

CHAPTER TWELVE ANTEBELLUM CULTURE AND REFORM

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Twelve should enable the student to understand:

1. The two basic impulses that were reflected in the reform movements, and examples of groups illustrating each impulse.
2. The contributions of a new group of literary figures (such as James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, and Edgar Allan Poe) to American cultural nationalism.
3. The transcendentalists and their place in American society.
4. The sources of American religious reform movements, why they originated where they did, their ultimate objectives, and what their leadership had in common.
5. The two distinct sources from which the philosophy of reform arose.
6. American educational reform in the antebellum period, and the contribution of education to the growth of nationalism.
7. The role of women in American society, and the attempts to alter their relationships with men.
8. The origins of the antislavery movement, the philosophy behind it, and the sources of its leadership.
9. The role of abolitionism in the antislavery movement, and the strengths and weaknesses of that part of the movement.
10. The role world opinion played in ending slavery.

Main Themes

1. How American intellectuals developed a national culture committed to the liberation of the human spirit.
2. How this commitment to the liberation of the human spirit led to and reinforced the reform impulse of the period.
3. How the crusade against slavery became the most powerful element in this reform movement.

Glossary

1. **romanticism:** The intellectual movement that replaced the Age of Reason (rationalism). Stressing imagination, emotion, and sentiment, the movement emphasized individual thought and action as well as human goodness and equality.
2. **temperance:** The use of moderation in one's indulgences. In the context of the reform movement, the abstinence from alcoholic drinks and ultimately the prohibition of these beverages.
3. **socialism:** A social, economic, and political theory based on collective ownership of the means of production and distribution. These means are directed by the people or their representatives for the good of society as a whole.

Pertinent Questions

THE ROMANTIC IMPULSE (320-326)

1. How was the work of James Fenimore Cooper the culmination of an effort to produce a truly American literature? What did his work suggest about the nation and its people?
2. Why was Whitman called the "poet of American democracy"?

3. Who were the transcendentalists? What was their philosophy, and how did they express it in literature?
4. How were the transcendentalists among the first Americans to anticipate the environmental movement of the twentieth-century?
5. How did the transcendentalists attempt to apply their beliefs to the problems of everyday life at Brook Farm? What was the result?
6. What other utopian schemes were put forth during this period, and how did they propose to reorder society to create a better way of life?
7. How did the utopian communities attempt to redefine the gender roles? Which communities were most active in this effort, and what did they accomplish?
8. Who were the Mormons? What were their origins, what did they believe, and why did they end up in Utah?

REMAKING SOCIETY (326-334)

9. The "philosophy of reform" that shaped this era rose from what two distinct sources?
10. What gave rise to the crusade against drunkenness? What successes and failures resulted from the movement's efforts?
11. What was the biggest problem facing American medicine during this period? What impact did this problem have on health care in the United States?
12. How did efforts to produce a system of universal public education reflect the spirit of the age?
13. What were the problems facing public education, and what types of institutions were created to deal with them?
14. How did the rise of feminism reflect not only the participation of women in social crusades, but also a basic change in the nature of the family?
15. How did feminists benefit from their association with other reform movements, most notably abolitionists, and at the same time suffer as a result?

THE CRUSADE AGAINST SLAVERY (334-341)

16. What was the antislavery philosophy of William Lloyd Garrison? How did he transform abolitionism into a new and "dramatically different phenomenon"?
17. What role did black abolitionists play in the movement? How did their philosophy compare with that of Garrison?
18. Why did many northern whites oppose the abolitionist movement? How did they show this opposition?
19. What divisions existed within the abolitionist movement itself? How did each faction express its position?
20. What efforts did abolitionists make to find political solutions to the question of slavery? How successful were they initially?
21. How did abolitionists attempt to arouse widespread public anger over slavery through the use of propaganda? What was the most significant work to emerge from this effort? Why did it have such an impact?

