



# AP<sup>®</sup> United States History

2007–2008

Professional Development  
Workshop Materials

**Special Focus:**  
**Antebellum Reform**

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# AP<sup>®</sup> United States History

## Special Focus: Antebellum Reform

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## Editor's Introduction

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The antebellum period is one of the most dynamic and vivid in all of American history. The industrial, transportation, and market revolutions, unprecedented urban growth and its accompanying problems, religious revivals spawning such diverse figures as Charles Finney and Joseph Smith, and reform movements tackling social ills ranging from prostitution to slavery are just part of the story. At the same time territorial expansion and increasing sectional tensions undermine the two party system, lead to the rise of the Republican Party, and push the country toward the violent rupture of civil war.

Reform is one of the 12 major themes listed for the AP® U.S. History course in the Course Description, and so merits serious attention in any AP class. Additionally, even amid what can often become the mad rush of the U.S. survey, significant attention to antebellum reform can bear rich dividends in laying a strong foundation for students' later study of the Progressive, civil rights, and women's movements in the twentieth century. Finally, antebellum reform is so rich in its own right, and replete with colorful figures and engaging stories, that its study can generate high interest on the part of students, and get them thinking not only about the mix of forces and influences in play during this period but about the interconnectedness of multiple factors in historical causation as well.

This special focus section is designed to provide AP U.S. History teachers with a range of lesson possibilities. These can readily be taken and used as they are, or easily modified to meet particular needs and interests. These lesson ideas can also serve as models of different ways to approach a subject and as such can suggest new ways to teach other topics as well.

The introductory overview of the historiography of this period, by Dr. Andrea Foroughi, sets antebellum reform movements squarely in the context of the era's market revolution and the Second Great Awakening, and in so doing underscores the linkages between of economic, social, and ideological forces. As she highlights recent scholarship on the period, Foroughi differentiates between different strands of reform; looks at the relative importance of gender, capitalism, and religion; and thus provides the beginnings of an analytical rubric that can help make sense of what often seems to students to be a random collection of disparate movements.

The lessons themselves present a rich combination of content and pedagogical strategies. Simply reading over these lessons provides an excellent overview of some of the major events, people, issues, and themes of the period. Highlights include Scott Beekman discussing lecture and discussion strategies that use students' presentist assumptions as a starting point

for historical analysis; Cathleen Randall addressing the multiple interconnections between abolitionism and the antebellum women's movement; and Jason George and Cora Greer looking at various ways that role-playing can stimulate student interest and understanding. Themes that emerge include the interconnectedness of reform movements, the reality of conflict as well as consensus in our past, the multiple understandings of freedom held by different people and groups, the ongoing question of the relationship between church and state, and, a perennial favorite with students, the various ways that individuals and groups have attempted, at times with some success, to "change the system."

Significantly, it should be noted that these materials take up similar themes and issues to those addressed in the Document-Based Question on the 2006 AP United States History Exam, which discussed changing perceptions of women's roles during the antebellum period. Teachers should consider using that DBQ, or some of the documents it contains, in conjunction with these materials, in order to help underscore for students the importance of gender and reform as analytical categories in the study of U.S. history and to better prepare students for the AP Exam.

I would also like to raise a note of caution regarding possible dangers in using role-playing in the teaching of history. If instructors fail to require occasions of serious research and rigorous analysis, students may simply enact and view the past solely in terms of preconceived, presentist, and erroneous assumptions, neglecting to see the degree to which the past is truly different from the present. Teachers tend to be so concerned about the opposite problem, that our students have no sense of connection with the experiences of people in the past, that we can easily forget that for them to assume that historical characters were essentially "the same as us" can distort their understanding. Clearly this touches on personal choices of the instructor about the purpose and value of historical inquiry, and what instructors want to accomplish with their students.

Please take time to read through and consider the ideas and suggestions contained in the following essay and lessons. I hope that they will prove to be stimulating and provide some points from which to go further in your own creative construction of lessons and approaches best suited to your students and needs.

# Antebellum Reform: An Overview

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## Introduction

“Second Great Awakening”; “Industrial Revolution”; “Manifest Destiny”; “antebellum reform.” American history teachers and students encounter these phrases on their way from the “American Revolution” to the “Civil War”—two other well-used names for events and concepts in the history of the United States. Sometimes these phrases become so comfortable or familiar that they seem self-evident or they take on an indistinct cast, which blurs their meaning.

Take the Second Great Awakening, for example, which for some students in my college American history survey is the “Secondgreatawakening,” a nebulous word they know is important and should memorize but are unclear as to its meaning and importance. A simplified definition is a period of widespread religious change evidenced by revival meetings and the belief that individuals are responsible for their own morality and improving that of others in their communities. But the individual words that make up such phrases beg additional consideration. In the case of the Second Great Awakening: What about it makes it second? Why was it “great”—or widespread? Why did people require “awakening”? Re-inserting the spaces between the words in the conceptual phrase in this way aids students (and their educators) in their efforts to decode, analyze, and respond to questions about the historical label. In this essay, I will take apart “Antebellumreform” and reconstitute it as “antebellum reform” by considering how scholars have conceptualized this crucial component of the American past.

## Ways of Viewing the Past

“Antebellumreform” obscures two key features: time and action. These are “antebellum,” meaning before the war, and “reform,” meaning action taken to improve a condition or institution understood by an individual or group to be flawed or unjust. These two words raise several questions for clarification: When is the “antebellum” period? What distinguishes it from other periods of American history? Who advocated reform? What conditions or institutions required reform? Why did these need reform? How did reformers attempt to make changes, and were they successful?

