Chapter 9

Religion and Reform
(1815–1855)
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Section 1: Reforming Society

Section 2: The Antislavery Movement

Section 3: The Movement for Women’s Rights

Section 4: Growing Divisions
Reforming Society

What message did Protestant revivalists preach?
Who were the transcendentalists?
Why did reformers launch a temperance movement?
How did Horace Mann and others work to reform public education?
How did Dorothea Dix try to improve conditions in prisons?
Why did many reformers work to establish utopian communities?
The Revivalist Movement

- During the early 1800s, a social reform movement rooted in Protestant religious faith emerged.
- The reformers believed that God was all-powerful but that God allowed people to make their own destinies.
- Revivalists gave speeches, helped slaves escape, and worked for women’s right to vote and other social issues.

Notable Reformers

- Charles Grandison Finney of New York was a lawyer and Presbyterian minister who emphasized individuals’ power to reform themselves.
- Lyman Beecher was also an important revivalist figure. He taught that good people would make a good country, and he raised 13 children, including reformer Catherine Beecher and antislavery author Harriet Beecher Stowe.
A philosophical movement called transcendentalism emerged among writers and philosophers in New England. Transcendentalists believed that through a process of spiritual discovery and insight, people could rise above, or transcend, the material world.

Transcendentalists taught that people should live self-reliant, moral lives. To many, this meant helping to reform society.

Two transcendentalist writers became renowned figures. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Essays* and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* earned them worldwide fame as well as a place in the American literary tradition.
The most widespread social reform movement during the early 1800s was the **temperance movement**, an organized campaign to eliminate alcohol consumption.

Temperance reformers opposed alcohol consumption, arguing that it threatened family life and caused employee absenteeism.

Members of the movement encouraged people to take pledges of **abstinence**, or refraining from doing something, in this case drinking alcohol. They also worked for political change to ban the sale of alcohol.

Some states, beginning with Maine in 1851, passed laws banning the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. However, protests soon led to the lax enforcement or the repeal of most of these laws.
Emergence of Public Education

Desire for Public Education
Beginning in the 1820s, many working-class and middle-class Americans demanded tax-supported public schools. They felt that a democracy required citizens who were literate, informed, and morally upright.

Opposition Views
Others did not want their tax money to support schools. Many rural families depended on their children’s labor and did not want them to be required to attend school.

Horace Mann
Horace Mann helped Massachusetts pioneer school reform, encouraging other states to do the same. He also established the grade level system, consistent curricula, and teacher training programs.

Moral Education
Early public education was designed to teach Protestant moral values as well as reading and other skills. Students learned thrift, obedience, honesty, and temperance from books such as McGuffey’s Readers.

The Limits to Reform
African Americans and girls often did not have the same opportunity to attend school that white boys did. When African Americans did attend schools, they were often segregated, or separated according to their race.
Reforming Prisons

In the early 1800s, many states built prisons to house people who had committed crimes. These prisons were supposed to allow inmates to reflect on their sins and possibly later rejoin society as law-abiding citizens.

Beginning in 1841, Boston schoolteacher Dorothea Dix visited prisons and found deplorable conditions. These conditions included crowded living spaces, lack of heat, lack of proper food and clothing, and lack of treatment for mentally ill inmates.

Dix submitted a report of her findings to the Massachusetts legislature. Her testimony convinced Massachusetts and other states to improve prison conditions and to build separate hospitals for the mentally ill.
Instead of working for larger reform, some reformers aimed to create small societies dedicated to social and political perfection. These societies, called **utopian communities**, arose across the United States.

One of the most well-known utopian communities was New Harmony in Indiana, founded in 1825 by Scottish industrialist and social reformer Robert Owen.

Most utopian communities were religiously oriented. One group in particular, the Shakers, aimed to lead lives of productive labor, moral perfection, and equality.

Despite their goals, most utopian communities, including New Harmony, fell victim to laziness, selfishness, and quarreling.
Which of the following people was well-known as an advocate of public education?

(A) Robert Owen  
(B) Charles Grandison Finney  
(C) Dorothea Dix  
(D) Horace Mann

Why were members of the temperance movement opposed to alcohol consumption?

(A) They preferred spiritual discovery and insight.  
(B) They felt it led to family problems and employee absenteeism.  
(C) They thought alcohol had no place in utopian communities.  
(D) They felt alcohol consumption led to worse prison conditions.

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• How did the antislavery movement arise and grow?
• What contributions did Frederick Douglass make to the antislavery movement?
• What caused divisions among abolitionists?
• How did the Underground Railroad operate?
• How did some Americans resist abolitionism?
An Antislavery Movement Arises

Chapter 9, Section 2

The Antislavery Movement

The Roots of Abolitionism

The abolitionist movement, the movement to put an end to slavery, began in earnest during the late 1700s. Antislavery societies and newspapers were created, and between 1777 and 1804, every state north of Maryland abolished slavery.

