On November 3rd, 20+ very engaged readers gathered at the Venice Inn for an informed discussion of *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*. The meeting led off with a brilliant, overview by Kent Kirwan, that helped sort out the sometimes confusing chronology of this highly acclaimed biography.

It was explained that Jackson was the first populist U.S. president, meaning that he came from simple beginnings, and was broadly supported by an extended voting cohort of lower-class citizens. His was a media-conscious administration that saw the initiation of vicious party politics into the capitol scene. This was expressed in Jackson’s creation of the patronage system for replacement of the propertied class of citizens who formerly controlled all public offices in the civil service.

The biography provides extensive documentation of personal and family aspects of Jackson’s administration, with dismaying details of the protracted feud between Emily Donelson and Margaret Eaton. It was surprising to some readers that such petty matters could loom so central in the matters of presidential conduct. It appeared that bruising conflicts in Jackson’s early life left him unable to distance himself from the worst aspects of the “Petticoat Affair.”

Jackson’s strong character and fervid patriotism marked this as an era of strong of presidential domination over Congress. This occurred especially in the divisive debate on Nullification, in which Jackson asserted the priority of the constitution and federal initiatives over states rights.

Many readers commented on Jackson’s regrettable and cruel insensitivity to the plight of slaves and American Indians.

Discussion of the next book and meeting date led to the selection of *Peter Hessler’s Oracle Bones: A Journey Be-*
tween China’s Past and Present, for our next meeting, scheduled for **Wednesday, January 5th**, again at 11:30 at the Caniglia’s Venice Inn. This title is available at the Book Worm, Countryside Village at 20% discount for Bibliophiles. *See review at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/30/books/review/30spence.html?_r=1&emc=etal* (Reported by Bob Runyon, 11/14/10, rrunyon@unomaha.edu)