# **United States History**

**Choral Reading: John C. Calhoun versus Andrew Jackson**

South Carolina’s John C. Calhoun, angry over the Tariff of Abominations (1828), developed a theory of nullification. Whenever a federal law is harmful to a state, that state can nullify (block) the implementation of that law in that state. Nullification is an idea that strengths the belief in states’ rights—that states have certain powers to protect themselves from harm by the federal government. John C. Calhoun worked out the theory of nullification and President Andrew Jackson rejected it.



**CALHOUN:**

The Tariff imposes on the South the burden of sustaining the Government.

**CALHOUN:**

The Constitution of the United States is, in fact, a compact, to which each State is a party.

**CALHOUN:**

South Carolina understands that a State, in the last resort, has a right to judge resistance to oppression, or secession from the Union.

**CALHOUN:**

The right of judging prevents the encroachments of the General Government on the reserved rights of the States.

**CALHOUN:**

This right of interposition, be it called—State-right, veto, or nullification—I conceive to be the fundamental principle of our system.

“If one drop of blood be shed in South Carolina in defiance of the laws of the United States, I will hang the first man of them I can get my hands on to the first tree I can find.” *–Andrew Jackson, 1832*



**JACKSON:**

The wisdom of man never yet made a system of taxation that would operate with perfect equality.

**JACKSON:**

Our compact declares that the Constitution and laws of the United States are the supreme law of the land.

**JACKSON:**

If South Carolina has a right to prevent the collection of taxes, then all states have a right to avoid paying taxes considered unjust.

**JACKSON:**

The right is founded on the strange position that any one State may declare an act of Congress void and prohibit its execution.

**JACKSON:**

I consider, then, the power to nullify a law of the United States, assumed by one State, *incompatible with the existence of the Union.*

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