Before offering some answers to these questions, I want to return to the idioms with which I began. It is not coincidental that I selected the phrases Second Great Awakening, Industrial Revolution, and Manifest Destiny for my analysis of Antebellum Reform. They correspond to the three main ways scholars have characterized the cause and nature of antebellum reform in the past 30 years—the Second Great Awakening fostering not only religious revivals but also secular activism to improve the morals and lives of antebellum Americans; the Industrial

(or Market) Revolution effecting monumental changes in the economy locally, regionally, and nationally; and Manifest Destiny fueling the expansion across the continent and its political consequences. Although scholars recognize that these political, economic, and socio-cultural processes were inextricably linked, most give more weight to one of these over the others to explain why antebellum reform occurred when, where, and how it did. Often, this emphasis can be ascribed to the category of analysis the historian employs; race, gender, class, and region serve as the prisms through which historians view the antebellum past.

## Defining the Period

Historians usually define the antebellum years as 1815–1860—from the successful conclusion of the War of 1812 through the onset of the Civil War. Traditionally historians have demarcated historical eras by wars because these armed conflicts usually indicate a significant shift in or challenge to political power or national identity. This is the case for the antebellum period because the War of 1812 solidified America’s independence from Britain and contributed to an increased sense of nationhood; 45 years later, the American Civil War nearly ruptured that fragile union. Between these conflicts, the country doubled its size through forced Indian removal and wars on its southwestern border, even as it struggled to diffuse growing sectional anxiety over how those lands would be governed. Determining the best balance between federal and state power consistently proved a significant challenge in the face of tariffs, nullification, Indian sovereignty, and slavery; universal white male suffrage and the rise and demise of political parties came to characterize the young nation’s experiment with democracy.

Historians also use these approximate dates to delineate the shift from localized home production, especially of textiles, to large-scale manufacturing. To maximize the gains to be made from this change required not merely rivers and roads but canals and railroads to transfer raw materials and finished goods to the increasingly far-flung farms, plantations, and towns of the Mississippi River Valley and beyond, as well as to the cities that attracted immigrants from both within and outside of the country’s borders. Despite, or perhaps because of, this economic expansion, this period was also marked by financial depressions in 1819, 1837, and 1857 and the emergence of a distinct middle class.

Historians also track the social and cultural changes within this 45-year period, including religious revivals and the clergy’s decreasing authority during the Second Great Awakening, as well as the proliferation of secular reform movements. From both revivals and reform, many middle-class women in particular acquired a new sense of purpose as their responsibilities transitioned from home production to social reproduction. They gained experience in organizing, running, and leading associations to “provide bibles and tracts, end drunkenness, abolish slavery, build orphan asylums and training schools, improve the moral and physical condition of prostitutes, establish utopian communities, transform Americans’ practices of eating, healing, dressing, and educating, and raise women’s status.”<sup>1</sup> While some of these efforts involved self-reform, many were directed at the growing working, especially immigrant, class. As gradual emancipation of slavery in states like New York and



New Jersey went into effect, the northern free black population grew in numbers. However, free blacks also faced the loss of civil and political rights in many northern states. Despite efforts to marginalize them politically and economically, reform-minded blacks established associations to ameliorate poverty and provide education in their communities, and spoke publicly against slavery and gave assistance to runaway slaves on their way to Canada.

### Weighing Causes: *The Market Revolution*

Although historians generally agree that the changes described above occurred, they disagree on either the relative importance of those changes to shaping antebellum America or the motivations of the reformers who both experienced and influenced those changes. Much of the debate over these issues was provoked by Charles Sellers's *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (1991). Sellers views capitalism as a hegemonic force that shaped America's political economy by involving state and local governments in market development as sponsors of commercial infrastructure by funding the building of roads, bridges, and canals as well as chartering banks and corporations.<sup>2</sup> It also drove the rise and fall of political parties. Federalists, National Republicans, and Whigs championed not only individual entrepreneurship but also an activist state overseeing tariffs and taxes through government intervention in state and federal economies.

More suspicious of state involvement in these economies, Democratic Republicans and eventually Jacksonian Democrats espoused limited government so it would not become a tool of wealthy merchants, manufacturers, and bankers. Even as government leaders wrestled with the political consequences of the market revolution, the Protestant clergy of the Northeast split over how to respond to it and its socioeconomic consequences of rapid urbanization, increased immigration, single-minded pursuit of gold rather than God, and perceived immorality within the increasing ranks of impoverished wage laborers. Unitarian rationality among the wealthy, along with evangelical, democratic revivals in agrarian areas in the East and new settlements of the West, inspired citizens and established a multitude of reform organizations. It is at this point in the narrative of the market revolution, the rise of political parties, the Second Great Awakening, and the origins of antebellum reform that historians diverge.

According to Sellers, reform organizations financed and headed by the new middle class attempted to solve all human problems, establishing a "Benevolent Empire." By the 1830s, economically successful middle-class men faced two profound challenges in their personal and public lives. First, their wives flocked to evangelical revivals and ministers, such as Charles Grandison Finney, who empowered the women to reform themselves, their children, their husbands, and a society polluted by excessive greed and immorality by establishing voluntary associations. Second, middle-class men met with social disorder fomented by wage laborers—be they immigrant, Catholic, and/or transient—who no longer adhered to the patriarchal discipline that had characterized the pre-market economy.

