

## **7. Andrew Jackson (1829-1837)**

### **Benevolence**

### **Music and lyrics by Christian Kiefer**

### **Art by Christine Castro**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### Literary / Musical:

1. “No I don’t regret I thing,” begins Andrew Jackson in this song. Kiefer’s song envisions a Jackson unrepentant, essentially describing his actions as right for the times. Discuss Kiefer’s Andrew Jackson as a character, analyzing what you know about him from this song—his motivations, his desires, his will. What can we say about this character? What has been left out?
2. The backing band on “Benevolence” is Califone, a band famous for twisting the American blues and folk traditions. Listen carefully to the song and discuss how the music does or does not represent the lyrics and/or the history of the subject matter. You’ll need to do more than simply state whether or not you like the music. Listen to it deeply, look up other songs by Califone, compare and analyze your findings.

##### Historical:

3. Andrew Jackson is a figure that has been both celebrated and damned in American popular culture. On the one hand, he’s celebrated enough to appear on American currency. On the other, Native American peoples (in particular) view him as instrumental in the genocide of their peoples. Discuss the gap apparently between these positions, not only in relation to Andrew Jackson but in relation to our approach to American politics on the whole.

##### Research-Based:

4. Expanding from question #3 above, research to determine how closely tied “Benevolence” is to our understanding of Jackson, both today and during his own time. By extension, discuss how we revise history over time to suit our own cultural understanding of the past.

##### Art/Visual Rhetoric:

5. Compare Christine Castro’s image of Jackson to Christa Dalien’s of James Madison. Both have used similar media—pen and ink with some white painted highlights—and have achieved similar results. Compare and contrast the works of art, paying particular attention to the “gaze” of both Presidents and to your own gaze as a viewer. How does the black field of the clothing move the viewer’s eye (for example). How does each image function to move the viewer’s eye and how do the Presidents’ own

eyes function in the composition. (In other words, can you use the Presidents' gaze to reach any conclusions about the art as a whole?)