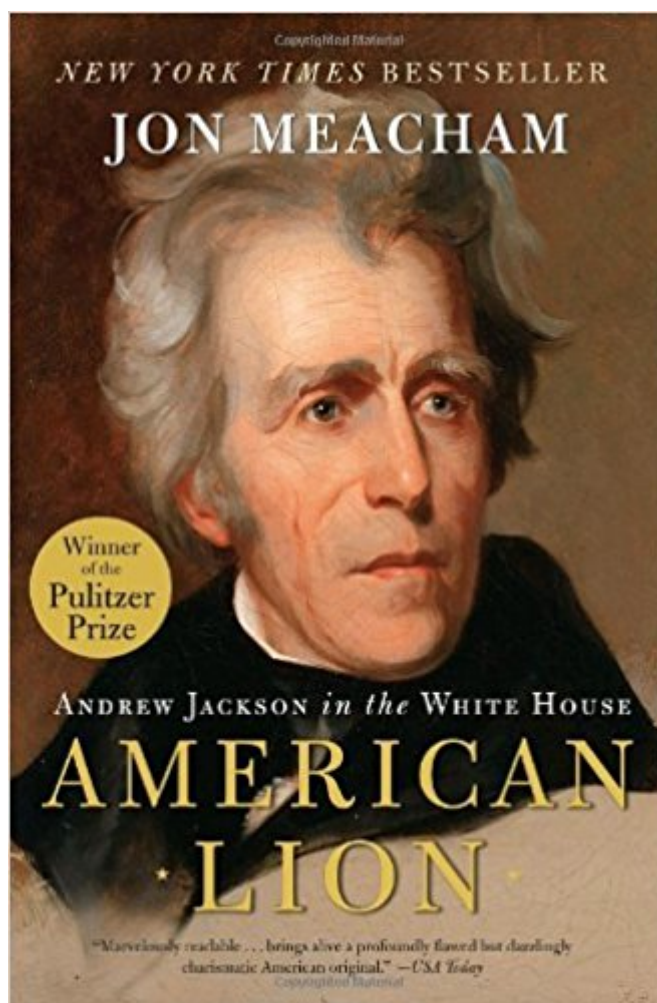


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AMERICAN LION: Andrew Jackson In The White House



Synopsis

The definitive biography of a larger-than-life president who defied norms, divided a nation, and changed Washington forever. Andrew Jackson, his intimate circle of friends, and his tumultuous times are at the heart of this remarkable book about the man who rose from nothing to create the modern presidency. Beloved and hated, venerated and reviled, Andrew Jackson was an orphan who fought his way to the pinnacle of power, bending the nation to his will in the cause of democracy. Jackson's election in 1828 ushered in a new and lasting era in which the people, not distant elites, were the guiding force in American politics. Democracy made its stand in the Jackson years, and he gave voice to the hopes and the fears of a restless, changing nation facing challenging times at home and threats abroad. To tell the saga of Jackson's presidency, acclaimed author Jon Meacham goes inside the Jackson White House. Drawing on newly discovered family letters and papers, he details the human drama of the family, the women, and the inner circle of advisers that shaped Jackson's private world through years of storm and victory. One of our most significant yet dimly recalled presidents, Jackson was a battle-hardened warrior, the founder of the Democratic Party, and the architect of the presidency as we know it. His story is one of violence, sex, courage, and tragedy. With his powerful persona, his evident bravery, and his mystical connection to the people, Jackson moved the White House from the periphery of government to the center of national action, articulating a vision of change that challenged entrenched interests to heed the popular will or face his formidable wrath. The greatest of the presidents who have followed Jackson in the White House—from Lincoln to Theodore Roosevelt to FDR to Truman—have found inspiration in his example, and virtue in his vision. Jackson was the most contradictory of men. The architect of the removal of Indians from their native lands, he was warmly sentimental and risked everything to give more power to ordinary citizens. He was, in short, a lot like his country: alternately kind and vicious, brilliant and blind; and a man who fought a lifelong war to keep the republic safe no matter what it took.

