

OUTLINE

Chapter 12 An Age of Reform, 1820-1840

This chapter discusses the reform movements that swept through American society during the antebellum period. One of the most important of these reform movements was the effort to abolish the institution of slavery. Women were a key part of the antebellum reform movements and their participation began to change society's ideals about the rights of women.

INTRODUCTION

I. THE REFORM IMPULSE

II. THE CRUSADE AGAINST SLAVERY

III. BLACK AND WHITE ABOLITIONISM

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INTRODUCTION

STORY:

Abby Kelley was a teacher in Lynn, Massachusetts, who devoted her life to the movement to end slavery in America. She traveled throughout the North giving speeches against slavery, often leaving behind her husband and young daughter. “I have done it for the sake of the mothers whose babies are sold away from them,” Kelley said. “The most precious legacy I can leave my child is a free country.”



THEMES:

1. The antebellum period was an era of reform during which many Americans, particularly in the middle class, sought to change society.
2. The reform impulse resulted in the founding of utopian communities, organized movements to abolish drinking, and efforts to improve schools, prisons and mental institutions.
3. Abolitionism, the movement to abolish slavery, was a key component of antebellum reform.
4. Women were important players in the reform movements of this period and their efforts included new ideas about the rights and roles of women in American society.

I. THE REFORM IMPULSE

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the major expressions of the antebellum reform impulse?

A. Utopian Communities

1. About 100 reform communities were established in the decades before the Civil War
2. Nearly all the communities set out to reorganize society on a cooperative basis, hoping to restore social harmony to a world of excessive individualism, and to narrow the widening gap between rich and poor

B. The Shakers

1. The Shakers were the most successful of the religious communities and had a significant impact on the outside world
2. Shakers believed men and women were spiritually equal
3. They abandoned private property and traditional family life
 - a. celibacy

C. Oneida

1. The founder of Oneida, John Noyes, preached that he and his followers had become so perfect that they had achieved a state of complete “purity of heart,” or sinlessness

ID & S

Utopian
Communities



STUDY HINT

You should be able to compare and contrast the following utopian communities:

Shakers
Oneida
Brook Farm
New Harmony

2. Noyes and followers abandoned private property and traditional family life

a. complex marriage

3. Oneida was an extremely dictatorial environment

D. Worldly Communities

1. New England transcendentalists established Brook Farm to demonstrate that manual and intellectual labor could coexist harmoniously

2. Although it was an exciting miniature university, Brook Farm failed in part because many intellectuals disliked farm labor

E. The Owenites

1. The most important secular communitarian was Robert Owen

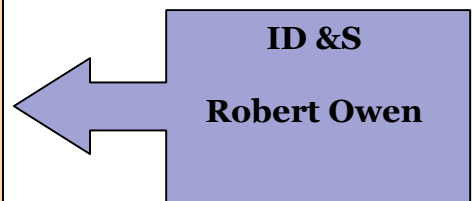
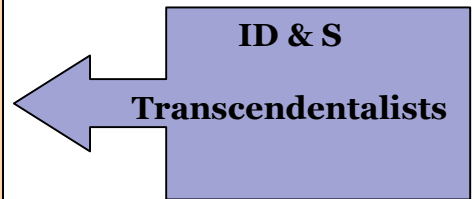
2. Owen promoted communitarianism as a peaceful means of ensuring that workers received the full value of their labor

3. At New Harmony, Owen championed women's rights and education

4. Other short-lived secular communities included those established by Joseph Warren

F. Religion and Reform

1. Some reform movements drew their inspiration from the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening



2. The revivals popularized the outlook known as “perfectionism,” which saw both individuals and society at large as capable of indefinite improvement

3. Under the impact of the revivals, older reform efforts moved in a new, radical direction

a. prohibition, pacifism, and abolition

G. Reform and Its Critics

1. To members of the North’s emerging middle-class culture, reform became a badge of respectability

2. Many Americans saw the reform impulse as an attack on their own freedom

a. Drinking was a hotly debated issue

b. Catholics rallied against the temperance movement

H. Reformers and Freedom

1. The vision of freedom expressed by the reform movements was liberating and controlling at the same time

I. The Invention of the Asylum

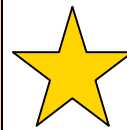
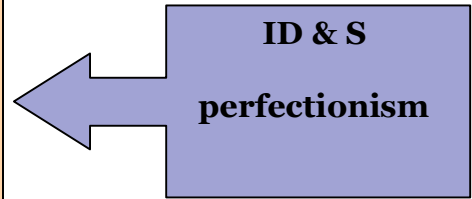
1. Americans embarked on a program of institution building

