The Age of Reform

Why It’s Important

The idea of reform—the drive to improve society and the lives of individuals—runs like a continuous thread through American history. During the mid-1800s, American reformers attacked such social problems as cruelty toward people with mental illness. They worked to make education available to more young people. Many also crusaded against slavery or for women’s rights. These movements paved the way for later social changes.

Chapter Themes

- **Section 1**, Civic Rights and Responsibilities
- **Section 2**, Individual Action
- **Section 3**, Groups and Institutions

Primary Sources

See pages 962–963 for primary source readings to accompany Chapter 14

The Country School by Winslow Homer

Homer painted scenes of rural American life in the 1800s. This painting shows a classroom in a rural public school.
A new reforming spirit arose in America in the early 1800s. The men and women who led the reform movement wanted to extend the nation’s ideals of liberty and equality to all Americans. They believed the nation should live up to the noble goals stated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

**The Reforming Spirit**

The spirit of reform brought changes to American religion, politics, education, art, and literature. Some reformers sought to improve society by forming utopias, communities based on a vision of a perfect society. In 1825 Robert Owen established New Harmony, Indiana, a village dedicated to cooperation rather than competition among its members.

The Shakers, the Mormons, and other religious groups also built their own communities. Founded on high hopes and sometimes impractical ideas, few of the utopian communities lasted more than a few years. Only the Mormons established a stable, enduring community.

**The Religious Influence**

In the early 1800s, a wave of religious fervor—known as the Second Great Awakening—stirred the nation. The first Great Awakening had spread through the colonies in the mid-1700s.

The new religious movement began with frontier camp meetings called revivals. People came from miles around to hear eloquent preach-
ers, such as Charles Finney, and to pray, sing, weep, and shout. The experience often made men and women eager to reform both their own lives and the world. The Second Great Awakening increased church membership, especially among Methodists and Baptists. It also inspired people to become involved in missionary work and social reform movements.

**War Against Alcohol**

Religious leaders stood at the forefront of the war against alcohol. Public drunkenness was common in the early 1800s. Alcohol abuse was widespread, especially in the West and among urban workers. Lyman Beecher, a Connecticut minister and crusader against the use of alcohol, wanted to protect society against “rum-selling, tippling folk, infidels and ruff-scruff.”

Reformers blamed alcohol for poverty, the breakup of families, crime, and even insanity. They called for temperance, drinking little or no alcohol. The movement gathered momentum in 1826 when the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance was formed.

Beecher and other temperance crusaders used lectures, pamphlets, and revival-style rallies to warn people of the dangers of liquor. The temperance movement gained a major victory in 1851, when Maine passed a law banning the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Other states passed similar laws. Many Americans resented these laws, however, and most were later repealed, or canceled.

The temperance movement would reemerge in the early 1900s and lead to a constitutional amendment banning alcohol. You will read about this amendment and its repeal in Chapter 21.

**Reforming Education**

Reformers also focused on education. They argued that the poor state of education threatened the nation’s well-being. Thomas Jefferson had stated that a democracy could not survive without educated citizens.

In the early 1800s, only New England provided free elementary education. In other areas parents had to pay fees or send their children to schools for the poor—a choice some parents refused out of pride. Some communities had no schools at all.

**Horace Mann**

The leader of educational reform was Horace Mann, a lawyer who became the head of the Massachusetts board of education in 1837. During his term Mann lengthened the school year to six months, made improvements in the school curriculum, doubled teachers’ salaries, and developed better ways of training teachers.

Mann shared Jefferson’s belief that education was vital to democracy:

During the 1800s, many Americans on the frontier attended religious camp meetings. At these gatherings, preachers gave rousing messages that stirred the listeners’ emotions. **What two religious groups gained members as a result of the camp meetings?**
If we do not prepare our children to be good citizens, then our republic must go down to destruction, as others have gone before it.

Partly due to Mann’s efforts, Massachusetts in 1839 founded the nation’s first state-supported normal school, a school for training high-school graduates as teachers. Other states soon adopted the reforms that Mann had pioneered.

**Education for Some**

By the 1850s all states had accepted three basic principles of public education—that schools should be free and supported by taxes, that teachers should be trained, and that children should be required to attend school.

These principles did not immediately go into effect. Opposition to compulsory education slowed the development of public schools in many places. In addition schools were poorly funded, and many teachers lacked training.

Most females received a limited education. Parents often kept their daughters from school because of the belief that a woman’s primary role was to become a wife and mother and that this role did not require an education. When girls did go to school, they often studied music or needlework rather than science, mathematics, and history—considered “men’s” subjects.

In the West, where settlers lived far apart, many children had no school to attend. And African Americans in all parts of the country had few opportunities to go to school.

