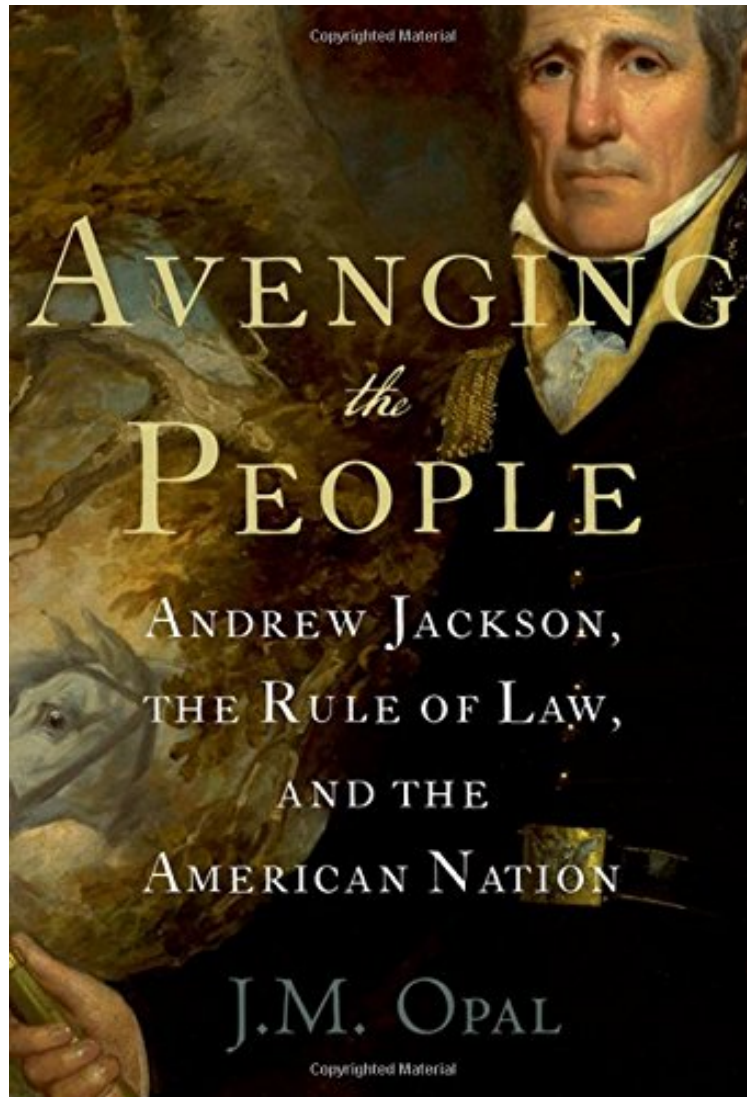


[Free read ebook] Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, the Rule of Law, and the American Nation

Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, the Rule of Law, and the American Nation

J.M. Opal

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J.M. Opal : Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, the Rule of Law, and the American Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, the Rule of Law, and the American Nation:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Read with an open mind, knowing it's biasedBy HortonThe first few

chapters are dry but you see later on why they were needed. If you follow this, the book becomes much more interesting and thoughtful. I don't usually like books which are so biased but this one does force some deep thinking about Jackson, much of which is already known. Jackson was such a complicated man, and this book forces one to consider whether he was a product of his environment, which was the South/frontier/rural setting, or if he was just essentially evil, with some intriguing soft spots. It seems we have not made up our minds on what to do with Jackson. This book provides more thought on the subject. The author has a fairly dry tone but it is a good book. I read it with a questioning mind, as the book concludes that Jackson was a mean, racist man, without actually saying this. I recommend reading it just to see if you agree with it, keeping in mind from the start that this is not a "balanced" biography. Still, there are enough books out there about Jackson which sing his praises and skip over the nasty stuff, so this acts as a sort of balance.

6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Shaky Thesis

By Andrew "Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, the Rule of Law, and the American Nation" is a well intentioned, but eventually confused and over stretched book. It provides some illuminating details about the world Andrew Jackson matured in, but its central thesis is shaky to begin with, and by the end of the book completely falls apart. Opal's argument is essentially that Jackson personifies an American impulse of sacred vengeance; wrongs must be paid back with blood, and grudges and scores are never to be forgotten. Every decision Jackson takes boils back to this need to avenge wrongs - from his clashes with the Indians as a young man to his involvement in the War of 1812 to his policies as President. This impulse is necessarily extrajudicial - and this forms the other end of Opal's thesis - where Jackson exists in a grey area between law and vengeance. Jackson apparently takes inspiration for his revenge from certain understanding of the law (Opal describes this in the introduction), but often finds himself outside of the legal norms of proper society, where his brand of frontier vengeance has no place. These two supposed extremes - law and vengeance - provide the parameters that Opal sees Jackson and the frontier world he lives in. This thesis has many problems to begin with. First, tracing every decision of a complex, historical character as Andrew Jackson to an ambiguous emotion such as "revenge" is facile. It reduces Jackson and the frontier people of his community to one dimensional characters in a poor action movie. In the conclusion, President Jackson becomes Mel Gibson's William Wallace - a man seeking revenge for his dead wife instead of a politician with strong beliefs towards federal policies. When he isn't avenging a wrong, Opal's Jackson is an incredibly cynical figure, preying on the fears of the poor for political purposes and scooping up acres of land while rubbing his greedy fingers. By the end of the book, Opal's thesis completely falls apart. The law segment of the thesis disappears by the last third of the book, while being a main focus in its first few chapters. He tries his hand at explaining the rise of American political parties, Jackson's Indian policy and Bank War. The analysis is poor and adds nothing to the massive scholarship of these topics. In the ending chapters of the book, Opal seems to have bitten off more than he can chew, and repeatedly swerves out of his lane. At its end, the book seems to be more of an indictment of Jackson and his policies than a scholarly explanation of Jackson's personal formation - which I assumed was Opal's goal. However, there are some areas where this book shines. Opal's descriptions of the brutality of the early frontier in Tennessee and Kentucky are exceptional. His treatment of Jackson's early life is also well written and illuminating. One can sense how this violent, unpredictable world shaped Jackson into the man he was. Opal's unflinching look at the atrocities committed by Jackson is also needed and important. Jackson was a brutal militia leader, who committed war crimes and broke the law. Apologizing for him is not necessary, but boiling it down to a simple and ambiguous impulse like "revenge" undermines a historical figure's complexity. Overall, while there are some excellent scholarship here, JM Opal's "Andrew Jackson" is generally a poor book that adds few interesting tidbits to the historiography.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. An Important History of The Making of President Jackson and the Nation