Moderate Reforms

At first, activists such as Quaker Benjamin Lundy advocated moderate reforms. Lundy and others called for a gradual program of emancipation, or freeing, of enslaved persons.

Colonization of Liberia

In the early 1800s, some abolitionists established a new state in West Africa, Liberia, believing that free African Americans could receive better treatment there than in America. Many African Americans were offended by this idea, believing themselves to be as American as white people.

Radical Abolitionism

Some reformers, including white Bostonian William Lloyd Garrison, denounced moderation and called for an immediate end to slavery. Garrison founded the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 to work toward this goal.
Early Years

• Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland in 1817.
• Although Maryland state law prevented the education of slaves, Douglass was taught first by his owner’s wife and later educated himself.
• As a field hand, Douglass was brutally beaten, reaching what he called a “turning point” in his life—the time that he fought back.
• In 1838, Douglass disguised himself as a sailor and escaped to New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Douglass as Activist

• Douglass became a writer and speaker, earning a reputation for passion and eloquence.
• Douglass founded an abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*, in 1847.
• To avoid capture by his former master, Douglass went to Europe, where he raised the money to purchase his freedom.
• Douglass believed that slavery should be fought with deeds as well as words, although without violence.
Divisions Among Abolitionists

Women’s Participation

When the American Anti-Slavery Society insisted that female abolitionists be allowed to speak at meetings, some members resigned in disgust. Despite resistance, female abolitionists such as Sarah and Angelina Grimké and Sojourner Truth helped spread antislavery sentiment.

Racial Issues

African Americans felt a personal connection to the antislavery movement that many white people never understood. Some black reformers felt that white abolitionists regarded them as inferior.

Tactics

Some abolitionists, including Arthur and Lewis Tappan, felt that political action was needed. Others, including William Lloyd Garrison, supported other tactics. Garrison believed that the Constitution supported slavery, making new antislavery laws pointless.
Thousands of slaves escaped to freedom via the **Underground Railroad**, a secret network of abolitionists who guided and sheltered fleeing slaves along paths which led to northern states or Canada.

The Underground Railroad consisted of numerous paths whose natural characteristics helped escaping slaves avoid their pursuers. These included the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, the swamps along the East Coast, and the Appalachian Mountains.

One famous Underground Railroad “conductor,” Harriet Tubman, was herself an escaped slave. After escaping to the North, she made many trips back to the South, helping more than 300 other slaves to freedom.

Some people, including the Quakers of southern Ohio, were sympathetic to the Underground Railroad. Others, including whites in southern Illinois, attempted to catch escaped slaves as they fled.
Resistance to Abolitionism

Opposition in the North

• Even in the North, abolitionism was viewed as a radical idea in the decades before the Civil War.

• Northern merchants feared that tensions with the South over slavery would hurt trade, and labor leaders feared that escaped slaves would take jobs away from white Americans.

• Opposition to abolitionism became violent. Meeting halls and printing presses were destroyed, and abolitionists were humiliated and killed.

Opposition in the South

• Most white southerners were outraged by abolitionists’ criticisms.

• During the 1830s, speaking out against slavery became increasingly dangerous and rare in the South.

• In 1836, southerners in Congress passed what northerners called the gag rule, which prohibited antislavery petitions from being read or acted upon in the House for the next eight years.
What was the purpose of the Underground Railroad?
(A) To provide political action to change slavery laws
(B) To help fleeing slaves escape to freedom
(C) To give women a voice in the abolitionist movement
(D) To stop the abolitionist movement by violent means

What was one reason that some northerners were opposed to abolitionism?
(A) They were outraged by abolitionists’ criticisms.
(B) They feared that tensions would hurt trade with the South.
(C) They felt that speaking up against slavery was too dangerous.
(D) They were disappointed with how African Americans in the movement were treated.

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The Movement for Women’s Rights

Chapter 9, Section 3

- What private roles were women expected to fulfill in the early 1800s?
- What public roles did some women gradually adopt?
- What is the significance of the Seneca Falls Convention?
Cultural and Legal Limits on Women

- Industrialization meant that many women, especially in comfortable households in the North, were freed from some household chores and given more time to devote to other tasks.
- Women were expected to raise children, entertain guests, perform community service, and complete tasks around the house. These cultural norms were backed by laws such as those that prevented women from voting or prevented married women from owning property.

Reform at Home

- Some reformers, including Catherine Beecher, sought reform within the rules of the time.
- Beecher helped establish the Hartford Female Seminary, where she also taught.
- Beecher’s *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* offered women household advice and inspired them to help build a stronger America through their work in the home.
Public Roles for Women

Chapter 9, Section 3

Fighting for Reform

• For many women, participating in the reform movements of the late 1800s was a first taste of life outside the home.
• Women participated in many aspects of reform, including writing, speaking, and marching in parades to support their cause.
• Through these activities, many middle-class women became aware both of their inferior position in society and of their ability to fight to change it.