**Higher Education**

Dozens of new colleges and universities were created during the age of reform. Most admitted only men. Religious groups founded many colleges between 1820 and 1850, including Amherst and Holy Cross in Massachusetts and Trinity and Wesleyan in Connecticut.

Slowly, higher education became available to groups who were previously denied the opportunity. Oberlin College of Ohio, founded in 1833, admitted both women and African Americans to the student body. In 1837 a teacher named Mary Lyon in Massachusetts opened Mount Holyoke, the first permanent women’s college in America. The first college for African Americans—Ashmun Institute, which later became Lincoln University—opened in Pennsylvania in 1854.

**People with Special Needs**

Some reformers focused on the problem of teaching people with disabilities. Thomas Gallaudet (gəˈluːdət), who developed a method of educating people who were hearing impaired, opened the Hartford School for the Deaf in Connecticut in 1817.

At about the same time, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe advanced the cause of those who were visually impaired. He developed books with large raised letters that people with sight impairments could “read” with their fingers. Howe headed the Perkins Institute, a school for the blind, in Boston.

**Footnotes to History**

*Braille* Howe’s raised-letter system was later replaced by Braille, a method invented by Louis Braille of France, in which raised dots represent letters.
New Attitudes Toward Mental Illness

When schoolteacher Dorothea Dix visited a women’s jail in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she found that some women confined there had committed no crime. They were mentally ill. These “lunatics,” as the jailers called them, were locked up in the back of the jail in cold, dark cells.

Dix spent 18 months visiting the jails, poorhouses, and asylums of Massachusetts. She took notes on what she saw and made a report to the Massachusetts legislature. People were shocked by her vivid description of mentally ill people kept in pens, cellars, and cages, “chained, naked, beaten with rods and lashed into obedience.”

Massachusetts lawmakers agreed to spend the money needed to provide better care for the mentally ill. Dix then began a lifelong crusade to improve the care of people with mental illness—one of many reforms dedicated to transforming American society in the mid-1800s.

Cultural Trends

The changes in American society influenced art and literature. Earlier generations of American painters and writers looked to Europe for their inspiration and models. Beginning in the 1820s American artists developed their own style and explored American themes.

Painters

American painters started choosing subjects that were specifically American. One group of painters, known as the Hudson River School, painted landscapes of the Hudson River valley in New York.

George Catlin painted hundreds of pictures of Native American life in the West. George Caleb Bingham of Missouri celebrated contemporary river and frontier life. In a series of elegant paintings and sketches, John James Audubon portrayed the birds of America.

Transcendentalists

The American spirit of reform influenced Transcendentalists. Transcendentalists stressed the relationship between humans and nature as well as the importance of the individual conscience. Writers such as Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau were leading Transcendentalists. Through her life and writings, Fuller supported rights for women. In his poems and essays, Emerson urged people to listen to the inner voice of conscience and to break the bonds of prejudice. Thoreau put his beliefs into practice through civil disobedience—refusing to obey laws he thought were unjust. In 1846 Thoreau went to jail rather than pay a tax to support the Mexican War.

Other Writers

The Transcendentalists were not the only important writers of the period. Two of the most popular authors of the early 1800s were James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving. In novels such as The Deerslayer and The Last of the Mohicans, James Fenimore Cooper wrote of the clash between the values of the white settlers on the frontier and those of Native Americans. Washington Irving wrote tales, such as “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle,” set in the Hudson River valley of New York.

Using his experiences at sea, Herman Melville wrote *Moby Dick*, an epic tale of a whaling captain’s search for revenge. In stories such as “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Edgar Allan Poe explored the world of the supernatural. Poe perfected the modern detective story and has been called the “father of the modern short story.”

**American Poets**

Many poets created impressive works during this period. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote narrative, or story, poems, such as *The Song of Hiawatha*, on American themes. Walt Whitman captured the American impulse for self-improvement and equality in *Leaves of Grass* and other poetry. He wrote of a growing, confident people.

Emily Dickinson wrote simple, deeply personal poems. In a poem called “Hope,” written in 1861, she compares hope with a bird:

“Hope’ is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—”

Women writers of the period were generally not taken seriously, yet they were the authors of the most popular fiction. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote the most successful best-seller of the mid-1800s, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Stowe’s novel explores the injustice of slavery—an issue that took on new urgency during the age of reform.

**Section 1 Assessment**

**Checking for Understanding**

1. **Identify** Horace Mann, Dorothea Dix, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Harriet Beecher Stowe.

2. **Define** utopia, revival, temperance, normal school, Transcendentalist.

3. **Explain** the link between religion and reform in the early 1800s.

**Reviewing Themes**

4. **Civic Rights and Responsibilities** How did Thoreau act on his beliefs?