By Customer This is a wonderful read. It is meticulously researched, but with prose that flows comfortably and clearly. The book's focus is not as interested in Andrew Jackson's time as President (which it breezes through in a concluding chapter), but rather the events of the time that shaped the man. Additionally, while certainly focused on Jackson and his life, a detailed account is given to both the national and local history that was being played out at such an important time in the young Nation. This book is worth the purchase simply to be able to read the fifth chapter, entitled "The Hour of National Vengeance." It is an exciting, masterful retelling of Jackson as war general and his battle exploits. If you are a fan of either American History or Military History, this book is a must-have for your collection. Highly recommend.

Most Americans know Andrew Jackson as a frontier rebel against political and diplomatic norms, a "populist" champion of ordinary people against the elitist legacy of the Founding Fathers. Many date the onset of American democracy to his 1829 inauguration. Despite his reverence for the "sovereign people," however, Jackson spent much of his career limiting that sovereignty, imposing new and often unpopular legal regimes over American lands and markets. He made his name as a lawyer, businessman, and official along the Carolina and Tennessee frontiers, at times ejecting white squatters from native lands and returning slaves to native planters in the name of federal authority and international law. On the other hand, he waged total war on the Cherokees and Creeks who terrorized western settlements and raged at the national statesmen who refused to "avenge the blood" of innocent colonists. During the long war in the south and west from 1811 to 1818 he brushed aside legal restraints on holy genocide and mass

retaliation, presenting himself as the only man who would protect white families from hostile empires, "heathen" warriors, and rebellious slaves. He became a towering hero to those who saw the United States as uniquely lawful and victimized. And he used that legend to beat back a range of political, economic, and moral alternatives for the republican future. Drawing from new evidence about Jackson and the southern frontiers, *Avenging the People* boldly reinterprets the grim and principled man whose version of American nationhood continues to shape American democracy.

"Many Americans long for a strong man to lead the nation and avenge their grievances. In this eloquent book, Jason Opal astutely and vividly recovers the backstory to that longing in the personal charisma, frontier violence, legal reasoning, and assertive self-righteousness of Andrew Jackson and his America." --Alan Taylor, author of *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* "If you think there can't be much more to say about Andrew Jackson, you will share my excitement at how much Jason Opal has discovered. In his subject's diverse hatreds, against Whigs and Indians, Britons and bankers, Opal has found a unifying thread--Jackson's obsession with revenge--that helps to explain them all." --Woody Holton, author of *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* "Jason Opal shows how a violent frontier ruled by vengeance shaped the characters of Andrew Jackson and so many of his countrymen. This vivid, wide-ranging, meticulously documented narrative will fascinate history buffs and scholars alike." --Daniel Walker Howe, author of *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* "What a riveting book this is! How is it that Americans, a professedly civilized and peace-loving people, have at times behaved so savagely and even gloried in their savagery? J. M. Opal's provocative take on Jacksonian character rewrites Andrew Jackson not as common-man champion but as avenger-in-chief, the avatar of a nation whose defining trait was not equality or democracy but an unslakable craving for vengeance." --Daniel Feller, University of Tennessee "A timely study of how American democracy set limits on its own egalitarian potential while enacting bloody vengeance against people defined as enemies to American progress." --Kathleen DuVal, author of *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* "A scholarly study of Andrew Jackson's troubling sense of persecution and vindication for the poor, white frontier folk who flocked to his name and legend... Given some of the views of the current occupant of the White House, it is certainly relevant." --Kirkus "A thoroughly researched and quite sophisticated book... Opal's portrait of Jackson and his world is insightful and vividly rendered." --Richard White, Boston "A beneficial and comprehensive addition to the discussion of how the United States became what it is today." --Counterpunch "[Opal] certainly has an eye for the telling anecdote and a knack for capturing in a few words the essence of Jackson's vengeful character... Opal also offers a big idea to frame his lively prose. Jackson, he argues, was hardly the thoughtless figure [Richard] Hofstadter described, who believed that might always made him right. Instead, Old Hickory had a more sophisticated view of power: He legitimated his aggression in politics and war by invoking the concept of the rights of sovereign nations." --Michael Kazin, *The Nation* "Excellent research and impressive erudition." --Library of Law and Liberty blog About the Author J.M. Opal is Associate Professor of History at McGill University. He is the author of *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* and the editor of *Common Sense and Other Writings* by Thomas Paine.