



Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes: Examining Reform in the mid-1800s



The United States had been growing in every sense of the word since it officially gained its independence in 1783. The population had skyrocketed from 3.9 million in 1790 to just over 32 million in 1850. One reason that America grew so quickly is because of immigration. Most immigrants came to the United States in search of opportunities that would improve their lives. As evidenced by the actions of our Founding Fathers during the Revolutionary War, Americans believed that they possessed the power to make their lives better. Americans were not the type of people who “let life happen to them”; rather they believed in shaping their own destiny. As the nation grew, this belief became more ingrained in the American citizenry. People began to believe that they could not only improve their own lives, but also the lives of others. In the mid-1800s, groups of Americans began to try and reform America socially and economically.

The Temperance Movement



Women fighting for a ban on alcohol

Heavy drinking was a problem in the early 1800s. Alcoholism, though not yet identified as a disease back then, was widespread. Some workers spent most of their wages on alcohol, leaving their families without any money to live on. Doctors and other experts at the time linked alcohol consumption to a number of health and economic problems. Workers, who would drink alcohol all day long, were unreliable and unable to safely run machines. The temperance movement formed in response to this problem. The main goal of the temperance movement was to make the sale and consumption illegal in the United States. While American churches are credited with starting the movement, many women (whose families had been impacted by alcoholism) and industry leaders (whose businesses had been affected by inebriated employees) also supported the movement. The members of the

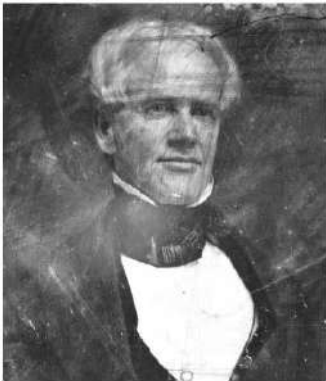
temperance movement handed out pamphlets to educate people about the harmful effects of alcohol and collected signatures from people to encourage the government to pass laws to make it illegal. In 1851, Maine became the first state to ban the sale of liquor. Four years later, 13 other states had passed similar laws. While most of these laws were eventually repealed, the members of the temperance movement continued to pressure the federal government to make alcohol an illegal drug in the United States.

The Fight for Worker's Rights



Working conditions were horrible in the mid-1800s. Workers were paid very little for their services and often forced to work very long hours. Factory workers operated dangerous machinery and were often hurt on the job. Business owners did not install safety equipment or pay workers who had been injured because it would have decreased their profits. There were no laws to protect Americans workers at this time. Workers decided to organize. They formed labor unions, hoping that together, they would be able to force business owners to increase their wages, shorten the work day and improve safety conditions. When factory owners refused to meet the demands of workers, the workers went on strike (meaning they refused to work until their demands were met). Each day that the workers were on strike, the business owners lost money. Between 1835 and 1836, 140 strikes took place in the eastern United States. Labor unions were able to improve working conditions in a few instances, until 1837 when an economic depression began and jobs were scarce. During the Panic of 1837 and the years that followed, workers were afraid to speak out against their employers because they feared that they would lose their jobs.

Improving Education



Horace Mann

Between 1790 and the 1830s, most public education was localized and available only to wealthy people. In 1821, Boston opened the first public high school that was open to most citizens. In the 1830s, Americans began to demand that the government provide educational opportunities to all citizens. In 1837, Massachusetts set up the first state board of education in the United State led by Horace Mann. The job of the board of education was to ensure that schools were providing an adequate education throughout the state. Mann called public education the "great equalizer." Mann believed that education had the power to change people's lives. He argued that, "education creates or develops new treasures – treasures never before possessed or dreamed of by any one." While most colleges did not allow women to attend, there were some exceptions. In 1837, the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary became the first college for women. Soon afterwards, a few other women's colleges were founded including Oberlin College. In 1841, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to earn a medical degree in the United States. In 1852, Massachusetts became the first state to pass a compulsory education law, requiring parents to educate their children (followed in 1853 by the state of New York). Despite these improvements, educational opportunities for most women and African-Americans were very limited.



Caring for the Needy

In the 1840s some Americans wanted to reform the ways that less fortunate people were being treated in this country. One of those reformers was Dorothea Dix. In 1841, Dorothea Dix was teaching a religious class at a women's prison. She discovered some women who were locked in cold filthy cells simply because they were mentally ill. Visiting other jails, Dix learned that the mentally ill often received no treatment. Instead, they were chained and beaten. Dix wrote a report outlining harsh treatment she had observed and offered up solutions for how to help the mentally ill. Dix pleaded with the Massachusetts Legislature to improve the care of the mentally ill. The state of Massachusetts agreed to build better hospitals for the mentally ill after hearing Dix's testimony. Dix



then traveled from New Hampshire to Louisiana pleading with state governments to build facilities for the mentally ill. Her efforts led to the construction of 32 new hospitals across the country. Dix continued her work until her death in 1887 and she is still remembered today for her charitable contributions.

Name:
Date:
Core:

U.S. History

Reflections on the Reformers...

Directions: Use the *Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch- Changes: Examining Reform in the mid-1800s* handout to answer the following questions.



Fact Check...

- Which of the following is a synonym for the word **reform**, as it is used throughout the text?
 - change
 - change that is intended to bring about improvement
 - making sure that things remain the same (status quo)
 - increase in population

- What was the **temperance movement**? _____

- What were two **goals** of **labor unions** in the 1830s?
 - _____
 - _____

- What did **Horace Mann** try to change in the United States? _____

- What did **Dorothea Dix** try to change in the United States? _____



Reading Comprehension...

1. The **text structure** used in section entitled "The Temperance Movement" is cause and effect. Using evidence from the text, identify the cause and effect in the boxes below.

Cause	Effect

2. What is the **text structure** of the paragraph under the heading "The Fight for Worker's Rights"?
- cause and effect
 - compare and contrast
 - main idea and supporting details
 - sequence of events

Identify **evidence** from the **text** that supports your answer choice: _____

3. What is the **text structure** of the paragraph under the heading "Improving Education"?
- cause and effect
 - compare and contrast
 - main idea and supporting details
 - sequence of events

Identify **evidence** from the **text** that supports your answer choice: _____

4. What is the **text structure** of the paragraph under the heading "Caring for the Needy"?
- cause and effect
 - compare and contrast

- c. main idea and supporting details
- d. sequence of events

Identify **evidence** from the **text** that supports your answer choice: _____

5. What is the **text structure** of the **entire text**?

- a. cause and effect
- b. compare and contrast
- c. main idea and supporting details
- d. sequence of events

Identify **evidence** from the **text** that supports your answer choice: _____