To ameliorate their anxiety about unrepentant and undisciplined laborers, Sellers argues, the middle classes expected ministers and leaders in law, medicine, education, business, and

intellectualism to instruct members of all socioeconomic classes “in a pansectarian middle-class culture of effortful ‘character’ and self-improvement.”<sup>3</sup> Although much of the working class withstood the reform initiatives intended to convince them to abide by middle-class values, the financial Panic of 1837 and its economic fallout caused many to adopt middle-class disciplines, although others intentionally scorned reform and instead pursued a culture based on competition, camaraderie, and boisterous entertainment. In sum, Sellers presents antebellum reform efforts as tools of the middle class to impose capitalism and morality on a freewheeling laboring class and establish bourgeois hegemony.

In the 15 years since its publication, *The Market Revolution* has been a catalyst for the continued study of the effects of the market revolution on antebellum America. To name just two, in 1997 an edited collection of essays, *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800–1880* testifies to the depth and breadth of influence of Sellers’s book.<sup>4</sup> Although the volume contains essays that criticize parts of Sellers’s analysis or attempt to move beyond it, it does not seriously challenge that analysis. A more recent edited volume, *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789–1860* (2005), contains essays that examine the “cultural dimensions, ramifications, and reactions to market expansion,” including a thought-provoking essay by Patrick Rael. He points out the irony of the market revolution as the catalyst for the expansion of slavery as well as the organized, and sometimes competing, efforts to end slavery through radical abolition, political antislavery, and black protest thought. Rael notes that northern African American leaders adopted reform as the vehicle for their activism in the 1830s, explaining that even after “many black activists declared their independence from radical abolitionism, but the flavor of reform never left the movement, and even the most militant black activists of the 1850s never stopped calling for moral reformation,” especially when articulating their strategy of individual uplift to counteract racial prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

## The Role of Gender

Sellers was not the first historian to attempt to analyze antebellum America and the tremendous changes that took place over the course of the era. More than a decade before *The Market Revolution*, two community studies situated in the Erie Canal corridor of upstate New York examined the connections between the Second Great Awakening, the rise of a middle class, and reform. In *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (1978), Paul E. Johnson characterizes middle-class social reforms as means of social control by middle-class capitalists over their employees. Specifically, “newly evangelized Christian employers, recognizing the financial benefits that would accrue from a workshop of orderly and sober employees, dispensed or withheld patronage and jobs on the basis of workers’ willingness to forgo drink, to behave industriously, and to embrace the revivalists’ brand of evangelical Protestantism.”<sup>6</sup>

Johnson’s tale of social reform based on class conflict overlooks gender as a factor in both class conflict and social reform, whereas Mary P. Ryan places women, if not gender, at the center of her study *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York*,

1790–1865 (1981). Ryan traces the development of the middle-class family with women's and young men's participation in voluntary associations and religious reforms as a step toward the creation of the Victorian middle-class family.

Indeed, women's involvement in voluntary associations outside of the home signified middle-class status because it meant their families did not require their productive labor. As Cindy S. Aron explains, "Over the course of the antebellum period . . . such women established and reaffirmed their middle-class identity as they differentiated themselves from the less-fortunate women who were often objects of their ministering and charity."<sup>7</sup> Laura F. Edwards, encapsulating scholars' findings regarding women and antebellum reform in the past 25 years, points out that reformers, visiting the homes of poor women in cities, "gave advice about motherhood and housekeeping, and distributed material aid to those deemed worthy and deserving," and "even confronted the sensitive issue of prostitution, linking it to women's economic marginality and their exploitation by men."<sup>8</sup>

In *Women in Antebellum Reform* (2000), Lori D. Ginzberg has crafted the most succinct yet comprehensive explanation of women and reform. She begins with the origins of reform, reminding readers, "Reform movements do not spring up from nowhere nor do they emerge simultaneously with a particular social problem."<sup>9</sup> Like Sellers, Ginzberg asserts that the economic changes in the first half of the nineteenth century sparked anxiety and fear; however, she distances herself from Sellers's cynical stance toward middle-class reform, discussing how reform movements represent optimism about the potential for social change. For many women, this meant that they must protect and improve their homes and families by promoting reform beyond the walls of their homes. How they went about this duty varied considerably. Ginzberg points out that more conservative charity work attracted members of the upper classes; more radical activities, including abolitionism, drew women and men from lower social groups. Working-class reformers were less integral to such movements.

Although divided by class, religious affiliation, and marital status, these reformers emphasized women's unique—in their minds—capacity to aid others, which they translated into moral superiority over men. However, this claim of moral superiority hampered attempts to improve women's legal, political, and economic position because they would call into question the "respectability" of women reformers. To avoid this, most of these women operated "within a framework that accepted a deeply gendered, Protestant mandate to better their society."<sup>10</sup>

Bruce Dorsey, in his *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (2002), also emphasizes the gendered nature of reform. Like Ginzberg, he offers a variation on Sellers's "market revolution" thesis. Dorsey identifies "the end of bound labor"—indentured servitude and northern slavery—"the rise of a market-driven and wage-labor economy, and conflicts over the nature of the citizenry" as "the backdrop for nearly all the reform movements that appeared in the North before the Civil War."<sup>11</sup> In doing so, he makes not only gender and class but also race and nationalism central to his analysis. Dorsey argues

that male and female reformers experienced their lives as gendered beings in a cultural milieu in which they also “invoked concepts and symbols of the masculine and the feminine to fashion and advance their reform agendas.”<sup>12</sup> For example, the concepts of independence and dependence held gendered meanings, the former ascribed to men and the latter to women. Dorsey’s nuanced reading of gender as a central feature of reformers’ experiences, assumptions, and actions adds another layer to the historical literature on antebellum reform.