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE (338-339)

22. Explain how sentimental novels of this era "gave voice to both female hopes and female anxieties."

AMERICA IN THE WORLD (337)

23. How did pressure of world opinion and Enlightenment ideals combine to end the slave trade and slavery in countries other than the United States?
24. How did world opinion and Enlightenment ideals influence the abolition movement in the United States and how, in turn, did American abolitionism help reinforce the movements abroad?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. Hudson River School
2. "Leatherstocking Tales"
3. Moby Dick
4. "The Raven"
5. "Oversoul"
6. "Resistance to Civil Government"
7. Nathaniel Hawthorne
8. "phantaxes"
9. "Owenites"
10. Oneida "Perfectionists"
11. Shakers
12. The Book of Mormon
13. Charles Grandison Finney
14. "burned-over district"
15. American Society for the Promotion of Temperance
16. Phenology
17. Horace Mann
18. Dorothea Dix
19. asylums
20. Reservations
21. Sarah and Angelina Grimké
22. Seneca Falls convention
23. Emma Willard and Catharine Beecher
24. Amelia Bloomer
25. American Colonization Society
26. Monrovia
27. American Antislavery Society
28. Walker's Appeal . . . to the Colored Citizens
29. Frederick Douglass
30. Elijah Lovejoy
31. PRIER v. Pennsylvania
32. "personal liberty laws"
33. "free soil"
34. William Wilberforce

Document 1

If any man spoke for the new democratic age, it was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Here, in an excerpt from his essay "Self-Reliance," he exhorts his fellow citizens to have confidence in themselves and their potential—what is democratic about that? How does this selection reflect the force behind the reform movement in America? Read the section in your text on Emerson, and compare what you read in this document with the philosophy of transcendentalism. What similarities exist?

On the contrary, how might it be argued that Emerson is really saying nothing new, but is merely verbalizing what Americans already believed but had not put into words? Are the people Emerson is addressing once again being "forced to take with shame [their] own opinions from another"?

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for always the inmost becomes the outmost—and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of hards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this: They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays* (New York: Hurst, 1885), pp. 63–64.

Document 2

Most reformers agreed that for Americans to reach their full potential, education was essential, and most agreed that an area where much needed to be done was education for women. Mount Holyoke Seminary, founded in 1837, was one of the earliest and most successful attempts to meet this need. The following, taken from a letter written by one of America's greatest poets, Emily Dickinson, when she was a student there, describes the school and some of its activities. How does Mount Holyoke's general approach to education compare with that at your school? How does the curriculum reflect the general attitude toward education in the mid-nineteenth century? Look at the description of Dickinson's nonacademic activities. Does anything she did indicate that women were still being treated differently from men?

MY DEAR ABIAH,

I am really at Mt. Holyoke Seminary and this is to be my home for a long year . . . I am now quite contented and am very much occupied now in reviewing the Junior studies, as I wish to enter the middle class. The school is very large, and though quite a number have left, on account of finding the examinations more difficult than they anticipated, yet there are nearly 300 now. Perhaps you know that Miss Lyon is raising her standard of scholarship a good deal, on account of the number of applicants this year and on account of that she makes the examinations more severe than usual. You cannot imagine how trying they are, because if we cannot go through them all in a specified time, we are sent home. I cannot be too thankful that I got through as soon as I did and I am sure that I never would endure the suspense which I endured during those three days again for all the treasures of the world . . .

I will tell you my order of time for the day, as you were so kind as to give me yours. At 6 o'clock, we all rise. We breakfast at 7. Our study hours begin at 8. At 9 we all meet in Seminary Hall for devotions. At 10 1/4 I recite a review of Ancient history in connection with which we read Goldsmith

in the fields, pressed to work under the driving lash of the overseers; for it was now in the very heat and hurry of the season, and no means were left untried to press everyone up to the top of their capabilities. "True," says the negligent loucher; "picking cotton isn't hard work." Isn't it? And it isn't much inconvenient, either, to have one drop of water fall on your head; yet the worst torture of the Inquisition is produced by drop after drop, drop after drop, falling moment after moment, with monotonous succession, on the same spot; and work in itself not hard becomes so by being pressed, hour after hour, with unvarying, unrelenting sameness, with not even the consciousness of free-will to take from its tediousness. Tom looked in vain among the gang, as they poured along, for companionable faces. He saw only sullen, scowling, embroiled men, and feeble, discouraged women, or women that were not women--the strong pushing away the weak--the gross, unrestricted animal selfishness of human beings, of whom nothing good was expected and desired; and who, treated in every way like brutes, had sunk as nearly to their level as it was possible for human beings to do.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (London: Bentley, 1852), pp. 356-358.

Document 4

At the women's rights convention held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, the delegates declared that "all men and women are created equal" and listed the "injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman." Then the convention adopted a series of resolutions for constructive action, among which were the following. What do these tell you about the goals of the early women's rights movement? What do they also tell you about the prejudices that women would have to overcome to gain the equality they sought?

Resolved, That the same amount of virtue, delicacy, and refinement of behavior that is required of woman in the social state, should also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

Resolved, That the objection of indelicacy and impropriety, which is so often brought against women when she addresses a public audience, comes with a very ill grace from those who encourage, by their attendance, her appearance on the stage, in the concert, or in feats of the circus.