**Critical Thinking**

5. **Drawing Conclusions** What did Thomas Jefferson mean when he said that the United States could not survive as a democracy without educated and well-informed citizens?

**Activity**

Conducting an Interview Interview your grandparents or other adults who are more than 50 years old to find out what they remember about their public school days.
The spirit of reform that swept the United States in the early 1800s was not limited to improving education and expanding the arts. It also included the efforts of abolitionists—members of the growing band of reformers who worked to abolish, or end, slavery.

**Early Efforts to End Slavery**

Even before the American Revolution, some Americans had tried to limit or end slavery. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the delegates had reached a compromise on the difficult issue, agreeing to let each state decide whether to allow slavery. By the early 1800s, Northern states had ended slavery, but it continued in the South. The North and the South then engaged in a heated debate over the issue of slavery.

The religious revival and the reform movement of the early and mid-1800s gave new life to the antislavery movement. Many Americans came to believe that slavery was wrong. Yet not all Northerners shared this view. The conflict over slavery continued to build.

**Quakers for Freedom**

Many of the men and women who led the antislavery movement came from the Quaker faith. One Quaker, Benjamin Lundy of New Jersey, founded a newspaper in 1815 to spread the
abolitionist message. Lundy wrote, “I heard the wail of the captive. I felt his pang of distress, and the iron entered my soul.”

**American Colonization Society**

The first large-scale antislavery effort was not aimed at abolishing slavery but at resettling African Americans in Africa or the Caribbean. The *American Colonization Society*, formed in 1817 by a group of white Virginians, worked to free enslaved workers gradually by buying them from slaveholders and sending them abroad to start new lives.

The society raised enough money from private donors, Congress, and the Virginia and Maryland legislatures to send several groups of African Americans out of the country. Some went to the west coast of Africa, where the society had acquired land for a colony. In 1822 the first African American settlers arrived in this colony, called Liberia, Latin for “place of freedom.”

In 1847 Liberia became an independent country. American emigration to Liberia continued until the Civil War. Some 12,000 to 15,000 African Americans settled in the new country between 1822 and 1865.

**Problems With Resettlement**

The American Colonization Society did not halt the growth of slavery. The number of enslaved people continued to increase at a steady pace, and the society could only resettle a small number of African Americans. Furthermore, most African Americans did not want to go to Africa. Many were from families that had lived in America for several generations. They simply wanted to be free in American society. African Americans feared that the society aimed to strengthen slavery.

**The Movement Changes**

Reformers realized that the gradual approach to ending slavery had failed. Moreover, the numbers of enslaved persons had sharply increased because the cotton boom in the Deep South made planters increasingly dependent on slave labor. Beginning in about 1830, the American antislavery movement took on new life. Soon it became the most pressing social issue for reformers.

Abolitionist *William Lloyd Garrison* stimulated the growth of the antislavery movement. In 1829 Garrison left Massachusetts to work for the country’s leading antislavery paper in Baltimore. Impatient with the paper’s moderate position, Garrison returned to Boston in 1831 to found his own newspaper, *The Liberator*.

Garrison was the first white abolitionist to call for the “immediate and complete emancipation [freeing]” of enslaved people. Promising to be “as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice,” he denounced the slow, gradual approach of other reformers. In the first issue of his paper he wrote: “I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.”
The Grimkés persuaded their mother to give them their share of the family inheritance. Instead of money or land, the sisters asked for several of the enslaved workers, whom they immediately freed.

Angelina Grimké and her husband, abolitionist Theodore Weld, wrote *American Slavery As It Is* in 1839. This collection of firsthand accounts of life under slavery was one of the most influential abolitionist publications of its time.

**African American Abolitionists**

Although white abolitionists drew public attention to the cause, African Americans themselves played a major role in the abolitionist movement from the start. The abolition of slavery was an especially important goal to the free African Americans of the North, who numbered about 250,000 in 1850.

Most African Americans in the North lived in poverty in cities. Excluded from most jobs and often attacked by white mobs, a great many of these African Americans were nevertheless intensely proud of their freedom and wanted to help those who were still enslaved.

**Fighting Slavery**

African Americans took active part in organizing and directing the American Anti-Slavery Society, and they subscribed in large numbers to William Lloyd Garrison’s *The Liberator*. In 1827 Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm started the country’s first African American newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*. Most of the other newspapers that African Americans founded before the Civil War also promoted abolition.

Born a free man in North Carolina, writer David Walker of Boston published an impassioned argument against slavery, challenging African Americans to rebel and overthrow slavery by force. “America is more our country than it is the whites”—we have enriched it with our blood and tears,” he wrote.

**Americans Against Slavery**

Among the first women who spoke out publicly against slavery were Sarah and Angelina Grimké. Born in South Carolina to a wealthy slaveholding family, the sisters moved to Philadelphia in 1832.

