man has political duties devolving upon him, of a nature calculated to awaken attention and call forth his best energies. And, in this country of freedom, it would seem most astonishing, that any individual should be indifferent to the important concerns of the nation. It is indeed not sufficient, that we appear at the ballot boxes and cast our suffrages for our rulers—it is not sufficient, that we attach ourselves to a particular party and perform the ordinary duties of freemen—we must improve every opportunity of increasing our political knowledge and unite heart and hand in promoting the cause of liberty. . . .

We feel secure on account of our recent success, and this feeling of security may prove our ruin. And, while we are sluggish and inactive, our enemies are vigilant, and no arts or devices will be left untried by them. The enemies of Jackson have nothing to lose; and they are desperate to a degree of madness never before exhibited in this country. Our venerated Chief Magistrate has been the object of their bitterest and most abhorred assaults for the last four years, and now that he is exalted by the free suffrages of his fellow citizens to the highest and most enviable station on earth, their tongues have become envenomed and their hearts hardened. . . . And they in their rage have not been satisfied with hurling their poisoned shafts upon Jackson alone—the partner of his bosom, while living was their jest and sport; and the grave affords no security against their slander. Yes, not only have the very portals of the tomb been broken, by the hands of these worse than barbarians; but our Hero, whose heart was filled with anguish for his loss, has been himself the object of renewed attack. And what must we not expect from those men, who deride the finer feelings of humanity, and to the overwhelming sorrows of the afflicted, add their most malignant poison? We must expect that such men, destitute of the common feelings of our nature, will exercise the grossest and most detested passions, in all their doings. It is not a matter of wonder, that they object to every step, which President Jackson takes, be it good, bad, or indifferent. It is not surprising, that at this early hour, they should use every means to embarrass his measures, and endeavor to cheat the public into a belief that "all is wrong." These things they unblushingly do; and nothing can defeat their malicious designs, but the determination of his friends, honestly to defend him, and, to make a sure defense, one and all must awake to duty, and rest assured that although the "battle's fought and victory's won,""the danger is not over."[2]

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 4–9

One of President Jackson's most controversial measures related to the Bank of the United States, which had been established in 1791 by Congress. The bank's initial charter expired in 1811, and five years later, Congress created the Second Bank with another twenty-year term. But by the 1830s, the bank had become the target of heated criticism. Supporters, who coalesced around the new Whig Party in the 1830s, argued that the bank facilitated the financing of internal improvements that would bind the country together and enhance commerce. But many decried the bank, particularly Americans who had moved into the trans-Appalachian west and who saw it as unfairly controlling their credit. These and other critics caricatured the bank as run by elites, a monster crushing the people, controlled by foreign interests. Jackson opposed the bank, and vetoed the congressional bill renewing its charter in 1832. His message explaining the veto is Document 4, followed by Senator Daniel Webster's response the next day (Document 5), an equally passionate defense of the bank and criticism of Jackson's veto. Note the way both Jackson and Webster describe their opponents as abusing power and violating the rights of the American people.

FYI

The "bank war" became integral to the 1832 presidential campaign and heightened the stakes in an already contentious and partisan election. In Document 6, the anti-Jackson forces argue that the president has become a monarch, criticizing him along the lines that Webster had advanced in July. Document 7 is a campaign advertisement sympathetically listing Jackson's first-term accomplishments. Document 8 is from the *Salem Gazette,* an editorial outlining Jackson's record as president.

Webster, Henry Clay, and their allies were unable to override Jackson's veto, and when the latter won reelection in November, he continued to assault the idea of a national bank. He ordered the Secretary of the Treasury to stop federal deposits to the bank, and when the Secretary refused, Jackson removed him from office. Jackson's old foe, Clay, responded by introducing a congressional resolution to censure the president, the first time such an act had been taken. Yet in many ways Jackson had prevailed, ending the Bank of the United States. In Document 9, Jackson assesses the bank and the economy toward the end of his eight-year presidency in 1837. What can these highly partisan sources reveal about political life in this era? Who would be likely to support Jackson's reelection bid?

4. PRESIDENT JACKSON VETOES THE BANK

PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON

JULY 10, 1832

The bill "to modify and continue" the act entitled "An act to incorporate the subscribers to the Bank of the United States" was presented to me on the 4th July instant. Having considered it with that solemn regard to the principles of the Constitution which the day was calculated to inspire, and come to the conclusion that it ought not to become a law, I herewith return it to the Senate, in which it originated, with my objections.

A bank of the United States is in many respects convenient for the Government and useful to the people. Entertaining this opinion, and deeply impressed with the belief that some of the powers and privileges possessed by the existing bank are unauthorized by the Constitution, subversive of the rights of the States, and dangerous to the liberties of the people, I felt it my duty at an early period of my Administration to call the attention of Congress to the practicability of organizing an institution combining all its advantages and obviating these objections. I sincerely regret that in the act before me I can perceive none of those modifications of the bank charter which are necessary, in my opinion, to make it compatible with justice, with sound policy, or with the Constitution of our country.

. . . [The Bank] enjoys an exclusive privilege of banking under the authority of the General Government, a monopoly of its favor and support, and, as a necessary consequence, almost a monopoly of the foreign and domestic exchange. The powers, privileges, and favors bestowed upon it in the original charter, by increasing the value of the stock far above its par value, operated as a gratuity of many millions to the stockholders.