Resolved, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.

Resolved, That the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities.

Resolved, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to women an equal participation in the various trades, professions, and commerce.

Map Exercise

Fill in or identify the following on the blank map provided. Use the maps you have filled in earlier, as well as maps in Chapter Thirteen of the text, as your sources, and consult the maps in your library as needed.

1. Major literary centers of the nation.
2. Location of the utopian experiments: Brook Farm, New Harmony, the Oneida Community, and the Amana Community.
3. Place where Mormonism began, and the key locations on its movement to Salt Lake City.
4. "Burned-over district."
5. States where public education and educational reform received the most support.
6. Seneca Falls, New York.

and Grimshaw. At 11 I recite a lesson in "Pope's Essay on Man" which is merely transposition. At 12 I practice Calisthenics and at 12 1/4 read until dinner which is at 12 1/2. After dinner from 1 1/2 until 2 I sing in Seminary Hall. From 2 3/4 until 3 3/4 I practice upon the piano. At 3 3/4 I go to Section, where we give in all our accounts for the day, including Absence--Tardiness--Communications--Breaking Silent Study hours--Receiving Company in our rooms and ten thousand other things which I will not take time or place to mention. At 4 1/2 we go into Seminary Hall and receive advice from Miss Lyon in the form of a lecture. We have supper at 6 and silent study hours from then until the retiring bell, which rings at 8 3/4 but the lady bell does not ring until 9 3/4, so that we don't obey the first warning to retire.

Unless we have a good and reasonable excuse for failure upon any of the items that I mentioned above, they are recorded and a black mark stands against our names. As you can easily imagine, we do not like very well to get "exceptions" as they are called scientifically here. My domestic work is not difficult and consists in carrying the knives from the 1st tier of tables at morning and noon, and at night washing and wiping the same quantity of knives. . . . You have probably heard many reports of the food here and if so I can tell you, that I have yet seen nothing corresponding to my ideas on that point, from what I have heard. Everything is wholesome and abundant and much nicer than I should imagine could be provided for almost 300 girls. We have also a great variety upon our tables and frequent changes. One thing is certain and that is, that Miss Lyon and all the teachers seem to consult our comfort and happiness in everything they do and you know that is pleasant. When I left home, I did not think I should find a companion or a dear friend in all the multitude. I expected to find rough and uncultivated manners, and to be sure I have found some of that stamp, but on the whole, there is an ease and a grace and a desire to make one another happy, which delights and at the same time surprises me very much. . . .

From your aff. EMILY, E.D.

Courtesy of the Trustees of Mount Holyoke College.

Document 3

The influence of Harriet Beecher Stowe's book Uncle Tom's Cabin on the northern perception of the South's "peculiar institution" was such that Abraham Lincoln was said to have addressed her in 1862 as "the little woman who wrote the book who made this great war." Presented here is a selection from Uncle Tom's Cabin, which describes the arrival of Uncle Tom on the plantation of Simon Legree:

What was Stowe's purpose in writing this book? Notice that Legree is not a southerner, but is from New England. Why would she have created such a character? Also, what of the "two coloured men" who served Legree as his "principal hands"? What was the author trying to say about the effect of slavery on slaves? Reread the section "Where Historians Disagree" in Chapter Eleven of the text. With which of these historians would Stowe have agreed?

These two coloured men were the two principal hands on the plantation. Legree had trained them in savageness and brutality as systematically as he had his bull-dogs; and, by long practice in hardness and cruelty, brought their whole nature to about the same range of capacities. It is a common remark, and one that is thought to militate strongly against the character of the race, that the negro overseer is always more tyrannical and cruel than the white one. This is simply saying that the negro mind has been more crushed and debased than the white. It is not more true of this race than of every oppressed race, the world over. The slave is always a tyrant, if he can get a chance to be one. . . .

It was late in the evening when the weary occupants of the shanties came flocking home--men and women, in soiled and lattered garments, surly and uncomfortable, and in no mood to look pleasantly on newcomers. The small village was alive with no inviting sounds; hoarse, guttural voices contending at the hand-mills where their morsel of hard corn was yet to be ground into meal, to fit it for the cake that was to constitute their only supper. From the earliest dawn of the day, they had been

7. Major centers of abolitionist activity.



Interpretive Questions

Based on what you have filed in, answer the following. On some of the questions you will need to consult the narrative in your text for information or explanation.