In the North the Grimké sisters lectured and wrote against slavery. At the National Anti-Slavery Convention in Philadelphia in 1838, Angelina Grimké exclaimed, “As a Southerner, I feel that it is my duty to stand up... against slavery. I have seen it! I have seen it!”
In 1830 free African American leaders held their first convention in Philadelphia. Delegates met “to devise ways and means for the bettering of our condition.” They discussed starting an African American college and encouraging free African Americans to emigrate to Canada.

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass, the most widely known African American abolitionist, was born enslaved in Maryland. After teaching himself to read and write, he escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1838 and settled first in Massachusetts and then in New York.

As a runaway, Douglass could have been captured and returned to slavery. Nevertheless he joined the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and traveled widely to address abolitionist meetings. A powerful speaker, Douglass often moved listeners to tears with his message. At an Independence Day gathering he told the audience:

“What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham... your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless... your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery.”

The Underground Railroad

Many enslaved African Americans escaped to freedom with the help of the Underground Railroad.

1. Movement Which river did enslaved persons cross before reaching Indiana and Ohio?

2. Analyzing Information About how many miles did an enslaved person travel from Montgomery, Alabama, to Windsor, Canada?
For 16 years, Douglass edited an antislavery newspaper called the *North Star*. Douglass won admiration as a powerful and influential speaker and writer. He traveled abroad, speaking to huge antislavery audiences in London and the West Indies. Douglass returned to the United States believing abolitionists must fight slavery at its source. He insisted that African Americans receive not just their freedom but full equality with whites as well. In 1847 friends helped Douglass purchase his freedom from the slaveholder he had fled in Maryland.

**Sojourner Truth**

“I was born a slave in Ulster County, New York,” Isabella Baumfree began when she told her story to audiences. Called “Belle,” she lived in the cellar of her master’s house. When New York banned slavery in 1827, her owner insisted she stay a year longer. Instead, she fled.

In 1843 Belle chose a new name. “Sojourner Truth is my name,” she said, “because from this day I will walk in the light of [God’s] truth.” She began to work in the movements for abolitionism and for women’s rights.

Sojourner Truth had never been taught to read or write, but she spoke with wit and wisdom. In 1852 at a gathering of Ohioans, a rowdy farmer challenged her: The Constitution did not oppose slavery. Was she against the Constitution?

In answer, Sojourner used an example the farmer could understand. She knew that insects called weevils had eaten that year’s wheat crop in Ohio. So she described walking near a wheat field and touching the tall, healthy-looking stalks but finding no grain there. “I says, ‘God, what’s the matter with this wheat?’ And he says to me, ‘Sojourner, there’s a little weevil in it.’”

The farmer started to interrupt, but Sojourner continued to speak: “I hears talk about the Constitution and rights of man. I come up and I takes hold of this Constitution. It looks mighty big. And I feels for my rights. But they not there. Then I says, ‘God, what ails this Constitution?’ And you know what he says to me? . . . ‘Sojourner, there’s a little weevil in it.’”

**The Underground Railroad**

Some abolitionists risked prison—even death—by secretly helping enslaved Africans escape. The network of escape routes out of the South came to be called the *Underground Railroad*. 

*The Underground Railroad* by Charles T. Weber  This 1850s painting shows fugitives arriving at a station of the Underground Railroad in Indiana. **Why was Harriet Tubman considered the most famous “conductor” of the Underground Railroad?**
The Underground Railroad had no trains or tracks. Instead, passengers on this “railroad” traveled through the night, often on foot, and went north—guided by the North Star. The runaway slaves followed rivers and mountain chains, or felt for moss growing on the north sides of trees.

Songs such as “Follow the Drinkin’ Gourd” encouraged runaways on their way to freedom. A hollowed-out gourd was used to dip water for drinking. Its shape resembled the Big Dipper, which pointed to the North Star.

“When the river ends in between two hills,
Follow the drinkin’ gourd,
For the Ole Man’s waitin’ for to carry you to freedom.
Follow the drinkin’ gourd.”

During the day passengers rested at “stations”—barns, attics, church basements, or other places where fugitives could rest, eat, and hide until the next night’s journey. The railroad’s “conductors” were whites and African Americans who helped guide the escaping slaves to freedom in the North.

In the early days, many people made the journey north on foot. Later they traveled in wagons, sometimes equipped with secret compartments. One runaway, Henry “Box” Brown, traveled from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, hidden in a crate.

African Americans on the Underground Railroad hoped to settle in a free state in the North or to move on to Canada. Once in the North, however, fugitives still feared capture. Henry Bibb, a runaway who reached Ohio, arrived at “the place where I was directed to call on an Abolitionist, but I made no stop: so great were my fears of being pursued.”

