

Chapter 15 Study Guide

The Ferment of Reform and Culture, 1790-1860

AP US History

Theme: The spectacular religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening reversed a trend toward secular rationalism in American culture, and helped to fuel a spirit of social reform. In the process, religion was increasingly “feminized,” while women in turn took the lead in movements of reform, including those designed to improve their own condition.

Theme: The attempt to improve Americans’ faith, morals, and character affected nearly all areas of American life and culture, including education, the family, literature, and the arts—culminating in the great crusade against slavery.

Theme: Intellectual and cultural development in America was less prolific than in Europe, but they did earn some international recognition and became more distinctly American, especially after the War of 1812.

Summary:

In the early nineteenth century America, movements of moral and religious reform accompanied the democratization of politics and the creation of a national market economy. After a period of growing rationalism in religion, a new wave of revivals beginning about 1800 swept out of the West and effected great change not only in religious life but also in other areas of society. Existing religious groups were further fragmented, and new groups like Mormons emerged. Women were especially prominent in these developments, becoming a major presence in the churches and discovering in reform movements an outlet for energies that were often stifled in masculinized political and economic life.

Among the first areas to benefit from the reform impulse was education. The public elementary school movement gained strength, while a few women made their way into still tradition-bound colleges. Women were also prominent in movements for improved treatment of the mentally ill, peace, temperance, and other causes. By the 1840s some women also began to agitate for their own rights, including suffrage. The movement for women’s rights, closely linked to the antislavery crusade, gained adherents even while it met strong obstacles and vehement opposition.

While many reformers worked to improve society as a whole, others created utopian experiments to model their religious and social ideals. Some of these groups promoted radical sexual and economic doctrines, while others appealed to high-minded intellectuals and artists.

American culture was still quite weak in theoretical sciences and the fine arts, but a vigorous national literature blossomed after the War of 1812. In New England, the literary renaissance was closely linked to the philosophy of transcendentalism promoted by Emerson and others. Many of the great American writers like Walt Whitman reflected the national spirit of utopian optimism, but a few dissenters like Hawthorne and Melville explored the darker side of life and of their own society.

Thought Provokers

1. What major changes in American religion occurred in the early nineteenth century, and how did they affect American culture and reform?
2. What were the causes and effects of the various reform movements of the early nineteenth century?
3. How did the first American feminists propose altering the condition of women, and what success did they have?
4. Compare the early American achievements in the sciences with those in the arts. Which were the most successful, and why?
5. What were the major concerns of America’s greatest imaginative writers in the early nineteenth century? Did those writers fundamentally reflect the deepest values of American culture, or were they at odds with the main currents of American society and politics?
6. In what ways were the movements of American religion (Second Great Awakening), reform, and culture an outgrowth of the American Revolution and American independence, and in what ways did they reflect qualities of American life reaching back to the Puritans?

Identification: *Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.*

- _____ 1. Liberal religious belief, held by many of the Founding Fathers, that stressed rationalism and moral behavior rather than Christian revelation
- _____ 2. Religious revival that began on the frontier and swept eastward, stirring an evangelical spirit in many areas of American life
- _____ 3. The *two* religious denominations that benefited from the evangelical revivals of the early nineteenth century
- _____ 4. Religious group founded by Joseph Smith that eventually established a cooperative commonwealth in Utah
- _____ 5. Memorable 1848 meeting in New York where women made an appeal based on the Declaration of Independence
- _____ 6. Commune established in New Harmony, Indiana by Scottish industrialist Robert Owen
- _____ 7. Intellectual commune in Massachusetts based on “plain living and high thinking”
- _____ 8. Thomas Jefferson’s stately self-designed home in Virginia that became a model of American architecture
- _____ 9. New York literary movement that drew on both regional and national themes
- _____ 10. Philosophical and literary movement, centered in New England, that greatly influenced many American writers of the early nineteenth century
- _____ 11. The doctrine, promoted by American writer Henry David Thoreau in an essay of the same name, that later influenced Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- _____ 12. Walt Whitman’s shocking collection of emotional poems
- _____ 13. A disturbing New England masterpiece about adultery and guilt in the old Puritan era
- _____ 14. The great but commercially unsuccessful novel about Captain Ahab’s obsessive pursuit of a white whale
- _____ 15. The masterpiece of New England writer Louisa May Alcott

Putting Things in Order:

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 5

- _____ A leading New England transcendentalist appeals to American writers and thinkers to turning away from Europe and develop their own literature and culture.
- _____ A determined reformer appeals to a New England legislature to end the cruel treatment of the insane.
- _____ A gathering of female reformers in New York declared that the ideas of the Declaration of Independence apply to *both* sexes.
- _____ Great evangelical religious revival begins in western camp meetings.
- _____ A visionary New Yorker creates a controversial new religion.