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Customer Reviews

Newsweek editor and bestselling author Meacham (Franklin and Winston) offers a lively take on the seventh president's White House years. We get the Indian fighter and hero of New Orleans facing down South Carolina radicals' efforts to nullify federal laws they found unacceptable, speaking the words of democracy even if his banking and other policies strengthened local oligarchies, and doing nothing to protect southern Indians from their land-hungry white neighbors. For the first time, with Jackson, demagoguery became presidential, and his Democratic Party deepened its identification with Southern slavery. Relying on the huge mound of previous Jackson studies, Meacham can add little to this well-known story, save for the few tidbits he's unearthed in private collections rarely consulted before. What he does bring is a writer's flair and the ability to relate his story without the incrustations of ideology and position taking that often disfigure more scholarly studies of Jackson. Nevertheless, a gifted writer like Meacham might better turn his attention to tales less often told and subjects a bit tougher to enliven. 32 pages of b&w photos. (Nov. 11) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It's no surprise that the editor of Newsweek can write a well-researched, well-written, and entertaining book on American history. What stands out about reviews of American Lion, however, is how often critics—even professional historians—said they learned something new about the seventh president. A few reviewers were not so impressed with Meacham's scholarly synthesis, especially regarding Jackson's unwavering approval of slavery, his removal of Native Americans despite the objections of the Supreme Court, and his vindictive qualities. But even these reviewers praised Meacham's ability to tell Jackson's story without resorting to the clichés of high school history textbooks. Copyright 2009 Bookmarks Publishing LLC --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Good content, but after reading other biographers such as Chernow, I kind of find Meacham's style scattered and clunky. Not bad by any means, but I had spots where I found it hard to track with Meacham's focus.

Great book-- very interesting of the often misunderstood Andrew Jackson. I highly recommend to both experienced historians and newly interested students of American history.

great detail and insight into Washington politics during Jackson's administration

The book reaches some great insight to one of our strongest presidents. Most of the book peers into the eternal struggle of Jackson which is a very intriguing spell told by Meacham to make us understand Jackson's great love of the Union but it makes him seem fanciful and leads to the reader that his presidency was more emotion and not of action. Do not read this book to be enlightened of the many fights and inner workings of the Indian wars, preservation of the Union, or even more importantly defeating the bank of America. This is not to say Mr Meacham did not discuss all these topics but very little did we see the true white house power that lead to things as the long Seminole battles that shaped the south. Overall a good book that like I said shows the true demeanor of a warrior president but lacks the deft prowess of a man fighting the eloquence of an ever changing nation and the heated battles of furious politics

Andrew Jackson is a tough nut to crack. He lived firmly embedded in the attitudes of his time. Soaked in racism, violence, and eventually acquiring the enjoyment of the privileges of wealth, his story is a tough sell to a modern American audience. Yet he was a devoted family man, a friend of the common folk and possessed a view of the presidency that was truly modern. Meacham does a masterful job balancing these diverse elements of an incredibly complex man. He helps the reader understand why Jackson's anachronisms should not prevent our understanding of his importance in shaping the world's most powerful office.

My formal training in American History ended in high school, so I approached Meacham's book without a great deal of prior knowledge of the subject. I would say that this is not a good first book to read about Jackson. His childhood is covered in some detail, but the periods of his military career, his training as a lawyer, his term as a Tennessee congressman, are covered too briefly. Meacham

states in his acknowledgment section that he has deliberately not attempted to cover Jackson entire life in detail. The eight years of Jackson's presidency are the focus of the book. The main issues that characterize Jackson's presidency: the threat of secession by South Carolina, the dissolution of the national bank, standoff with the French over the payment of reparations, expanded use of the presidential veto, etc., were covered in detail. However, as a newcomer to the subject, I sometimes could have used more context. For instance, there was not much discussion of how a national bank came to be and what the counter-arguments might have been for preserving it. On the other hand, there was (in my view) excessive detail given over infighting between some very minor characters in American history. In the acknowledgment section, Meacham explains that new information about these people had come to light since previous biographies on Jackson were published so Meacham deliberately focused on these matters. If you have read previous books on Jackson and on this period in American history, you may find some interesting new stuff in Meacham's book. But if you are a novice like myself, there must be a better book out there to start with.

I enjoyed this Jackson biography. You read about his difficult childhood (his mother and father and brother died young), and his growing military skills and his triumph at the Battle of New Orleans. You also read about his controversial courtship and subsequent marriage (it was rumored that his wife was still married to her first husband, and bigamist charges were thrown around during Jackson's Presidential runs. Sad to say, she died just a couple of weeks after he was elected President). Jackson was fiercely patriotic and stood strong against the efforts of South Carolina to fight for the right to secede from the Union. The first couple of years of Jackson's administration was plagued with scandal over his secretary of war and whether or not his wife was an adulterer, but Jackson fiercely stood by his friend. You also read about Jackson's support for the removal of Indians from their native lands and sending them out east on reservations (The Trail of Tears). His deception of the Indians is not one of his shining moments. But Jackson is noteworthy for increasing the powers of the Presidency. He fired a lot of the sacred cows in government when he got elected and hired people who were faithful to him. He was hated by John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and later on, he was even disliked by his own VP John Calhoun. Later in life, he dedicated himself to serving Christ. Meacham writes well and keeps you interested. Good books

Jon Meacham is an excellent historian and a marvelous writer.

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