## Religion and the Second Great Awakening

A different vein of the historiography of antebellum reform examines its religious components, especially its roots in the Second Great Awakening. Catherine Brekus, in her overview of religious history in the nineteenth century, explains that those scholars who have focused on religious change have differed over whether religious revivals “were orderly, rational, and marked by ‘very few extravagances’” or “were anti-intellectual, emotional, and even crude at times.”<sup>13</sup> Regardless of interpretation, she avers, religious scholars agree that revivals were “a crucial part of American nation-building, [as] a religious response to the political upheavals of the early national period.”<sup>14</sup> T. Gregory Garvey takes this a step further in his *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (2006). He asserts that divisions between the more orthodox clergy and liberal evangelicals not only led to a liberalization and democratization of public discourse about theology but also to the creation of “a culture of reform through which people debated moral and ethical questions” outside of the courtroom, the market, and the political podium.<sup>15</sup> This “culture of public debate,” Garvey argues, “has not only enabled Americans continually to mediate deep divisions in the society but also profoundly influenced their understanding of equality and citizenship.”<sup>16</sup>

More directly concerned with the motivations of reformers, religious historians continue to debate whether the market revolution and the materialism it generated or a “religious vision in its own right (not as the reflexive vehicle for articulating ‘underlying’ material concerns)” stimulated religious reformers.<sup>17</sup> In *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (1994), Robert H. Abzug recognizes the importance of the market revolution but argues that a “religious vision” was promulgated by “religious virtuosos” who tried to reconcile their beliefs in God’s intentions for America with the daily realities of life in antebellum America. These religious virtuosos explored and experimented with a wide array of social reforms as ways to accomplish this reconciliation – environmentalism, temperance, body reforms, transcendentalism, social utopias, and abolition, among others. However, these reform movements proved transitory or, in the case of abolition, were adopted by reformers with political rather than religious vision.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

With roots in religious revivalism and dramatic socioeconomic change, antebellum reform touched on the full spectrum of nineteenth-century Americans’ lives: personal reforms like diet and dress; institutional reforms for schools, prisons, and asylums; moral reforms

to counteract prostitution, drunkenness, and poverty; cultural reforms like religious revivals and protest thought; and reforms that moved into the realm of politics like abolition and women's rights. After this cursory overview of recent scholarship, hopefully "Antebellumreform" has been replaced with "Antebellum Reform"—a complicated, contested, and yet crucial part of nineteenth-century history.

## Notes

1. Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2000), 1.
2. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 41–46. For a less negative interpretation of capitalism's effect on the economic and political systems, see Stanley L. Engerman and Robert F. Gallman, "The Emergence of a Market Economy before 1860" in *A Companion to 19th-century America*, ed. William L. Barney (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 133. For example, they link entrepreneurship in manufacturing with state and local governments' increasing attention to primary level education for a literate workforce.
3. Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 364 and 495.
4. Another book worth mentioning in this context is Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817–1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).
5. Patrick Rael, "The Market Revolution and Market Values in Antebellum Protest Thought" in *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789–1860*, ed. Scott C. Martin (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 21 and 30–31. For a different approach to the connection between the market revolution and abolition, see James L. Huston, "Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20 (Fall 2000): 487–518.
6. Cindy S. Aron, "The Evolution of the Middle Class," in *A Companion to 19th-century America*, ed. William L. Barney (Malden, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 180.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Laura E. Edwards, "Gender and the Changing Roles of Women," in *A Companion to 19th-century America*, ed. William L. Barney (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 230.
9. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 2.
10. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 11 and 14.
11. Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), 8.
12. Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, 2.
13. Catherine A. Brekus, "Interpreting American Religion," in *A Companion to 19th-century America*, ed. William L. Barney (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 330.
14. Brekus, "Interpreting American Religion," 330.
15. T. Gregory Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 44–53.
16. Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform*, 3.
17. James B. Stewart, "Rewelding the Historical Framework of Evangelical Reform," review of Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) in *Reviews in American History* 23, 3 (1995): 428. For a brief overview of this divided literature, see Stewart and also Huston, "Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 20:3 (Autumn 2000): 487–488 and 501.
18. Editor's note: Sean Wilentz's new book, *Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005), can also help provide an overview of this period, while additional useful sources include the classic works by Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District*:

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*The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800–1850* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, reissued 2006), Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers 1815–1860*, revised edition (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), and W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). More recent works, including Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), and Paul Johnson, *Sam Patch, the Famous Jumper* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004) are short, engaging, student-friendly, and underscore key themes of antebellum reform. Thanks to Thomas Chambers of Niagara University for mentioning the usefulness of these older and newer works for high school instructors teaching the AP U.S. History course.

## Five Lesson Plans for Teaching Antebellum Reform

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### Introduction

The following lessons have grown out of my classroom experience teaching AP U.S. History over two decades. Several have been adapted from the work of other teachers who have also successfully used these strategies in the classroom. They connect more familiar examinations of antebellum reform in general to significant offshoot movements, such as abolition and women's rights.<sup>1</sup> These two movements in particular are fruitful to examine because they not only present specific case studies of the internal/external workings of individual movements but also are deeply interconnected to each other. In addition, abolition and women's rights were the basis for similar reform movements in the twentieth century. Students can thus draw connections over time in two centuries and link the past to the present.

Social history itself is an important part of the AP U.S. History course, as outlined in the Course Description, as these topics are commonly discussed in the college survey classroom experience that AP is modeled upon. In addition, one of the 2005 AP U.S. History Exam free-response questions focused on social history for African Americans and one focused on women. The use of multiple perspectives also is a goal noted in the AP Course Description.