Fighting for Abolition

• Many women entered the public world of politics by participating in the fight to end slavery.
• Women saw parallels between their status and that of African Americans.
• Some men objected to women’s participation in the abolitionist movement, believing that women should use their influence only within their families.
A Women’s Rights Movement

Chapter 9, Section 3

• American women delegates to the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England, in 1840 were outraged when the convention voted to prohibit women from participating.

• Two of these women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, turned their anger into action. In 1848, they organized their own convention on women’s rights.
The women’s rights convention that Mott and Stanton organized, called the **Seneca Falls Convention**, was the first of its kind in United States history.

At the convention, Stanton read her Declaration of Sentiments, a document which echoed the language of the Declaration of Independence.

The convention passed 12 resolutions, including a controversial one calling for **suffrage**, or the right to vote, for women. Women opposed to suffrage argued that women should use their influence only within their homes.

No African American woman attended the convention. Although many found the abolitionist movement to be a more pressing concern, some, including Sojourner Truth, were active in the women’s movement as well.
Although some gains came more slowly, many women began attending college and taking on careers in fields previously reserved for men. Some notable women of this period include:

- In 1851, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first American woman to earn a medical diploma.

- Maria Mitchell became the nation’s first female astronomer, becoming highly successful in her field.

- Author and editor Margaret Fuller criticized cultural traditions that restricted women’s roles.

- Editor Sarah Josepha Hale published articles about women’s issues for almost 50 years.
How did Catherine Beecher believe that women should achieve social change?

- (A) By overhauling the current cultural and legal system
- (B) By working within the existing system
- (C) By fighting for the right to vote
- (D) By taking on careers traditionally reserved for men

Why was suffrage a controversial issue at the Seneca Falls Convention?

- (A) Focusing on suffrage would have reduced efforts on other issues.
- (B) Suffrage interfered with the Declaration of Sentiments.
- (C) Some women preferred to use their influence only in their homes.
- (D) African American delegates were more interested in abolition.

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Growing Divisions

• What were the causes of the huge rise in immigration to the United States in the 1830s and 1840s?
• Why did reform movements heighten tensions between the North and the South?
Irish and German Immigration

- Hundreds of thousands of Irish people fled to the United States from 1845 to 1849, when the Irish Potato Famine caused mass starvation.
- Like other groups, Irish immigrants became naturalized, or applied for and were granted American citizenship.
- A series of failed rebellions in Europe in 1848 brought many German immigrants to America for political freedom.

New Cultures

- Irish and German immigrants settled mostly in the North and West because slavery in the South meant fewer jobs were available there.
- These immigrants brought their Catholic traditions to the United States.
- Events such as boxing matches, horse races, and new team sports such as baseball provided inexpensive entertainment for new immigrants.
Irish and German immigrants often faced **discrimination**, or unequal treatment of a group of people because of their nationality, race, sex, or religion.

Labor unions disliked the fact that immigrant workers would work during strikes and would accept lower wages than union workers.

Some Protestants objected to the immigrants’ Catholic religion, claiming that Catholicism’s emphasis on rituals discouraged individual thinking. The issue of religion was especially prevalent in public schools, where Protestant values and the Protestant version of the Bible were taught.

Anti-immigration citizens formed the American Republican Party to fight for newer, more restrictive naturalization laws.

The hostility over immigration turned violent in 1844 when Irish Catholics attacked American Republicans who were attempting to vote in Philadelphia’s Irish districts. The attacks led to riots which killed 30 people and destroyed the homes of many Irish immigrants.
Divided Churches
• The issue of slavery caused a rift in Methodist and Baptist churches of the North and South.
• Methodist churches in the slaveholding states broke away from the national Methodist Church to form the Methodist Episcopal Church South.
• A similar division took place in the Baptist Church, as many southern churches formed the Southern Baptist Convention.

South Holds On to Traditions
• The South remained untouched by much of the social turmoil that had accompanied industrialization in the North.
• Because of this, many southerners saw no need for the reforms that northern activists suggested.
• The distance between farms and plantations meant that southern women did not have as much opportunity to participate in community organizations as their northern counterparts.
Why did immigrants during the mid-1800s settle mostly in the North and West?

(A) Northern schools were more sympathetic toward Catholicism.
(B) Immigrants feared discrimination in the South.
(C) Slavery meant that fewer jobs were available in the South.
(D) Immigrants wanted to work on social reform in the North.

Which of these factors contributed to growing North-South divisions?

(A) Industrialization led to more calls for social reform in the South.
(B) Slavery divided churches of the North and South.
(C) More Southern women than Northern women joined community organizations.
(D) Immigrants settled in equal numbers in the North and the South.

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