

# OLD HICKORY: The Undisputed Heavyweight Champion of the World(?)

A Boxing-Based Readers' Theater on Andrew Jackson  
by Jake Miller, Cumberland Valley School District of PA



## Characters:

- Andrew Jackson
- Boxing Announcer (needs big voice)
- Chief John Ross (Cherokee rival)
- Electoral College (Knocks out Jackson)
- Spirit of Thomas Jefferson (Jackson's hero)
- Henry Clay (Jackson's rival)
- John C. Calhoun (Vice President)
- JQ Adams (Jackson's antagonist)
- Narrator 1 & 2
- National Debt (dead in 1835)
- Nicholas Biddle (Jackson's rival)
- Rachel Jackson (Wife)
- Slave
- William H. Crawford (Vies for 1824 presidency)

Props: Bell, 4 pair of boxing gloves, journal, mirror, nametags, newspaper, picture of parents, referee shirt, fake money, portrait of George Washington, ice pack

## Scene 1: Jackson's Recollections

*In Scene: Jackson, Jefferson, Rachel*

**Narrator 1:** Andrew Jackson is seated at his desk, fiddling with his pen. He is wearing black and his white hair shags from his head.

**Jackson** (while writing in his journal): Dear Journal – it's been quite a life for me. As I sit here, hoary and aged, I'm reflecting on what the Big Man Upstairs has had to offer.

**Narrator 2:** Jackson pauses for a second and looks at a portrait of his parents that was in his pocket. He puts it on the table.

**Jackson:** First he took my parents from me – and all my family. Those bloody British took everything from me.

**N1:** Jackson pounds the table

**Jackson** (enraged): I hate those Brits! I always have. Not only did they make me a teenage orphan, they gave me this ghastly scar.

**N2:** Jackson looks at himself in the mirror.

**N1:** In the glimpse of the mirror, Jackson catches himself looking at a portrait of George Washington

**Jackson:** And that man.

**N2:** Jackson pounds the table again.

**Jackson:** The “father of the country.” Everybody glorifies this man. He wasn’t a father. He was just lucky.

**Jackson:** (while writing in his journal once more): And while Washington gets credit for creating a country, he only cared about the rich man. I still remember when he gave his 2<sup>nd</sup> Inaugural Address and everyone fawned over him, cheering and looking silly. I was the House Representative in the room who sat there observing his hypocrisy.

**N2:** Jackson stands up and looks into the class with power and force.

**Jackson:** I’ve always cared about the common man. The average man. The American man. Just like my hero, Thomas Jefferson.

**N1:** The Spirit of Jefferson appears.

**N2:** Jackson and Spirit high-five and do a fun handshake.

**Spirit:** You’re my boy, AJ. You’re my boy!

**N1:** Jackson returns to writing; Spirit of Jefferson stands behind and massages his shoulders as he writes.

**Jackson:** It was an honor to fight in the War of 1812. To oppose the British! I’d fight them even if God was on their side.

**Spirit:** It’s like they almost were

**Jackson:** No doubt, son! In New Orleans, I turned back a British force nearly 3x the size of my own army, experiencing only a handful of fatalities. But as for the British? I went savage on them!

**N2:** Jackson and Jefferson chest bump.

**Jackson:** Afterward, I made my force known. For the common man. For the westward man. For the pioneer. I did what was right and took on Florida. People say I ended “The Era of Good Feelings,” but I merely made a new America. Who cares about feelings when we have a country to win?

**N1:** The Spirit of Rachel Jackson appears

**Rachel** (speaking softly): And then he became President.

**Jackson:** Because I always win! Except that one time...

## **Scene 2: The Corrupt Bargain**

*In Scene: Jackson, Jefferson, Clay, Adams, Crawford, Electoral College, Announcer*

**N2:** The scene begins with Jackson, Crawford, Clay, and Adams each in a corner of a “boxing ring.”

**Announcer** (in a booming, center-ring voice): Hello, and Welcome to the Election of 1824. Everyone in Washington! The battle for America. The Match of the Masters. The...