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery to become the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. She made many dangerous trips into the South and guided hundreds of enslaved people, including her parents, to freedom.

Slaveholders offered a large reward for Tubman’s capture or death. “There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death,” she said. “If I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive.” Tubman was never captured and lived to an old age.

The Underground Railroad helped only a tiny fraction of the enslaved population. Most who used it as a route to freedom came from the border states, not the Deep South. Still the Underground Railroad gave hope to those who suffered in slavery. It also provided abolitionists with a way to help some enslaved people to freedom.

Clashes over Abolitionism

The antislavery movement led to an intense reaction against abolitionism. Southern slaveholders—and many Southerners who did not have slaves—opposed abolitionism because they believed it threatened the South’s way

Footnotes to History

Early Freedom Rider During the Civil War, Sojourner Truth tried to desegregate public transportation. Desegregated public transportation would not exist until almost 100 years later, in the 1950s.
of life, which depended on enslaved labor. Many people in the North also opposed the abolitionist movement.

**Opportunity in the North**

Even in the North, abolitionists never numbered more than a small fraction of the population. Many Northerners saw the antislavery movement as a threat to the nation’s social order. They feared the abolitionists could bring on a destructive war between the North and the South. They also claimed that, if the enslaved African Americans were freed, they could never blend into American society.

Economic fears further fed the backlash against abolitionism. Northern workers worried that freed slaves would flood the North and take jobs away from whites by agreeing to work for lower pay.

**Violence against Abolitionists**

Opposition to abolitionism sometimes erupted into violence against the abolitionists themselves. In the 1830s a Philadelphia mob burned the city’s antislavery headquarters to the ground and set off a bloody race riot. In Boston a mob attacked abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and threatened to hang him. Authorities saved his life by locking him in jail.

Elijah Lovejoy was not so lucky. Lovejoy edited an abolitionist newspaper in Illinois. Three times angry whites invaded his offices and wrecked his presses. Each time Lovejoy installed new presses and resumed publication. The fourth time the mob set fire to the building. When Lovejoy came out of the blazing building, he was shot and killed.

**The South Reacts**

Southerners fought abolitionism by mounting arguments in defense of slavery. They claimed that slavery was essential to economic progress and prosperity in the South. Slave labor, they said, had allowed Southern whites to reach a high level of culture and civilization. Southerners also argued that they treated enslaved people well, and that for African Americans slavery was preferable to factory work in the North.

Other defenses of slavery were based on racism. Many whites believed that African Americans were better off under white care than on their own. “Providence has placed [the slave] in our hands for his own good,” declared one Southern governor.

The conflict between proslavery and antislavery groups continued to mount. At the same time, a new women’s rights movement was growing, and many leading abolitionists were involved in that movement as well.

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**Section 2 Assessment**

**Checking for Understanding**

1. **Identify** Liberia, William Lloyd Garrison, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman.
2. **Define** abolitionist, Underground Railroad.
3. **Discuss** the American Colonization Society’s solution to slavery.

**Reviewing Themes**

4. **Individual Action** What role did Harriet Tubman play in the antislavery movement?

**Critical Thinking**

5. **Making Comparisons** Compare the arguments of Northerners and Southerners who opposed abolitionism.

**Activity**

Creating a Political Cartoon Find a political cartoon that depicts abolitionists or expresses an abolitionist sentiment. Use it as a model to create your own cartoon about the antislavery movement.
The Underground Railroad was a secret, widespread network of people and places that helped enslaved people reach freedom in the North. Many conductors of the Underground Railroad, such as Harriet Tubman, used Polaris—the fixed star in the northern sky—to guide them to the North. To find out more about the Underground Railroad’s famous history, travel the Internet.

Setting up the Video
With a group of your classmates, view “Frederick Douglass’s Home” on the videodisc Historic America: Electronic Field Trips. Frederick Douglass’s efforts to abolish slavery make him one of America’s greatest civil rights leaders. This program focuses on different aspects of Douglass’s life and contributions he made during his lifetime.

Surfing the “Net”

The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad was a secret, widespread network of people and places that helped enslaved people reach freedom in the North. Many conductors of the Underground Railroad, such as Harriet Tubman, used Polaris—the fixed star in the northern sky—to guide them to the North. To find out more about the Underground Railroad’s famous history, travel the Internet.

Getting There
Follow these steps to gather information about the Underground Railroad.
1. Use a search engine. Type in the phrase Underground Railroad.

2. After typing in the phrase, enter words like the following to focus your search: maps, stations, fugitives, slaves.

3. The search engine should provide you with a number of links to follow. Links are “pointers” to different sites on the Internet.