The lessons themselves form an "arc" of topics. I have led the first, second, and third activities as part of a one-week/chapter unit on antebellum culture and society. Lessons 4 and 5 can be continued as part of that week, to complete the thematic whole, or inserted, separately, into the time periods as relevant (Lesson 4 as part of the changes wrought by the Civil War and Reconstruction; Lesson 5 alongside the social changes of the 1960s and afterward). I usually present Lesson 1 either before or after Jacksonian politics. I have found the concept mapping extremely useful as a way to help students unpack the big themes and the particular movements. Lessons 2 and 3 usually are part of the same section in the textbook, following the general reform overview. Students can read the entire text for Lesson 2 and then just documents for Lesson 3, or the text and documents can be strictly limited to each day's topic. Class discussion of the documents, along with the additional background knowledge imparted by the teacher, helps the student understand the complexities of social reform. Lessons 4 and 5 will have different amounts of textual support, depending on the textbook used.

Assessments in this unit (Lessons 1 through 5) build in complexity from concrete to applications of analysis. The end of Lessons 4 and 5 provide some suggestions for ways to synthesize the entire unit.

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1. *Editor's note:* Advocates for greater rights for women in the nineteenth century stressed the similarity of women and the universal ideal of womanhood, and so referred to the movement as "woman's rights." Following current usage, this article refers to "women's rights" except when referring to events or documents with the older phrasing.

Any of these lessons may stand alone. They are designed for use in the author's own classroom, most recently 40-minute blocks meeting four times a week (although in an ideal world this would be 50 minutes meeting five times a week). It is the hope of this author that teachers take what is useful to their classrooms and use it in ways that enrich the teaching and learning experience.

## Lesson 1: Content Mapping Antebellum Reforms

**Goal:** To have students understand the concept of reform in general, and to have students gain a general overview of the reforms of the antebellum period, 1820–1850.

**Essential question:** *What were the major antebellum reform movements and their goals?*

**Homework:** Students have read the textbook chapter on antebellum reform for class.

### **Class Activities:**

1. Create a concept map with the class to gain an overview of all the reforms. Draw “antebellum reform” as the center circle. The class will name reforms and link them as the rest of the mapping exercise.
2. Class Discussion:
  - a. Discuss what themes these reforms have in common.
  - b. Discuss differences of focus and constituency.
  - c. Discuss which reform had most support (temperance) and why.
  - d. Discuss which reform became best-known and why.

### **Assessment:**

Evaluate thoroughness of concept map and discussion produced by class.

### **Background Materials:**

Background links on concept mapping:

[http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm\\_home.htm](http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm_home.htm)

[www.columbia.k12.mo.us/she/cncptmap.html](http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us/she/cncptmap.html)

## Lesson 2: Abolitionism

**Goal:** To have students understand the uniqueness of abolitionism compared to other responses to slavery. To have students articulate the variety of reasons for support of the abolitionist movement, its impact (despite small numbers of adherents), and responses to it.

**Essential Questions:** *What was abolitionism? What social–economic–political conditions were abolitionists responding to? How does a social change movement develop and change over time?*

**Background lecture:** Discuss the history of other antislavery efforts, including such topics as the Quakers, gradualism, and colonization vs. abolitionism. These efforts grew out of religious or philosophical principles of equality and stressed immediate and uncompensated



emancipation. Mention the split of the American Anti-Slavery Society into two groups in 1839, one headed by William Lloyd Garrison and one headed by Louis Tappan. Ask students to posit the reasons for the rise of, and change within, this movement. Then frame the following activities with a presentation of the essential questions following each document.

### Classroom Activities

Individual or “jigsaw” discussion of the following documents. If individual, then have class discuss the points following each document. If class jigsaw, then ask each “expert group” to respond to the points and present these answers to their classmates during sharing of expertise.

- A. William Lloyd Garrison, “First Editorial of the Liberator” (1831)  
[www.sewanee.edu/faculty/Willis/Civil\\_War/documents/Liberator.html](http://www.sewanee.edu/faculty/Willis/Civil_War/documents/Liberator.html)  
 How is abolition different from other antislavery movements?
- B. Angelina Grimke, “Speech at Philadelphia Hall” (1838)  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2939t.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2939t.html)
- C. Response by Catherine Beecher.  
[www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/grimkehpb.html](http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/grimkehpb.html)  
 Discuss the role of women in the abolitionist movement and the personal nature of anti-slavery work. Were Southerners active in this movement? Why or why not? What opposition did Grimke experience and why?
- D. Frederick Douglass, “Independence Day Speech” (1841)  
[www.libertynet.org/edcivic/freddoug.html](http://www.libertynet.org/edcivic/freddoug.html)  
 Discuss the role of former slaves in abolition. What factors encouraged/challenged slaves/former slaves in participating in the movement?
- E. Sojourner Truth, “The Injustice of Slavery” (1856)  
[www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/Default.htm#SLAVERY](http://www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/Default.htm#SLAVERY)  
 What was the role of black women in abolition?
- F. Defense of slavery by George Fitzhugh  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h3141t.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h3141t.html)

What was the response to abolition on the part of slaveholders? What role did newspapers play in affecting public opinion?

### Assessments

**Version 1:** Have students compare and contrast documents as class discussion—full class or jigsaw—and answer essential questions.

**Version 2 (Fishbowl):** Have students assigned to each document as a role. Debate the propriety of abolition as others watch and evaluate.

**Version 3:** Have students construct an abolitionist newspaper (one sheet) as a class.

**Version 4:** Each member of class chooses a role based on the point of view of one document; he or she writes a letter as that person to a local newspaper.