**Jackson:** Shut up and get on with it!

**N1:** The four boxers approach the center of the ring. Jackson and Adams stare one another down.

**Announcer:** In this corner, the former Ambassador to France, Senator, Secretary of the Treasury, and Secretary of War, the underdog himself, the man, the myth, the legend, William “Crawdaddy” Crawford! (\*Crawford pretends to punch the corner of the ring)

**N2:** And the class goes wild!

**Announcer:** In this corner, the Speaker of the House, the Senator, and the Kentucky kicker, Henry “The Great Compromiser” Clay! (\*Clay stands on a desk flexes his muscles)

**N2:** The class goes wild again!

**Announcer:** In this corner, the scion (SIGH-on) of the Adams family, the Minister to Prussia, Russia, Netherlands, Creator of the Monroe Doctrine, THEEEE Secretary of State, John Quincy “JQA” Adams! (\*Adams takes a sip from his water bottle and begins reading)

**N1:** The class cheers even louder!

**Announcer:** And, in this corner, the General, the Savior of New Orleans, the Rescuer of Florida, the Man of the Commoner, Andrew “Old Hickory” Jackson (\*Jackson high-10’s Jefferson, who is standing in his corner)

**N2:** The class is practically out of control wild! (\*Jackson turns to face them, and winks)

**Announcer:** Let’s get ready toooooooooooooo rummmmmmmmmmmmmble!

**N1:** This is different – a four-man boxing match!

**Announcer:** That’s right... it’s never been done before!

**N2:** And the match begins quickly. Crawford comes in and delivers a striking body blow to Jackson!

**Jackson:** UGH!

**N1:** Jackson recoils and delivers a shot to Adams’s rib cage!

**Adams: UGH!**

**Clay: Get over here, Crawford!**

**Crawford: Noooooooo!**

**N2: Crawford runs away and gets popped by Jackson.**

**Announcer: What a rumble!**

**N1: And here comes the Electoral College – the toughest competitor of them all!**

**Electoral College (EC): Good bye, Great Compromiser!**

**Clay: Noooooooo!**

**N2: The EC hunts down Clay and gives him a devastating blow.**

**N1: And Clay's down for the count!**

**Announcer: 3... 2... 1... you're out!**

**N2: And the class goes wild! (\*Clay rolls out of the ring)**

**Crawford: Now there are just 3 of us left.**

**Clay (while coming off the mat): Not if I have anything to do with it!**

**Jackson: What are you talking about, you sleaze!**

**Adams (while popping Jackson in the rib cage): Take that!**

**Announcer: Ding-ding-ding! That's the end of the first round.**

**N1: And they return back to their corners.**

**Jefferson (while massaging his shoulders): Go out there and get 'em Hickory!**

**N2: And... and... what's this? Clay is walking over to Adams's corner? Whoa nelly!**

**Crawford: Who's in my corner? (\*Grabs his chest and falls out of the ring)**

**N1: Crawford had a heart attack!**

**Crawford: ARRRRRGH!**

**N2: This is getting wild!**

**Announcer:** Round 2!

**N1:** Jackson & Adams exchange blow-for-blow for the round and return to their corners, exhausted.

**N2:** The battle lasts 18 rounds until... until...

**N1:** Is that Clay?

**Clay** (while sticking sticks his foot out): Take that!

**N2:** Jackson trips over his foot as Adams delivers a devastating blow.

**N1:** And Jackson's down for the count!

**Announcer:** 3... 2... 1... You're toast!

**Clay & Adams** (while doing a victory dance): Yayyyyyyyyy!

**Jackson:** Nooooooooooooo!

**Announcer:** The winner, and Undisputed Pressssssssssssssident of the United States of AAAAAAAAAAMERICA, John Quincy Adams!

**N2:** Jackson and the Spirit of Jefferson walk off the canvas together;

**Adams** (with Clay holding his hand in the air): I'm the President!

### **Scene 3: The Rematch**

*In Scene: Jackson, Clay, Adams, Electoral College, Jefferson, Rachel, Announcer*

**N1:** JQA's 4 years as president aren't exactly memorable. In fact, most voters were disappointed in him.

**N2:** That's because the American public overwhelming voted for Jackson in 1824.

**Jackson** (while staring at the Electoral College): But I didn't win the Electoral College.

**Announcer:** It's the rematch of the century – you know the competitors; you know the stakes... let's get ready tooooo rummmmmmmmmmmmmble!