What to Do When You Are There
Click on the links to navigate through the pages of information. Locate information about escape routes and stations that fugitive slaves used. Then use a large wall map of North America and trace the various routes that fugitive slaves used to reach freedom in the North. Place pins on the map to represent the location of stations.
In the early 1800s, American women lacked many of the rights that men enjoyed. The British system of law, which the American states had adopted after independence, made men the guardians of women. The law treated women like children who needed to be looked after and cared for. Unmarried women came under the authority of their fathers or nearest male relatives. Married women came under their husbands’ authority. Widows and single women could own property and make wills. When they married, however, control of their property and earnings passed to their husbands.

Women played a major role in all the American reform movements of the 1800s, but they were especially active in the campaign to end slavery. The female abolitionists, however, were often pushed aside or excluded by the men in the movement.

Some men believed that women should not speak in public or publish their writings. When American women attended a world antislavery meeting in London in 1840, they had to sit behind a curtain that separated them from the all-male meeting.

Gender prejudice turned many female abolitionists into champions of women’s rights. “We have good cause to be grateful to the slave,”
wrote reformer Abby Kelley. “In striving to strike his irons off, we found most surely, that we were manacled [chained] ourselves.”

Women abolitionists became the first American feminists, people who work for women’s rights. Seeking to improve women’s lives and win equal rights, they launched a continuing struggle.

Like many of the women reformers, Lucretia Mott was a Quaker. Quaker women, who enjoyed a certain amount of equality in their own communities, were particularly disturbed by the sexism in the antislavery movement. Mott gave lectures in Philadelphia calling for temperance, peace, workers’ rights, and abolition. Mott also helped fugitive slaves and organized the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society.

At the world antislavery convention in London, Mott met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. There the two female abolitionists joined forces to work for women’s rights.

Feminists Meet Opposition

The abolitionist sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké were early supporters of women’s rights. Some men in the movement criticized the Grimkés for engaging in “unfeminine” activities, but the sisters continued their work. “Men and women were CREATED EQUAL,” they declared, “... and whatever is right for man to do, is right for woman to do.”

Sojourner Truth also met opposition as she traveled throughout the North speaking about women’s rights and slavery. When she addressed a women’s meeting in New York City, a hostile crowd forced its way into the hall to jeer at the women. Truth told the mob,

“We’ll have our rights; see if we don’t; and you can’t stop us from them; see if you can. You may hiss as much as you like, but it is comin’.”

The Seneca Falls Convention

In July 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and a few other women organized the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. About 200 women and 40 men attended.

The convention issued a Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions modeled on the Declaration of Independence. The women’s document declared: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.”

Just as the Declaration of Independence had listed Americans’ complaints against King George III, the Seneca Falls declaration listed women’s grievances against men. It read,

“He [man] has endeavored, in every way he could, to destroy her [woman’s] confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and . . . [miserable] life.”

Footnotes to History

Women Physicians The first American medical school for women, the Boston Female Medical School, opened in 1848 with an enrollment of 12 students.
The women’s declaration called for an end to all laws that discriminated against women. It demanded that women be allowed to enter the all-male world of trades, professions, and businesses. The most controversial issue at the Seneca Falls Convention concerned **suffrage**, or the right to vote. Elizabeth Stanton insisted that the declaration include a demand for **woman suffrage**, but delegates thought the idea of women voting was too radical. Lucretia Mott told her friend, “Lizzie, thee will make us ridiculous.” After a heated debate, however, the convention voted to include the demand for woman suffrage in the United States. As Stanton later reasoned:

> “Having decided to petition for a redress of grievances, the question is for what shall you first petition? For the exercise of your right to elective franchise [vote]—nothing short of this. The grant to you of this right will secure all others, and the granting of every other right, whilst this is denied, is a mockery. For instance: What is the right to property, without the right to protect it?”

**The Movement Grows**

The Seneca Falls Convention paved the way for the growth of the **women’s rights movement**. During the 1800s women held several national conventions. Many reformers—including William Lloyd Garrison—joined the movement.

**Susan B. Anthony**, the daughter of a Quaker abolitionist in rural New York, worked for women’s rights, temperance, and the reform of New York property and divorce laws. She called for equal pay for women, college training for girls, and **coeducation**—the teaching of boys and girls together. Excluded from a group called the Sons of Temperance, Anthony organized the country’s first women’s temperance association, the Daughters of Temperance.