a. jails

b. poorhouses

c. asylums

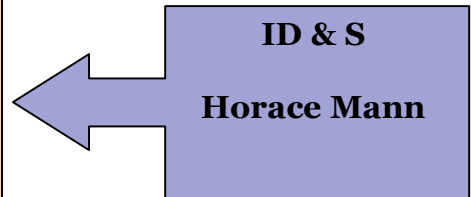
d. orphanages



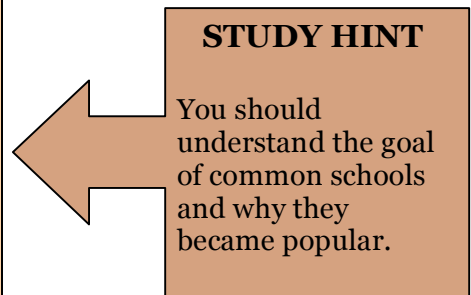
2. These institutions were inspired by the conviction that those who passed through their doors could eventually be released to become productive, self-disciplined citizens

J. The Common School

1. A tax-supported state public school system was widely adopted
2. Horace Mann was the era's leading educational reformer
3. Mann believed that education would "equalize the conditions of men"
 - a. Avenue for social advancement
 - b. Opportunity for character building
4. Common schools provided career opportunities for women, but widened the divide between North and South



ID & S
Horace Mann



STUDY HINT
You should understand the goal of common schools and why they became popular.

II. THE CRUSADE AGAINST SLAVERY

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the sources and significance of abolitionism?

A. Colonization

1. The American Colonization Society promoted the gradual abolition of slavery and the settlement of black Americans in Africa

a. Liberia

2. Like Indian removal, colonization rested on the premise that America was fundamentally a white society

3. Most African-Americans adamantly opposed the idea of colonization

a. Insisted that blacks were Americans, entitled to the same rights enjoyed by whites

B. Militant Abolitionism

1. A new generation of reformers demanded immediate abolition

a. Believed that slavery was both sinful and a violation of the Declaration of Independence

2. David Walker's *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* was a passionate indictment of slavery and racial prejudice

C. The Emergence of Garrison

1. The appearance in 1831 of *The Liberator*,



William Lloyd Garrison's weekly journal published in Boston, gave the new type of abolitionism a permanent voice

2. Some of Garrison's ideas were too radical, but his call for immediate abolition was echoed by many

a. Garrison rejected colonization

D. Spreading the Abolitionist Message

1. Abolitionists recognized the democratic potential in the production of printed material

2. Theodore Weld helped to create the abolitionists' mass constituency

3. He used the methods of the religious revivals and said slavery was a sin

4. Identifying slavery as a sin was essential to replacing the traditional strategies of gradual emancipation and colonization with immediate abolition

5. Nearly all abolitionists, despite their militant language, rejected violence as a means of ending slavery

E. Abolitionists and the Idea of Freedom

1. Abolitionists repudiated the idea of "wage slavery" popularized by the era's labor movement

a. Only slavery deprived human beings of their "grand central right—the inherent right

ID & S

William Lloyd Garrison

STUDY HINT

You should know the key arguments that the abolitionists used to oppose slavery, including how the abolitionists defined freedom.

of self-ownership”

F. A New Vision of America

1. The antislavery movement sought to reinvigorate the idea of freedom as a truly universal entitlement
2. Insisted that blacks were fellow countrymen, not foreigners or a permanently inferior caste
3. Abolitionists disagreed over the usefulness of the Constitution
4. Abolitionists consciously identified their movement with the revolutionary heritage
 - a. The Liberty Bell



III. BLACK AND WHITE ABOLITIONISM

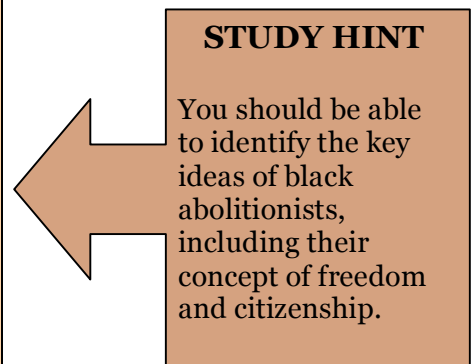
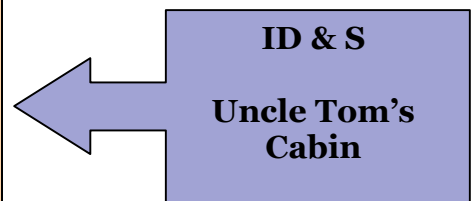
FOCUS QUESTION: How did abolitionism challenge barriers to racial equality and free speech?

