 1. (a)** Identify one fact in this letter. **(b)** Explain how the fact could be proved.
- 2. (a)** Identify two opinions in this letter. **(b)** Identify three emotion-packed words used by Jackson.
- 3.** Reread the first sentence. **(a)** What part is fact? **(b)** What part is opinion?
- 4.** How would you describe Jackson's point of view?

Apply the Skill See the Chapter Review and Assessment.