Matching People, Places, and Events: Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter of the blank line.

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| ___ 1. Dorothea Dix | A. Leader of a radical New York commune that practiced “complex marriage” and eugenic birth control |
| ___ 2. Brigham Young | B. Bold, unconventional poet who celebrated American democracy |
| ___ 3. Elizabeth Cady Stanton | C. The “Mormon Moses” who led persecuted Latter-Day Saints to their promised land in Utah |
| ___ 4. Lucretia Mott | D. Influential evangelical revivalist of the Second Great Awakening |
| ___ 5. Emily Dickinson | E. New York writer whose romantic sea tales were more popular than his dark literary masterpiece |
| ___ 6. Charles G. Finney | F. Pioneering women’s educator, founder of Mount Holyoke Seminary in Massachusetts |
| ___ 7. Robert Owen | G. Idealistic Scottish industrialist whose attempt at a communal utopia in America failed |
| ___ 8. John Humphrey Noyes | H. Second-rate poet and philosopher, but first-rate promoter of transcendentalist ideals and American culture |
| ___ 9. Mary Lyon | I. Eccentric southern-born genius whose tales of mystery, suffering, and the supernatural departed from general American literary trends |
| ___ 10. Louisa May Alcott | J. Quietly determined reformer who substantially improved conditions for the mentally ill |
| ___ 11. James Fenimore Cooper | K. Reclusive New England poet who wrote about love, death, and immortality |
| ___ 12. Ralph Waldo Emerson | L. Leading feminist who wrote the “Declaration of Sentiments” in 1848 and pushed for women’s suffrage |
| ___ 13. Walt Whitman | M. Novelist whose tales of family life helped economically support her own struggling transcendentalist family |
| ___ 14. Edgar Allen Poe | N. Path-breaking American novelist who contrasted the natural person of the forest with the values of modern civilization |
| ___ 15. Herman Melville | O. Quaker women’s rights advocate who also strongly supported abolition of slavery |

Matching Cause and Effect: Matching the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line

Cause

- ___ 1. The Second Great Awakening
- ___ 2. The Mormon practice of polygamy
- ___ 3. Women abolitionists' anger at being ignored by male reformers
- ___ 4. The women's right movement
- ___ 5. Unrealistic expectations and conflict within perfectionist communes
- ___ 6. The Knickerbocker and transcendentalist use of new American themes in their writing
- ___ 7. Henry David Thoreau's theory of "civil disobedience"
- ___ 8. Walt Whitman's *Leave of Grass*
- ___ 9. Herman Melville's and Edgar Allan Poe's concern with evil and suffering
- ___ 10. The Transcendentalist movement

Effect

- A. Created the first literature genuinely native to America
- B. Captured in one long poem the exuberant and optimistic spirit of popular American democracy
- C. Caused most utopian experiments to decline or collapse in a few years
- D. Inspired writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller
- E. Aroused hostility and scorn in most of the male press and pulpit
- F. Made their works little understood in their lifetimes by generally optimistic Americans
- G. Aroused persecution from morally traditionalist Americans and delayed statehood for Utah
- H. Inspired a widespread spirit of evangelical reform in many areas of American life
- I. Led to expanding the crusade for equal rights to include women
- J. Inspired later practitioners of nonviolence like Gandhi and King

Answers:

Identification

- 1. Deism
- 2. Second Great Awakening
- 3. Methodists, Baptists
- 4. Mormons
- 5. Seneca Falls Convention
- 6. New Harmony
- 7. Brook Farm
- 8. Monticello
- 9. Knickerbocker group
- 10. Transcendentalism
- 11. civil disobedience
- 12. *Leaves of Grass*
- 13. *The Scarlet Letter*
- 14. *Moby Dick*
- 15. *Little Women*

People, Places, Events

- 1. J
- 2. C
- 3. L
- 4. O
- 5. K
- 6. D
- 7. G
- 8. A
- 9. F
- 10. M
- 11. N
- 12. H
- 13. B
- 14. I
- 15. E

In order

- 3
- 4
- 5
- 1
- 2

Cause and Effect

- 1. H
- 2. G
- 3. I
- 4. E
- 5. C
- 6. A
- 7. J
- 8. B
- 9. F
- 10. D