**Jackson** (while fist-bumping Jefferson): This election's going to be mine.

**Adams:** You're going down again, Jackson!

**N2:** Adams fist-bumps Clay, who's now his Secretary of State.

**Announcer:** Keep everything fair – let's tussle in the Election of 1828 Hustle! Ding-ding!

**N1:** Jackson comes out swinging hard and hits Adams several times.

**Jackson:** This one's for all the insults you said about my wife (punch). This one's for all the things you said about my marriage (pop). This one's for all the things you said to hurt me (whap). And this one's for the corrupt bargain!

**N2:** Jackson delivers a hammering shot to Adams, who falls over.

**Clay:** Mr. President, Mr. President! Get up! Get up!

**Adams** (groaning in pain): Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

**Announcer:** 3... 2...

**N1:** Adams gets up and goes at Jackson with a haymaker. Jackson's back is turned as he's thought he's already won...

**Clay:** Look out for the Electoral College!!!!

**Electoral College** (while delivering a huge blow to Adams): Ah haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

**N2:** I hope he's not dead! He looks absolutely like an icicle!

**Announcer:** 3... 2... 1... The winner and undisputed President of these Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuunited States, Andrew "Old Hickory" Jackson!

**Rachel** (while running on-stage): Great job, honey! I'm so proud of you! (\*Kisses him on the cheek)

**Jackson:** We did it! This is the era of the common man!

**N1:** The Election of 1828 marked the first time in American history that a President wasn't from either Virginia or Massachusetts.

**Rachel:** And my honey bumpkins was also the first President who was elected that wasn't considered a...

**N2:** Wealthy aristocrat.

**Jackson** (angrily): Like... I... said... for... the... people!

**N1:** Jackson comes over and pops Narrator 2 out cold.

**N2:** That's not funny.

**N1:** But it's part of the script!

**Jackson** (while popping Narrator 2): Take that!

**N1:** And Narrator 2's down for the count!

**Announcer:** 3... 2... 1...

**Jackson:** Time to set America straight!

#### **Scene 4: A Change in Agenda**

*In Scene: Jackson, Jefferson, Rachel, Slave, Calhoun, Ross, Biddle*

**N2** (while holding an ice pack): Right before Jackson took office, his wife suddenly passed away.

**N1:** Rachel falls over and dies.

**Jackson:** Is that your fault, Narrator 2?! Did you poison my dear Rachel?!

**N2:** I didn't do it, but you always blamed John Quincy Adams for her death.

**Jackson** (angrily): Then I hope he gets pinched in the rear end with Satan's pitchfork!

**Jefferson** (snapping in front of a steaming angry Adams): Well then, Mr. President, it's due time to set your agenda.

**Jackson** (calmer): Right-o. The first thing I'm doing is taking a stand for the Common Man.

**N1:** Class cheers him on.

**Slave:** So you'll finally free me?

**Jackson:** Heck no. I have slaves and want to keep them!

**John C. Calhoun:** (while entering) Have no fear, Andrew! Your VP is here!

**Jackson:** Mr. Calhoun, have a seat.

**Calhoun:** Yes Mr. President; so I have a few ideas on how to run the country a bit better. First of all, thank you for dismissing the slavery issue. It is very important to my Southern states.

**Jackson:** Yes, Mr. Vice President.

**Calhoun:** Anyway, as I was saying, I have a few ideas for what we can do to put to ease the injustices of this nation.

**Jackson** (Pauses for some time): No offense, Mr. Calhoun, but the people chose me to be their president. Not you.

**Calhoun:** But, I still...

**Jackson:** You still are only the Vice President. Please don't assume that we are friends and that we can work together.

**Calhoun:** And I don't appreciate the way you abuse your power.

**Jackson:** Well, then leave!

**Calhoun** (while storming out of the room): Fine then! (\*Flips desk while exiting stage)

**Chief John Ross:** (enters as soon as Calhoun exits) So now is the time that the Cherokee nation will be able to have a state of its own! A state where the American Indians can join the whites in peace and freedom! A state where we can vote...