For each individual student’s performance, score on a rubric. A rubric for all summation exercises follows below. Criteria for assessment include:

- Summarizes point of view of author accurately
- Acknowledges other views accurately
- Rebuts opposing views effectively
- Demonstrates creative detail
- Demonstrates contextual knowledge

**Extension Activity:** Watch the PBS *The American Experience* documentary *Roots of Resistance* (1991).

**Online Resources**

Old Sturbridge Village—antislavery time line from lesson plan on antislavery  
[www.osv.org/education/LessonPlans/ShowLessons.php?LessonID=36](http://www.osv.org/education/LessonPlans/ShowLessons.php?LessonID=36)  
 Click “Teacher Resources” on the left and then follow the link to the “Antislavery Timeline.”

Jigsaw instructions  
[www.jigsaw.org/overview.htm](http://www.jigsaw.org/overview.htm)

Fishbowl discussion instructions and information:  
[www.uwmc.uwc.edu/english/Teaching%20Fellow/fishbowl\\_instructions.htm](http://www.uwmc.uwc.edu/english/Teaching%20Fellow/fishbowl_instructions.htm)  
[www.ncteamericancollection.org/amer\\_fishbowl\\_lessonplan.htm](http://www.ncteamericancollection.org/amer_fishbowl_lessonplan.htm)

**Abolition Lesson Plan Rubric**

Name:

	Summarizes point of view of author accurately.	Acknowledges other views accurately.	Rebuts opposing views effectively.	Demonstrates creative detail.	Demonstrates contextual knowledge.
Excellent					
Very Good					
Good					
Fair					
Poor					

Comments:

**Lesson 3: Women’s Rights**

**Goals:** To have students understand the connection between the American abolitionist movement and the American women’s rights movement, and to understand contemporary views of women in the antebellum period. To understand the political and social stresses that lead to change within a reform movement.

**Essential questions:** *To what social–economic–political conditions was the women’s rights movement responding? How did the women’s rights movement grow from abolitionism? What were the goals and philosophy of women’s rights? How does a social change movement develop and change over time?*

**Background lecture:**

Summarize key points of abolition.

- Discuss British antislavery movement.
- Explain experience of American women delegates to British antislavery convention.
- Provide background on Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Burned-Over District—how the economic changes of the Erie Canal, evangelicalism, and abolitionism created a climate for women’s rights.
- Explain “woman” essentialist views (contrasted to “women”)—connections to views on women of the era.

**Classroom Activity:**

Have students complete the first two document activities as a class group, or jigsaw all of the following documents. Then have full class discussion on the essential questions.

1. The Seneca Falls Declaration  
[www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Senecafalls.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Senecafalls.html)  
 Analyze key points and discuss the reasons for the inclusion of these points.
2. Compare the Seneca Falls Declaration to the Declaration of Independence.  
[www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/declare.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/declare.htm)  
 What are the common themes/topics? What is changed and why?
3. Compare and contrast speeches by Sarah Grimke and Angelina Grimke Weld.  
[http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/people\\_grimke.html](http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/people_grimke.html)  
 Explain the difference of focus for each sister. Why was this so? What does this indicate about splits within the abolitionist and women’s rights movements?
4. Analyze the New York Married Women’s Property Act.  
[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property\\_law.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property_law.html)  
 To what extent was this law an advance for women’s rights? What does this law indicate about the cultural context for the women’s rights movement?
5. Compare/Contrast speeches/writings of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony with Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech (1851) or excerpt from Linda Brent. How did race affect women’s perceptions about women’s rights?

Elizabeth Cady Stanton  
[www.nps.gov/archive/wori/address.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/wori/address.htm)

Sojourner Truth  
[www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/Default.htm#SLAVERY](http://www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/Default.htm#SLAVERY)

6. Compare Catherine Beecher’s perception of woman with that of the Grimkes and/or Stanton and Anthony. Did all women want women’s rights?

Catherine E. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1842)  
[www.college.hmco.com/history/us/resources/students/primary/domestic.htm](http://www.college.hmco.com/history/us/resources/students/primary/domestic.htm)

Sarah and Angelina Grimke, “Letters to Catherine E. Beecher” (1837)  
[www.pinn.net/~sunshine/whm2000/grimke4.html](http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/whm2000/grimke4.html)

### **Assessments**

1. Have class as individuals or as a group design a WebSearch/WebQuest activity about the history of the women’s rights movement, 1848–1919. (Description of WebQuest and its tasks: <http://webquest.org/>)
2. Have students deliver a speech promoting/opposing women’s rights in student’s hometown circa 1855.
3. Have students build a shadowbox of items representative of women’s lives and issues circa 1850 and present to the class. This could be physical or virtual. Assessment should focus on the explanation of the choices and their significance. (Shadowboxes were popular nineteenth-century decorations. A description of a modern version can be found at [www.geocities.com/diabutsu\\_place/aframe.html](http://www.geocities.com/diabutsu_place/aframe.html))
4. Have students write a declaration of rights for today’s women.

### **Online Resources**

Women’s History  
[www.binghamton.edu/womhist/](http://www.binghamton.edu/womhist/)

Suffragist Time Line  
[www.suffragist.com/timeline.htm](http://www.suffragist.com/timeline.htm)

National Park Service—Seneca Falls  
[www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm)

National Women’s History Project  
[www.nwhp.org/](http://www.nwhp.org/)

PBS—“Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony”  
[www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/](http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/)

Women’s History  
[www.greatwomen.org/women.php](http://www.greatwomen.org/women.php)  
<http://womenshistory.about.com/>

## **Lesson 4: Connections between Abolitionism and Women’s Rights Pre/Post Civil War**

**Goal:** To have students understand the relationship between the women’s rights and abolitionist causes before and after the Civil War.

**Essential questions:** *How did abolition and women’s rights change as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction? How do movements change over time? How do we approach the “ugly side” of history?*

**Background lecture:**

Discuss splits within movements—

- Abolitionists into two groups—Single goal (Tappan) and general utopian (Garrison)—in 1839. Ended in 1870.
- “Woman’s Rights” into two groups (American and National)—single issue and broad utopian—in 1869 over the 15th Amendment.

