



# An Age of Reform

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1800-1848  
Discussion Items



# Abolitionism

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- a. Originally, he thought that slavery would only disappear gradually and joined an organization which sought to colonize freed slaves in West Africa.
- b. It was meeting Benjamin Lundy, who advocated for immediate emancipation for every slave and seeing the slave markets in Baltimore which changed his mind.
- c. The primary vehicle for his movement became his newspaper, the Liberator, which reached a very large audience of abolitionists- particularly in New England.

# Women's Rights

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- a. Women were regarded as mothers for their children and as the domestic caretaker of the family home. Because of their concern for their children and for their homes, women were often in the forefront of some of the important early reform movements.
- b. When she suffered discrimination— not being able to fully participate in an abolitionist meeting in England, and after meeting Lucretia Mott, she became one of the most important early voices in the women's rights movement.
- c. It was not well-received and though it was a watershed moment in the history of women's rights, it garnered very little immediate support, even from those who may have been somewhat sympathetic to extending more rights to women at the time. However, it did garner the early support of Frederick Douglass.

# Public Education

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- a. At the dawn of the 19th century, private academies, church-supported schools, charity schools for the poor, and of course, apprenticeships were important components of the early educational experience until public schools appeared. Your education often depended on your ability to pay.
- b. Both religious reformers and urban workers (some of them immigrants) made the early push for public schools for all children. Horace Mann, a Massachusetts politician, was an early and important advocate for the creation of a public school system. They wanted to bring an end to crime and poverty, plus to put the children of workers on par with those of the well-to-do.
- c. The entrance age was raised, so were the requirements, plus new subjects such as history, literature, geography, modern languages and the sciences were studied for the first time. Plus, free-African-Americans and a few women were also being admitted to the new colleges during the period.

# Criminal and Asylum Reform

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- a. Crime was beginning to be seen as a social problem— either as a product of the environment or of parental neglect. Plus, there was a desire to step away from the awful spectacle of public punishments. Also, there was a desire to outlaw capital punishment and to treat mental illness as a disease.
- b. Prisons changed to rehabilitate criminals— to put them back into civilized society as productive citizens. Plus, some crimes such as petty debts were being forgiven for the first time.
- c. There was for the first time, a desire to treat the mentally ill and the handicapped, rather than just lock them away, plus, schools for the deaf and the blind began to appear.

# Temperance and Social Reform

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- a. To put it simply, it was cheap and produced in abundance, plus, it had become a staple in everyday life. As a consequence, people, especially most American men drank regularly and much more than the average person today.
- b. The first approach to dealing with alcoholism was the Washingtonian Movement– which meant taking a pledge to abstinence– or, not to drink. The second approach was to push for laws that would make it more difficult for people to produce or distill alcoholic drinks, or prohibition.
- c. Mostly started as a reaction to the growth of industrialization and the desire to leave the growing cities, the utopian communities became experiments in building ideal societies– away from society, itself. Perhaps, the most successful group, one which is still with us today, is the Mormon community which would establish the successful community of Salt Lake City, which eventually led to the development of what eventually became the state of Utah in the West.