Susan B. Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton at a temperance meeting in 1851. They became lifelong friends and partners in the struggle for women’s rights. For the rest of the century, Anthony and Stanton led the women’s movement. They worked with other women to win the right to vote. Beginning with Wyoming in 1890,

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**Ladies’ Legwear Creates Scandal**

In the early 1850s, women’s rights worker Amelia Jenks Bloomer thought that huge hoops and long skirts kept women from moving about easily and naturally. She began wearing a pair of loose trousers gathered at the ankles. The trousers—invented by Elizabeth Miller but commonly called “bloomers”—caused quite a scandal. Some men shouted taunts, while others hurled sticks. Eighty years later, in the 1930s, wearing pants became commonplace for women.
several states granted women the right to vote. It was not until 1920, however, that woman suffrage became a reality everywhere in the United States.

### Progress by American Women

In the 1800s most Americans believed that girls should not have advanced education. Some even questioned whether girls should be taught to read and write. Education, people feared, might make young women dissatisfied with their lives.

Without institutions that would offer them advanced education degrees, women were stopped from expanding their professional horizons. Before the 1830s no university or college in the United States would accept female students. Many men and women alike believed that it was useless and even dangerous for women to learn such subjects as mathematics. The stress of studying such subjects, some felt, might cause delicate women to have nervous breakdowns.

The only schools for women beyond elementary schools at that time offered courses for women on how to be good wives and mothers. Some young women, however, began to make their own opportunities. They broke barriers to female education and helped other women do the same.

### Education

After her marriage Emma Willard educated herself in subjects considered suitable only for boys, such as science and mathematics. In 1821 Willard established the Troy Female Seminary in upstate New York. Catharine Beecher, the daughter of temperance crusader Lyman Beecher, founded schools to teach women about homemaking in Connecticut and Ohio. Mary Lyon established Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (later Mount Holyoke College) in Massachusetts in 1837. She modeled its curriculum on that of nearby Amherst College.

### Marriage and Family Laws

During the 1800s women made some gains in the area of marriage and property laws. New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Wisconsin, Mississippi, and the new state of California recognized the right of women to own property after their marriage.

Some states passed laws permitting women to share the guardianship of their children jointly with their husbands. Indiana was the first of several states that allowed women to seek divorce if their husbands were chronic abusers of alcohol.

### Breaking Barriers

In the 1800s women had few career choices. They could become elementary teachers—although school boards often paid much lower salaries to women than to men. Breaking into fields such as medicine and the ministry was far more difficult. Some strong-minded women, however, succeeded in entering these all-male professions.

Hoping to study medicine, Elizabeth Blackwell applied to—and was turned down...
by—more than 20 schools. Finally accepted by Geneva College in New York, Blackwell graduated at the head of her class. She went on to become the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States or Europe. In 1857 she founded the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, staffed entirely by women.

One of Blackwell’s sisters-in-law, Antoinette Brown, became the first ordained female minister in the United States. Blackwell’s other sister-in-law, Lucy Stone, an Oberlin College graduate, became an influential lecturer on abolitionism and women’s rights. To symbolize her equality with her husband, Stone kept her maiden name after she married and encouraged other women to do the same.

Maria Mitchell, a librarian, taught herself astronomy. Mitchell gained world renown when she discovered a comet in 1847. She became a professor of astronomy at Vassar College and the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Sarah Hale, editor of a popular magazine called Godey’s Lady’s Book, influenced thousands of American women. Hale mixed articles on fashions and other traditional female subjects with a call for women to stand up for their rights.

Despite the accomplishments of notable women, some gains in education, and changes in state laws, women in the 1800s remained limited by social customs and expectations. The early feminists—like the abolitionists, temperance workers, and other activists of the age of reform—had just begun the long struggle to achieve their goals.

Maria Mitchell won world-wide recognition for her achievements in astronomy. What other notable women made contributions in fields once closed to women?

Checking for Understanding
1. Identify Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Mary Lyon, Elizabeth Blackwell, Maria Mitchell.
2. Define feminist, suffrage, coeducation.
3. Summarize how the fight to end slavery helped to spark the women’s movement.

Reviewing Themes
4. Groups and Institutions Discuss three specific goals of the women’s rights movement.

Critical Thinking
5. Making Generalizations What qualities do you think women such as Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Elizabeth Blackwell shared?

Activity
Composing a Song Write and record a song designed to win supporters for the women’s rights movement. Include lyrics that will draw both men and women supporters.
How many times have you had to go to the library to research a report or paper? Skill in using a computerized card catalog will help you find the information you need.

**Learning the Skill**

Go to the card catalog computer in your school or local library. What do you want to know about? Type in the name of an author or performer; the title of a book, videotape, audiocassette, or CD; or a subject heading. You will access the on-line, or computerized, card catalog that lists all the library’s resources for that topic. The computer will list on screen the titles, authors, or whatever you requested.

The “card” that appears on screen will provide other information as well, including the year the work was published, who published it, what media type it is, and the language it is written or recorded in. Use this information to determine if the material meets your needs. Then check to see if the item is available. In addition, find the classification (biography, travel, etc.) and call number under which it is shelved.