Discuss context of the Civil War and the politics behind the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.

- Explore the question, “Who gets the vote?” and the question of whether advances both for freedmen and women would have been possible at the same time.
- Trace developments in the women’s suffrage movement, especially the creation of NAWSA and of the National Women’s Party (return to this in Progressive movement).
- Present the 1913 Suffrage March on Washington, D.C. and Wells-Barnett’s refusal of segregated participation in the march (and Mary Church Terrell acceptance). Explain role of Black Clubwomen and of NAACP (Wells-Barnett was a founding member).
- Note the passage of the 19th Amendment.
- Ask how reform energy can “die out.”

**Class Activities:**

- A. Evaluate cartoons about black suffrage and women suffrage—pro and con. Using the Library of Congress’s American Memory Web site (<http://memory.loc.gov/>), search for the following cartoons. (URLs are not reprinted here because of their complexity and the fact that the site architecture changes frequently.)

*Both Black and Women’s Suffrage:*

Search for:

“The modern Cornelia, a veritable rum ‘un”  
 Thomas Nast, “The Ignorant Vote—the Honors are Easy”  
 Thomas Nast, “Is This Not a Man?”

At <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vfwhtml/vfwhome.html>

- B. Evaluate speeches by Elizabeth Cady Stanton over votes for freedmen. Note the division over votes for black men and votes for women.

Stanton, “Social Purity” (1875)

[www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/resources/index.html?body=social\\_purity.html](http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/resources/index.html?body=social_purity.html)

Douglass, “What the Black Man Wants” (1861)

[www.frederickdouglass.org/speeches/](http://www.frederickdouglass.org/speeches/)

- C. Compare and contrast writings by Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Carrie Chapman Catt. Analyze the impact of race on reform efforts.

Ida B. Wells, “The Lynch Law in America” (1900)

<http://courses.washington.edu/spcmu/speeches/idabwells.htm>

Carrie Chapman Catt, “Woman Suffrage Is Inevitable” (1917)

[http://womenshistory.about.com/od/cattcarriec/a/cong\\_1917\\_speech.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/cattcarriec/a/cong_1917_speech.htm)

Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement*, chapters on “The Negro’s Hour” and “Politics After the War,” available at the American Memory Women’s History Collection

- D. Watch videos on Ida B. Wells-Barnett and on the women’s suffrage movement. Compare the different activities and perspectives of women’s rights activists in the early twentieth century.

- “Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice” (1989) (PBS *American Experience*)
- *Iron-Jawed Angels* (2004) (HBO Films)

- E. Class discussion of Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s “Solitude of Self”: discuss how one person can change over time and involvement in a movement. Compare and contrast Stanton to Chapman Catt and the younger generation of the women’s movement.

<http://www.lclark.edu/~ria/stanton.solitude.html>

## **Assessments**

1. Have students write an editorial from someone who opposes women’s suffrage circa 1870. For assessment, use the rubric from Lesson 2.
2. Have students write response poems from black and white women circa 1900.  
Have students form pairs. One student takes the role of a black reformer, the other the white. Take one sheet of paper, fold it half down the middle, have one student write one line in response to the title “Votes for Women” and the other student write a line in response to the opening line. Alternate responses for five to seven lines or for five minutes. Have members of the class stand together and read their poems aloud to the class.
3. Create a time line of antebellum reform and its offshoots to 1877, 1920, 1980.
4. Respond to a document-based question using documents from all units.
5. Answer the Document-Based Question from the 2004 AP U.S. History Exam, available as a free download from AP Central.

## Online Resources

Ida B. Wells House  
[www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/il2.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/il2.htm)

Women's Suffrage in Cartoons, by Jim Zwick  
[www.boondocksnet.com/gallery/suf\\_intro.html](http://www.boondocksnet.com/gallery/suf_intro.html)

About.com Women's Suffrage Time Line  
<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrageoverview/a/timeline.htm>

## Lesson 5: Abolition and Women's Rights to Civil Rights and Women's Lib

**Goal:** To have students understand “reform” in a broad context, and able to compare eras and trace themes over time.

**Essential questions:** *What similarities and differences did the reform movements of the nineteenth century have with reform movements of the twentieth century? How do reform movements develop and change over time?*

**Background lecture:** This lesson is best done as part of the end of year, pre-AP Exam review. Remind students of previous units on reform, abolition, and women's rights. Then, review units on the Civil Rights Movement (1950s–1970s) and Women's Movement (1960s–1970s). Include discussion of American Indian, Gay Rights, La Raza movements as appropriate.

### Class Activities:

- A. Pose the first essential question above. Create a topical organizer from the group response (a T-chart with nineteenth and twentieth century as the two sides may be easiest).
- B. Pose the second essential question above. Have the class journal responses about these movements and any social change the student would like to see happen. Have student make a “to do” list of change activities. Discuss student responses.
- C. Discuss broad themes and connect them to themes listed in the AP U.S. History Course Description.

## Assessments

1. Write a class document-based question on this topic. Have class select documents and create a rubric.
2. Have students explore social issue Web sites. Have them write letters to representatives. Evaluate their responses.
3. Have students examine political action Web sites from various perspectives: conservative, liberal, radical.

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4. Have students examine blogs; post relevant blog entries.
5. Have students create posters for social change issues of the 1950s–1970s. Write an exhibit text and post as an exhibit.
6. Have students create a video documentary.
7. Have students compete in National History Day on the topic.



