

Honing Research Skills

Get to Know Andrew Jackson

This lesson plan, created by teacher Andrew Ragan, is to be used with this issue's American History Play, "Muddy Boots" (pp. 9-11).

Ragan has been a reader of *Junior Scholastic* (1971-1973), a *JS* intern (1980), an associate editor and staff writer (1981-1983), and a freelance contributor (1984-present). Since 2001, he has used *JS* to help teach the history of the Western Hemisphere and the United States to seventh- and eighth-graders at Allendale Columbia School in Rochester, New York.



Andrew Ragan

OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help students:

- practice Internet and library research skills
- hone public-speaking and presentation skills
- appreciate the depth of interesting information available about historical figures

It also will give students cool facts about Andrew Jackson to share with their families over dinner, one gold standard of a successful lesson!

Padding the Prologue: An Andrew Jackson ["A.J."] Scavenger Hunt

The "Muddy Boots" prologue is packed with great information about Andrew Jackson's pre-election life. Digging beyond these facts may provide even more surprises for students about Andrew Jackson.

Have students read the prologue aloud. Then assign the following questions to different students. Students will use research skills to find new "cool facts" about Andrew Jackson. Students should search the Internet, textbooks, encyclopedias, or nonfiction books. (The answers to the questions are provided on p. T-4.) If you can't fit student research time into your schedule, use the information to show some of the interesting facts about Andrew Jackson.)

Here are some hints for specific sources. Find many more with Google searches.

Andrew Jackson page from the State Library of North Carolina, statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/nc/bio/public/jackson.htm

Hakim, Joy. *History of Us: The New Nation, 1789-1850, Book Four*. Oxford University Press, 2003

Meacham, Jon, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*. Random House, 2008

The Hermitage Web site, thehermitage.com

Wilentz, Sean. *Andrew Jackson*. Henry Holt & Co., 2005

When students complete their detective work, have them present their discoveries to the class. Fill in information as necessary using the answers provided.

Have students look for the answers to these questions:

- A.J. became famous as a general in the War of 1812. But that wasn't his first war experience. What was, and how old was he?
- A.J. held many jobs before becoming President. How many can you name?
- A.J. lived much of his adult life in pain from bullets in his shoulder. How did he get them? (Hint: One man died as a result of A.J.'s involvement in one of these events.)
- A.J. was the first U.S. president to travel on a form of public transportation that was very new in 1833. What was it?
- A.J. used government funds to buy something for the Executive Mansion (later known as the White House) that perhaps saved the building's floors and carpets from permanent damage. What was it?