A. Black Abolitionism

1. From its inception, blacks played a leading role in the antislavery movement
2. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin gave the abolitionist message a powerful human appeal
3. Although the movement was racially integrated, whites relegated blacks to secondary positions
4. Abolitionists launched legal and political battles against racial discrimination in the North
5. Black abolitionists developed an understanding of freedom that went well beyond the usage of most of their white contemporaries
 - a. Attacked the intellectual foundations of racism

B. Liberty and Slavery

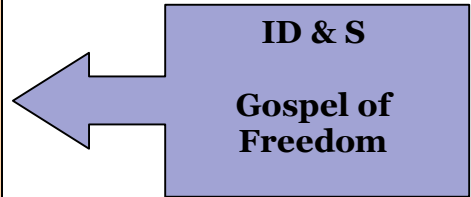
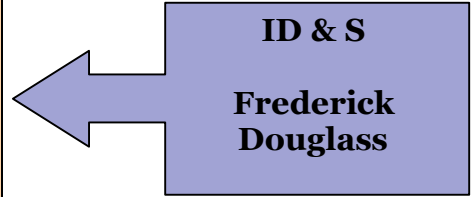
1. At every opportunity, black abolitionists rejected the nation's pretensions as a land of liberty
2. Black abolitionists articulated the ideal of color-blind citizenship



3. Frederick Douglass on the Fourth of July

C. Slavery and Civil Liberties

1. Abolitionism aroused violent hostility from northerners who feared that the movement threatened to disrupt the Union, interfere with profits wrested from slave labor, and overturn white supremacy
2. Editor Elijah Lovejoy was killed by a mob while defending his press
3. Mob attacks and attempts to limit abolitionists' freedom of speech convinced many northerners that slavery was incompatible with the democratic liberties of white Americans
4. The fight for the right to debate slavery openly and without reprisal led abolitionists to elevate "free opinion" to a central place in what Garrison called the "gospel of freedom"



IV. THE ORIGINS OF FEMINISM

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the sources and significance of the antebellum women's rights movement?

A. The Rise of the Public Woman

1. Women were instrumental in the abolition movement
2. The public sphere was open to women in ways government and party politics were not

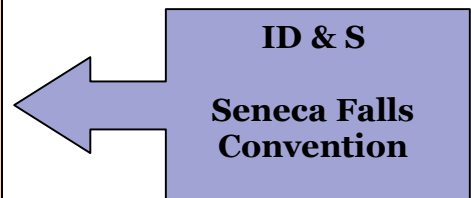


B. Women and Free Speech

1. Women lectured in public about abolition
 - a. Grimké sisters
 - b. Frances Wright
 - c. Maria Stewart
2. The Grimké sisters argued against the idea that taking part in assemblies, demonstrations, and lectures was unfeminine
 - a. Letters on the Equality of the Sexes (1838)

C. Women's Right

1. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848
 - a. Raised the issue of women's suffrage for the first time



2. The Declaration of Sentiments condemned the entire structure of inequality

D. Feminism and Freedom

1. Lacking broad backing at home, early feminists found allies abroad
2. Women deserved the range of individual choices, the possibility of self-realization, that constituted the essence of freedom
3. Margaret Fuller sought to apply to women the transcendentalist idea that freedom meant a quest for personal development

E. Women and Work

1. The participants at Seneca Falls rejected the identification of the home as women's "sphere"
 - a. the "bloomer" costume
2. The movement posed a fundamental challenge to some of their society's central beliefs

F. The Slavery of Sex

1. The concept of the "slavery of sex" empowered the women's movement to develop an all-encompassing critique of male authority and their own subordination
2. Marriage and slavery became a powerful rhetorical tool for feminists

STUDY HINT

You should understand how early feminism argued for new boundaries of freedom.

G. “Social Freedom”

1. The demand that women should enjoy the rights to regulate their own sexual activity and procreation and to be protected by the state against violence at the hands of their husbands challenged the notion that claims to justice, freedom, and individual rights should stop at the household’s door
2. The issue of women’s private freedom revealed underlying differences within the movement for women’s rights

H. The Abolitionist Schism

1. When organized abolitionism split into two branches in 1840, the immediate cause was a dispute over the proper role of women in antislavery work
 - a. American Antislavery Society
 - b. American and Foreign Antislavery Society
2. The Liberty Party was established in hopes of making abolitionism a political movement

