

Growth and Conflict: Social Reform Movements

Temperance Movement

Temperance reformers saw alcohol as the source of most problems of the lower class. Men wasted money, missed work, beat their wives, committed crimes, and ruined the good Christian name. Reformers wanted to ban alcohol and end drunkenness. Most of these activists were women, clergymen, and members of Congress. The American Temperance Society was formed in 1826. They would eventually succeed in passing a national Prohibition amendment in 1919.

Abolitionist Movement

The first abolitionist society in America dates back to the 1770s, and strong anti-slavery language was included in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence. However, the movement did not gain steam until after the turn of the century. As democratic rights spread to more Americans under President Jackson, some began to question the country's dedication to true equality. Slavery was becoming an increasingly divisive issue in the country. Abolitionists saw the practice as morally reprehensible, and called for the immediate emancipation of all slaves. The issue would be one of the main causes of the Civil War. The practice of slavery would later be outlawed by the 13th Amendment.

Women's Movement

In the early 19th century, a new feminine ideal gained popularity: the Cult of Domesticity. This model required that women be pious (religious), pure (of mind and body), submissive, and domestic. They considered themselves the moral center of the family, and thus, should act as the moral compass of society as well. Most middle class women believed this role would allow them to raise virtuous, moral children, and provide a calm, pleasant household for their husbands. However, not all women were willing to submit to this ideal. Led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, feminists met at Seneca Falls, New York in a Woman's Rights Convention in 1848. Inspired by the words of the Declaration of Independence, they wrote "The Declaration of Sentiments," which argued that all men *and women* were created equal. It demanded political equality and female suffrage. Women would eventually be granted the right to vote in 1920 with the passage of the 19th Amendment.

Prison Reform

The influx of people moving to the cities caused the crime rate to soar. However, instead of placing thousands of urban poor in prisons, states began focusing on reforming criminals, rather than punishing them. These institutions were meant to allow the criminal the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and repent for their crime, and were thus called "penitentiaries." States gradually abolished debtors' prisons due to public demand. The number of capital offenses was also reduced.

Utopian Communities

The rapid progress that resulted from America's sudden growth spurt placed immense pressure on urban communities. Cities were unable to provide enough homes, work, and space for its growing population, causing crime rates to soar. Congregations of unhappy city dwellers decided to leave "civilization" and begin new communities far from the cities and their vices. These utopian communities were intended to be free from greed, violence, and sin; however most of them fell apart within a few years. The Shakers promoted gender equality and simple living. However, their faith required celibacy, which caused the religion to die out. The Oneida community believed in communal living, including free love. The community fell apart due to poor leadership and natural disaster. However, their legacy lives on in the Oneida silverware company that began in the 19th century.

Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism was an intellectual movement that argued that knowledge transcends (rises above) just the senses. The movement was a reaction to the increase in science and technology that had both improved our lives, as well as chained Americans to these new technologies and the greed that followed them. Transcendentalists promoted self-reliance, self-culture, and self-discipline. Through study, personal reflection, and the rejection of modern conveniences, one could reach universal truth and understanding. The most well-known transcendentalist was Henry David Thoreau. He spent two years living alone in the woods, living off only what he could produce, in order to discover his own humanity. While there he wrote an essay titled, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*. In this essay he stated that it is not only the right, but the duty of citizens to ignore immoral law; the essay greatly influenced both Gandhi and MLK.

Education Reform

Free public education was not popular in the early 1800's. People questioned why their tax money was being spent on teaching another person's child. But, Jacksonian Democracy began to change opinions; more people could vote, so children needed education to be knowledgeable voters. Education was clearly in need of reform - teachers were ill-educated and ill-trained; few universities accepted women; most Americans were still illiterate. States began setting aside money for public education, "normal schools" (teacher training schools), and state-run universities. Some private colleges opened specifically for women. Despite these reforms, minorities were still largely ignored.

Mental Health Reform

America's mentally ill were largely overlooked until the 1840s. Generally, the individual was expected to be cared for by their family. However, the increasing number of impoverished families resulted in a growing number of mentally ill people being abandoned. Some states tried to solve the problem by paying people to care for the abandoned individuals. Dorothea Dix conducted a statewide investigation of how Massachusetts cared for the insane poor. Unregulated and underfunded, this system produced widespread abuse. She found many of these people were being treated like animals, housed in cages or with livestock and beaten with whips. She presented her findings to the state legislature who increased funding for the insane poor, and established the country's first insane asylums.

Task:

After reading about each of the social reform movements, fill in the worksheet, explaining how each movement could be inspired by the Second Great Awakening, and how they increase democracy and/or equality. Then answer the critical thinking questions in complete sentences.

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	Connection to the Second Great Awakening	How it increased democracy and/or equality
Temperance Movement		
Abolitionist Movement		
Women's Movement		
Prison Reform		
Utopian Communities		
Transcendentalism		
Mental Health Reform		
Education Reform		

Critical Thinking: *(answer in complete sentences)*

1. Besides the Second Great Awakening, what other events and developments inspired most of these movements? Why do you think that happened?

2. Some of these reform movements do not succeed for decades. Why do you think it takes some so long to see results? What obstacles or events might have gotten in the way?

3. In your opinion, which of the reform movements did the most to increase democracy and/or equality? Why?
