

Founded on high hopes and sometimes impractical ideas, few of the utopian communities lasted more than a few years. The Shakers, the Mormons, and other religious groups also built their own communities. 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 preachers, 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. It also inspired people to become involved in missionary work and social reform movements.

 (See page 967 of the Appendix for a primary source account of a revival meeting.)

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 Many Americans resented these laws, however, and most were repealed, or canceled, within several years.

The temperance movement would reemerge in the early 1900s and lead to a constitutional amendment banning alcohol.

 **Reading Check Analyzing** What were the effects of the Second Great Awakening?

Reforming Education

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.

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.

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 most 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. Schools were poorly funded, and many teachers lacked training. In addition, some people opposed compulsory, or required, education.

Most females received a limited education. Parents often kept their daughters from school because of the belief that a woman’s 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, which were considered “men’s” subjects.

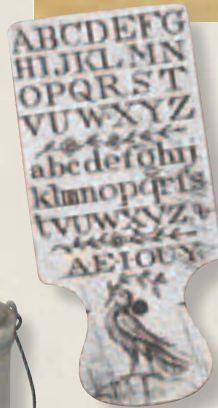
In the West, where settlers lived far apart, many children had no school to attend. African Americans in all parts of the country had few opportunities to go to school.

What *Life* Was Like...

One-Room Schoolhouse

Until education became widespread, many children learned to read and write in one-room schoolhouses. Students of all ages learned mostly by rote—one group recited while the rest studied their lessons. The popular McGuffey *Readers* provided moral lessons as well as lessons in reading and grammar.

*Lunch pail, left
Hornbook, center
Page from McGuffey's, right*



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** (ga•luh•DEHT), who developed a method to educate 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.

When schoolteacher **Dorothea Dix** began visiting prisons in 1841, she found the prisoners were often living in inhumane conditions—

chained to the walls with little or no clothing, often in unheated cells. To her further horror, she learned that some of the inmates were guilty of no crime—they were mentally ill persons. Dix made it her life's work to educate the public as to the poor conditions for both the mentally ill and for prisoners.

✓ Reading Check Identifying How did Dr. Samuel Howe help the visually impaired?

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.

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 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.

The transcendentalists were not the only important writers of the period. Many poets created impressive works during this period. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote narrative, or story, poems, such as the *Song of Hiawatha*. Poet Walt Whitman captured the new American spirit and confidence in his *Leaves of Grass*. 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.

✓ Reading Check Describing What was one of the subjects that Margaret Fuller wrote about?

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

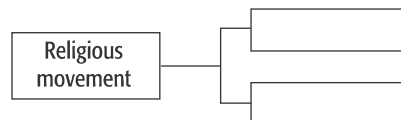
- 1. Key Terms** Use each of these terms in a sentence that helps explain its meaning: **utopia, revival, temperance, normal school, transcendentalist.**
- 2. Reviewing Facts** What were the three accepted principles of public education in the 1850s?

Reviewing Themes

- 3. Civic Rights and Responsibilities** How did Thoreau act on his beliefs? What impact might such acts have had on the government?

Critical Thinking

- 4. 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?
- 5. Determining Cause and Effect** Re-create the diagram below and describe two ways the religious movement influenced reform.



Analyzing Visuals

- 6. Picturing History** Study the painting of the school room on page 414. What is pictured that you still use in school today?

Interdisciplinary Activity

Research Interview your grandparents or other adults who are over 50 years old to find out what they remember about their public school days. Before you do the interview, write six questions about the information that interests you.