**Practicing the Skill**

This chapter discusses abolitionists. These steps will help you use the computerized card catalog to find additional information on the subject “abolitionists”:

1. Type “s/abolitionists.”
2. From the list of subjects that appears on the screen, determine which might apply to abolitionists in the United States during the years between 1820 and 1860.
3. Follow the instructions on the computer screen to display all the titles under each subject you selected. For example, the instructions might be to type the line number next to the subject and press RETURN.
4. Determine which of the books, videos, audiocassettes, and CDs now on the screen you want to learn more about.
5. What do the instructions on the screen tell you to do to find more details?
6. What do the instructions on the screen tell you to do if you want to find out how many copies of the title the library owns and if and where a copy is available?

**Applying the Skill**

Use the computerized card catalog in your school or local library to identify four resources—books, videotapes, CDs, or audiocassettes—you can use to write two reports, one on Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the other on public education in the 1800s.
Reviewing Key Terms

On graph paper, create a word search puzzle using the following terms. Crisscross the terms vertically and horizontally, then fill in the remaining squares with extra letters. Use the terms’ definitions as clues to find the words in the puzzle. Share your puzzle with a classmate.

- utopia
- revival
- temperance
- normal school
- Transcendentalist
- civil disobedience
- abolitionist
- Underground Railroad
- feminist
- suffrage
- women’s rights movement
- coeducation

Reviewing Key Facts

1. What were the founders of utopias hoping to achieve?
2. What problems in society did leading reformers in the temperance movement blame on the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages?
3. What were the three basic principles of public education?
4. What was unique about the subject matter that American artists and writers of the mid-1800s used?
5. How did William Lloyd Garrison’s demands make him effective in the antislavery movement?
6. What purposes did the Underground Railroad serve besides helping runaway slaves?
7. How were women viewed under the American system of law in the early 1800s?

Time Line Activity

Create a time line on which you place the following events in chronological order.

- Oberlin College admits women and African Americans
- William Lloyd Garrison founds abolitionist newspaper
- Horace Mann introduces major changes in schools
- Seneca Falls Convention held in New York
- First African American settlers arrive in Liberia
- Dorothea Dix files report revealing abuses of people with mental illness

Reviewing Themes

1. Civic Rights and Responsibilities How did Dorothea Dix win rights for people with mental illness?
2. Individual Action Summarize Frederick Douglass’s role in the abolitionist movement.
3. Groups and Institutions What was the significance of the Seneca Falls Convention?

Skill Practice Activity

Using a Computerized Card Catalog

Use the card catalog computer in your school or local library to find out more about American poets of the early 1800s.

1. Type “s/poetry.”
2. From the list of subjects that appears on the screen, determine which might apply to the United States during the years 1820 to 1860.
3. Follow the instructions on the computer screen to display all the titles under each subject you selected.
4. Which of the books on the screen do you want to learn more about?
Critical Thinking

Analyzing Information

Emily Dickinson’s special talent was to write about great subjects—life, death, nature—using concrete images from everyday experience. Read the poem below, then answer the questions that follow.

“Nature’ is what we see”

“Nature” is what we see—
The Hill—the Afternoon—
Squirrel—Eclipse—the Bumble bee—
Nay—Nature is Heaven—
Nay—Nature is what we hear—
The Bobolink—the Sea—
Thunder—the Cricket—
Nay—Nature is Harmony—
Nature is what we know—
Yet have no art to say—
So impotent [weak] our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity.

1. What does the poet say nature is in line 1? In line 4?
2. In your own words explain what the last four lines suggest about nature.

Geography Activity

Use the map on page 419 to answer the following questions.

1. Movement About how many enslaved African Americans found freedom through the Underground Railroad?
2. Location From what Southern ports did African Americans flee by ship?
3. Location What “stations” of the Underground Railroad were situated on the Ohio River?
4. Movement How many times did Harriet Tubman risk her life to help slaves escape?

Technology Activity

Using the Internet Search the Internet for a modern organization whose goal is to support women’s rights. Write a brief description of the organization, including its name, location, and a description of its purpose or activities.

Cooperative Activity

History and Language Arts Work in small groups to create a deck of “author cards” for your class. With members of your group, create a card for each of the 11 writers and poets discussed in the chapter. The front of each card should show a sketch of the author and a memorable line from one of that author’s works. The back of each card should contain biographical information, a list of some of the author’s titles, and other interesting facts about the author’s life or writing style. Combine the cards of all the groups. Then work with your group to come up with a set of rules to play a game using your cards.

History Journal Review the chapter and make a list of the major reform movements of this period. Create a graphic organizer that links the reform movements to the names of the people who participated in each.