1. Where was the "itinerary flowering" of America concentrated? What other regions had literary movements as well? How, and why, did these movements differ?
2. Where were most of the efforts to reform and improve education taking place? What connection might there be between this movement and the "itinerary flowering"?
3. Where were the major utopian communities located? What factors played a part in the choices of location?
4. What region of the country was less involved in the reform movement? What factors contributed to this?

Summary

By the 1820s, America was caught up in the spirit of a new age, and Americans, who had never been shy in proclaiming their nation's promise and potential, concluded that the time for action had come. Excited by the nation's technological advances and territorial expansions, many set as their goal the creation of a society worthy to be part of it all. What resulted was an outpouring of reform movements the like of which had not been seen before and have not been seen since. Unrestrained by entrenched conservative institutions and attitudes, these reformers attacked society's ills wherever they found them, producing in the process a list of evils so long that many were convinced that a complete reorganization of society was necessary. Most, however, were content to concentrate on their own particular cause, and thus, at least at first, the movements were many and varied. But in time, most reformers seemed to focus on one evil that stood out above the rest. The "peculiar institution," slavery, denied all they stood for—equality, opportunity, and, above all, freedom. Slavery became the supreme cause.

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. During this period, how did American intellectuals create a national culture committed to the liberation of the human spirit? How do their efforts relate to the efforts of social reformers?
2. What role did religion and religious leaders play in the reform movement described in this chapter?
3. Who were the major critics of slavery? On what grounds did they attack the institution, and what means to end it did they propose?
4. How did the reform movement affect the status of women? What role did women play in these efforts to change society, and what were they able to accomplish?

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response which best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. The reform movements of the first half of the nineteenth century reflected which of the following impulses:
 - a. an optimistic faith in human nature.
 - b. a rational view of man and his ability.
 - c. a desire for control and order.
 - d. a. and c.
2. The first great American novelist was:
 - a. Walt Whitman.
 - b. James Fenimore Cooper.
 - c. Herman Melville.
 - d. Ralph Waldo Emerson.
3. Transcendentalists believed that:
 - a. "understanding" was more important than "reason."
 - b. man should repress instinct and strive for externally imposed learning.
 - c. each individual should strive to "transcend" the limits of intellect and allow emotions to create an "original relation to the universe."
 - d. individuals should avoid anything that would bring one too close to the natural world.
4. In his essay "Resistance to Civil Government," Henry David Thoreau claimed an individual should:
 - a. not pay poll taxes.
 - b. refuse to obey unjust laws.
 - c. live in isolation and as simply as possible.
 - d. reject the artificial constraints of government.
5. The Oneida Community:
 - a. advocated "free love" to redefine gender roles.

- b. called for celibacy and attracted members of conversion.
 c. believed it liberated women from the demands of male "lust" and from traditional bonds of family.
 d. was widely accepted and had almost no critics.
6. Like other experiments in social organization of this era, Mormonism reflected:
 a. a strong antislavery bias.
 b. a celebration of individual liberty.
 c. a desire to improve the status of women.
 d. a belief in human perfectibility.
7. Evangelical Protestantism added major strength to which of the following reforms:
 a. temperance.
 b. education and rehabilitation.
 c. women's rights.
 d. peace.
8. The emphasis on educational reform was consistent with the spirit of the age because it:
 a. focused on the unleashing of individual talents.
 b. stressed educational equality.
 c. focused on external learning.
 d. stressed the importance of community.
9. As women in various reform movements confronted the problems they faced in a male-dominated society, they responded by:
 a. withdrawing from the movements.
 b. accepting the notion that men and women were assigned separate "spheres" in society.
 c. focusing their attention on religious matters.
 d. setting in motion the first important feminist movement.
10. Which of the following groups was most involved in the feminist movement?
 a. Baptists.
 b. Quakers.
 c. Mormons.
 d. Shakers.
11. The "burned-over district" was a region of upstate New York prone to religious revivals because of:
 a. efficient transportation provided by the Erie Canal for traveling evangelists.
 b. the disorientation of residents caused by profound social and economic changes.
 c. the significant number of utopian communities in the vicinity.
 d. the location there of the headquarters for the Mormon Church.
12. Educational reformers intended public schools to perform all of the following roles except to:
 a. extend and protect democracy.
 b. raise questions and criticisms of authority.
 c. expand individual opportunities.
 d. inculcate values of thrift, order, discipline, and punctuality.
13. After 1830, which of the following reform movements began to overshadow the others:
 a. antislavery.
 b. women's rights.
 c. temperance.
 d. education.
14. The most noted black abolitionist of the day was:
 a. Ralph Waldo Emerson.
 b. William Lloyd Garrison.
 c. Frederick Douglass.
 d. Joseph Smith.
15. Opponents of abolitionism in the North believed:
 a. abolitionists were dangerous radicals.
 b. the movement would lead to a war between North and South.
 c. the movement would lead to a great influx of free blacks into the North.
 d. all the above.
16. "Immediate abolition gradually accomplished" was the slogan of:
 a. moderate antislavery forces.
 b. Garrison and his followers.
 c. southern antislavery planters.
 d. black abolitionists.
17. Personal liberty laws:
 a. allowed masters to claim slaves who ran away to the North.
 b. freed slaves who escaped to states in the Old Northwest.
 c. forbade state officials to assist in the capture and return of runaways.
 d. outlawed the interstate slave trade.
18. The movement that advocated keeping slavery out of the territories was known as the:
 a. "personal liberty" movement.
 b. "free-soil" movement.
 c. John Brown Brigade.
 d. Garrison solution.
19. Throughout the North, black Americans:
 a. enjoyed full access to education and most career opportunities.
 b. voted and held government jobs proportionate to their numbers.
 c. defended their freedom and responded eagerly to the cause of abolitionism.
 d. earned a decent standard of living.
20. The creation of "asylums" for social deviants was an effort to:
 a. punish the inmates.
 b. get the deviants out of society.
 c. reform and rehabilitate the inmates.
 d. cut down the cost of crime and punishment.

TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

1. American intellectuals were pleased with the high regard in which their culture was held by Europeans.
2. Thoreau believed that a government which required an individual to violate his or her own morality had no legitimate authority.
3. Unlike most writers of his era, Herman Melville believed that the human spirit was a troubled, often self-destructive, force.
4. Because transcendentalism was at heart an individualistic philosophy, its followers did not take part in communal living experiments.
5. The philosophy of reform in America drew heavily from Protestant revivalism.
6. Brook Farm was the most successful of the utopian experiments.
7. The Shakers were able to prosper because of their high birth rate.
8. At the beginning of the Civil War, the United States had one of the highest literacy rates in the world.
9. The idea of asylums for social deviants was not simply an effort to curb the abuses of the old system, but also an attempt to reform and rehabilitate the inmates.
10. Early feminists made their point by drawing a parallel between the plight of women and the plight of slaves.
11. The American Colonization Society failed because it challenged both property rights and southern sensibilities.
12. The man who transformed the antislavery movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson.
13. Although there was opposition to abolitionism in the North, it was generally peaceful.
14. Radical abolitionists attacked slavery and the Constitution which seemed to sanction it.
15. Abolitionists were also pacifists and, therefore, did not advocate violence to free the slaves.
16. Antislavery and abolition were different words for the same thing.
17. Although it sold well, the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had little impact on American antislavery attitudes.
18. Only a relatively small number of people before the Civil War ever accepted the abolitionist position that slavery must be entirely eliminated in a single stroke.
19. The women's rights movement patterned its "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" after the Declaration of Independence.
20. "Free soil" was more popular than abolition in the North because it was a more moderate approach to the problem of slavery.

TERMS, CONCEPTS, NAMES

Romanticism	Temperance	Lucey Stone
Abolitionists	Horace Mann	American Colonization Society
James Fenimore Cooper	Dorothea Dix	Libertaria
<i>Leatherstocking Tales</i>	Indian reservations	William Lloyd Garrison, <i>The Liberator</i>
Walt Whitman	Transcendentalism	" <i>Genius of Universal Emancipation</i> "
Edgar Allan Poe	Ralph Waldo Emerson	<i>Liberator</i>
Brook Farm	" <i>Self-Reliance</i> "	Frederick Douglass
Robert Owen	Henry David Thoreau	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i>
New Harmony	<i>Walden</i>	Prudence Crandall
Margaret Fuller	" <i>Resistance to Civil Government</i> "	Elijah Lovejoy
Oneida Community	"Civil disobedience"	American Antislavery Society
Shakers	Nathaniel Hawthorne	Underground railroad
Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints	The Scarlet Letter	Prigg v. Pennsylvania 1842
Joseph Smith	Antebellum period	"Personal liberty laws"
Brightman Young	Grimké Sisters	Liberty Party
Unitarianism	Lucretia Mott	"Free soil"
Second Great Awakening	Elizabeth Cady Stanton	John Brown
New Light	Seneca Falls Convention	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>
Charles Grandison Finney	" <i>Declaration of Sentiments</i> "	
"Burned over district"	Elizabeth Blackwell	