**Jackson:** (interrupting) Let me stop you right there...

**Ross:** \*GULPS\*

**Jackson:** You will not be, by any means, having your own state.

**Ross:** But we've petitioned to the Supreme Court to...

**Jackson:** Back it up.

**Ross:** But...

**Jackson:** And park it somewhere else. You and your tribes will leave the area around Georgia.

**Ross:** But that is my people's land, and has been for our entire lives. This is our land, and...

**Jackson:** And now you'll be leaving it.

**Ross:** You'll force us to walk nearly a 1,000 miles in the snowy cold? This will be our Trail of Tears. This will cause my people to die.

**Jackson:** Cry me a river. This is to be settled by the common American. NEXT!

**Ross:** \*Exits with head down and muffling cries\*

**Jefferson** (shaking his head in disappointment while appearing on stage): What is with you?!

**Jackson:** Oh, pipe down, Jefferson! You act like your presidency was perfect!

**Jefferson** (while quickly leaving the stage): WAAAAAAAAAH!

**Biddle** (entering with a spring in his step, smiling, and whistling): It's a great day to be a banker.



**N2:** Biddle starts handing out money to the class, who enthusiastically try to snatch it from him.

**Jackson:** That's EXACTLY what I find wrong with your National Bank, MR. BIDDLE!

**Biddle:** What's wrong with my Bank of the United States? It's a bank for the common man. You should love this!

**Jackson:** Your "bank," as you call it, is not for the "common man." It is for the common Northerner, with pockets full o' money!

**Biddle** (in a scoffing tone): I take offense to your comments, Mr. President.

**Jackson** (while putting on his boxing gloves): You can chew on this!

**N1:** Biddle and Narrator 2 take off and hide.

**Jackson:** That's what I thought! Next!

**N2:** It seems like Jackson needs to take some anger management classes.

**Jackson** (while chasing Narrator 2): What did you say?!

**Jefferson:** This is ridiculous!

### **Scene 5: End of an Era**

*In Scene: Jackson, Rachel, Off-scene voices*

**Jackson** (while writing at his desk with the Ghost of Rachel massaging his shoulders): Thank you my dear Rachel; my shoulders are so tense from my time on this Earth.

**N1:** He pauses for a second to dip his pen in the ink well.

**Rachel:** From the beginning, you had serious problems with the British.

**Jackson** (while grabbing his sword and pointing it up): For No'lanz, MEN!

**Rachel & Class:** For New Orleans!

**Jackson** (returning to his journal): In the end, I defeated those lowly Cherokee. The land in Georgia became ours, and they moved to Indian Territory in what we now call "Oklahoma."

**Ross** (while sobbing from off-stage): You awful, awful man!

**Jackson:** Pipe down! Anywho, where was I? Oh, yes. I also was able to keep slavery in check. In fact, I owned nearly 100 slaves by now.

**Slave** (from the off-stage): You mongrel! The black man, too, is a common man!

**Jackson** (shrugging his shoulders and returning to his journal): I also defeated the Bank of the United States and am still the only President to eliminate the national debt. I made America less about wealth and more about Americans.

**Biddle** (from the off-stage): You bum! You bum bum bum! I hate you! I haaaaaaate you!

**Jackson**: When John C. Calhoun convinced Virginia and Kentucky to nullify the Constitution and leave the U.S., I stopped him.

**Calhoun** (from off-stage): I hate you too!

**Jackson**: Sit down Calhoun, ya bum!

**Jackson** (while returning to his journal): My only regret is that I didn't have you hanged and didn't shoot Henry Clay.

**Clay** (from off-stage): If only I could've done it first!

**N2**: Andrew Jackson seemingly made a lot of enemies.

**Jackson**: You want some of this, Narrator 2?!

**N1**: Narrator 2 runs and hides again, joining Biddle. Jackson throws his boxing gloves into the crowd.

**Jackson**: So long, America. (Jackson bows, then smiles & waives to the class)