. . . Every monopoly and all exclusive privileges are granted at the expense of the public, which ought to receive a fair equivalent. The many millions which this act proposes to bestow on the stockholders of the existing bank must come directly or indirectly out of the earnings of the American people.

. . . It is not conceivable how the present stockholders can have any claim to the special favor of the Government.

. . . Of the twenty-five directors of this bank five are chosen by the Government and twenty by the citizen stockholders. From all voice in these elections the foreign stockholders are excluded by the charter. In proportion, therefore, as the stock is transferred to foreign holders the extent of suffrage in the choice of directors is curtailed. . . . The entire control of the institution would necessarily fall into the hands of a few citizen stockholders. . . . There is danger that a president and directors would then be able to elect themselves from year to year, and without responsibility or control manage the whole concerns of the bank during the existence of its charter. It is easy to conceive that great evils to our country and its institutions might flow from such a concentration of power in the hands of a few men irresponsible to the people.

Is there no danger to our liberty and independence in a bank that in its nature has so little to bind it to our country?[3]

5. RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT'S VETO

SENATOR DANIEL WEBSTER

JULY 11, 1832

. . . Before proceeding to the Constitutional question, there are some other topics, treated in [Jackson's] message, which ought to be noticed. It commences by an inflamed statement of what it calls the "favor" bestowed upon the original Bank, by the Government, or indeed, as it is phrased, the "monopoly of its favor and support," and through the whole message all possible changes are rung on the "gratuity," the "exclusive privileges," and "monopoly," of the bank charter. Now, Sir, the truth is, that the powers conferred on the Bank, are such, and no others, as are usually conferred on similar institutions. They constitute no monopoly, although some of them are of necessity and with propriety exclusive privileges. . . .

There is a larger, and a much more just view of the subject. The bill was not passed for the purpose of benefiting the present stockholders. Their benefit, if any, is incidental, and collateral. . . . Congress passed the bill, not as a bounty or a favor to the present stockholders, nor to comply with any demand of right, on their part; but to promote great public interests, for great public objects. Every bank must have some stockholders, unless it be such a bank as the President has recommended, and in regard to which he seems not likely to find much concurrence of other men's opinions; and if the stockholders, whoever they may be, conduct the affairs of the bank prudently, the expectation is, always of course, that they will make it profitable to themselves, as well as useful to the public. If a bank charter is not to be granted, because it may be profitable, either in a small or great degree, to the stockholders, no charter can be granted. The objection [of Jackson] lies against all banks.

. . . From the commencement of the Government it has been thought desirable to invite, rather than to repel, the introduction of foreign capital. . . . It is easy to say that there is danger to liberty, danger to independence, in a bank open to foreign stockholders—because it is easy to say any thing. But neither reason nor experience proves any such danger. The foreign stockholder cannot be a director. He has no voice even in the choice of directors. His money is placed entirely in the management of the directors appointed by the President and Senate, and by the American stockholders. . . . Our liberties, indeed, must stand upon very frail foundations, if the government cannot, without endangering them, avail itself of those common facilities, in the collection of its revenues, and the management of its finances, which all other governments, in commercial countries, find useful and necessary.

. . . I now proceed, sir, to a few remarks upon the President's constitutional objections to the Bank. . . . He denies that the constitutionality of the Bank is a settled question . . . [yet] for thirty-six years, out of the forty-three, during which the Government has been in being, a BANK has existed, such as is now proposed to be continued. . . . Every President, except the present, has considered it a settled question. . . . If the president thinks lightly of the authority of Congress, in construing the constitution, he thinks still more lightly of the authority of the Supreme Court. He asserts a right of individual judgement, on constitutional questions, which is totally inconsistent with any proper administration of the government, or any regular execution of the laws. Social disorder, entire uncertainty in regard to individual rights and individual duties, the cessation of legal authority, confusion, the dissolution of free government!—all these, are the inevitable consequences of the principles adopted by the message, whenever they shall be carried to their full extent. Hitherto, it has been thought that the *final decision* of constitutional questions belonged to the supreme judicial tribunal . . . when a law has been passed by Congress, and approved by the President, it is now no longer in the power, either of the same President, or his successors, to say whether the law is constitutional or not. . . .

The President is as much bound by the law as any private citizen. . . . That which is now claimed for the President, is, in truth, nothing less, and nothing else, than the old *dispensing power* asserted by the kings of England. . . . Such an universal power, as is now claimed for him . . . is nothing else than pure despotism. If conceded to him, it makes him, at once, what Louis the Fourteenth proclaimed himself to be, when he said, "I AM THE STATE."[4]

6. "KING ANDREW" (1832)

Image 7.3 "King Andrew" (1832 or 1833)

This caricature of Jackson underscored his unilateral approach to governance. The language beneath the image included a series of accusations that Jackson had placed himself above the law, concluding, "Shall he reign over us, Or shall the PEOPLE RULE?" Given that Jackson portrayed himself as a man of the people, why was he pictured here as a monarch?

Source: Anonymous, New York? Courtesy of Library of Congress.