## Antebellum Reform Roundtable

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### Introduction

Students almost invariably respond well to exercises that ask them to assume the roles of historical figures, particularly well-known individuals. I vividly remember a student telling me how much a simulated Chautauqua discussion we had done during our study of the Progressive Era had helped her on her AP U.S. History Exam; she noted how she remembered not only her character but many of the other roles that other students had played as well and was able to apply what she remembered to questions on the exam.

Roundtable discussions work particularly well for periods and issues like the Progressive Era and the various reform movements of the antebellum period, which involve a variety of different individuals and groups that defy easy categorization. Such an exercise allows students to see a multiplicity of perspectives and begin to imagine how these debates played themselves out in the period under question.

Reform is one of the 12 themes in the AP U.S. History Course Description and as such is an important element of the course. This exercise will hopefully allow students to have a sense of how reformers in the antebellum period differed from those in later periods in American history. If nothing else, students will be well-served if they understand that most reformers of this period focused on the issue of moral reform of the individual as a key to bettering society (often referred to as “perfectionism”). Reformers of the Progressive Era and later, twentieth-century reformers looked much more to government as the agent of change.

### Preparation

This lesson can occur at a number of different points in the study of antebellum America. I usually deal with reform movements after having discussed the politics of the Jacksonian period and the growth of American nationalism after the War of 1812, along with the first Industrial Revolution, but before a discussion of Manifest Destiny and the growing debate over the expansion of slavery. While the pace of the course makes it difficult to devote more than one or two days to these movements, an excellent lead-in resource is the video “Democracy and Reform,” in the series *United States History: Origins to 2000* (more information available at <http://www.libraryvideo.com/>).

To begin, students should be assigned an individual to research and asked to write a one-to-two-page summary and analysis of the individual’s life and career. To give them some guidelines, I ask that they focus on the following:

## Special Focus: Antebellum Reform

- Personal background, particularly anything that might explain their involvement in reform movements
- The specific issue or issues that the person was involved in
- Their source of motivation (religious, philosophical, etc.)
- What they saw as the solution to the problem (legislation, individual moral reform, creation of a utopian community, etc.)

The list of individuals will vary according to class size and teachers' goals. Since students at our school, for example, read Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* and spend two days discussing this work in the context of the growing abolitionist movement and divide over slavery, I do not include Douglass and do not make abolition as central a part of the discussion as one otherwise might. The list of individuals can vary according to teacher goals.

The discussion works best if one can create a wide range of those who might be considered reformers. Including those who sought to create utopian communities, for example, allows the possibility for a dynamic discussion between advocates of separation from society with those who sought to work through existing political institutions to meet their reform goals.

A list of possible roles, by no means exhaustive, could include the following:

- Susan B. Anthony
- Adin Ballou
- Lyman Beecher
- Lydia Marie Child
- Dorothea Dix
- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Charles Grandison Finney
- Margaret Fuller
- William Lloyd Garrison
- Sylvester Graham
- Angelina/Sarah Grimke
- Mother Ann Lee
- Horace Mann
- John Humphrey Noyes
- Robert Owen
- Theodore Parker
- Wendell Phillips
- Joann Georg Rapp
- Joseph Smith
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Arthur Tappan
- Henry David Thoreau
- Sojourner Truth
- David Walker
- Theodore Dwight Weld
- John Greenleaf Whittier

In order to stimulate discussion, students can be asked to submit a particularly appropriate quotation that captures their individual's position. E-mail makes this very easy; teachers can collect student quotations and create a sheet that they distribute to students at the beginning of the class or for reading prior to the day of the roundtable discussion. If this is distributed ahead of time, students could then be asked to find a quotation with which they strongly agree or disagree and asked to state their reasons during the course of the discussion.

One effective way to introduce antebellum reform and to help students to understand the mindset of many reformers of the period is to use illustrations of the time period. These can

be shown to students as the exercise is being introduced in order to help them to understand how to approach the period. One particularly effective illustration is “The Way of Good and Evil” (available by searching the American Memory Web site from the Library of Congress), which will help students to see the degree to which reformers saw the path to social improvement in individual behavior.

## In Class

Roundtable discussions are usually extremely easy to conduct; ideally, the students will become so involved in responding to one another that the teacher can step back and simply record student responses. It is helpful to have name tags; the teacher can do this ahead of time or have the students do it themselves (before class is better; as much time as possible should be left for the discussion itself).

The type of schedule that a teacher operates under will dictate much of how the discussion is run. Our school has a 70-minute-block schedule, which allows for the discussion to be conducted comfortably; some classes take a little while to develop momentum, although one is still often left wishing for 10 minutes at the end once they get rolling.

Students can be asked to provide a *brief* introduction and statement of their views (obviously this must be short, particularly for classes with over 20 students). The teacher might then throw out a larger question to stimulate discussion and establish a theme. For antebellum reform, some questions could include the following:

- What is the biggest issue facing American society today? Why?
- Can social justice be achieved under the present system of government?
- Is human nature fundamentally good or bad?
- Can legislation change human behavior?
- Should we seek gradual or immediate changes to society?
- Can society be improved by active involvement or by withdrawal?
- What makes the good society?

Teachers operating on a schedule with shorter classes may want to consider starting out by focusing their discussion on a particular issue, such as slavery, abolition, or temperance. If time permits, they could address some of the larger questions above either later in the initial day of discussion or during the next class period (classes that meet every day will likely have a greater chance of maintaining momentum and focus than block-schedule classes that meet every other day).

## Following Up

As a follow-up assignment, students could be asked to write a short paper, either from their character’s perspective or from their own perspective, responding to any of these questions. A short amount of debriefing time should be allowed either at the end of the discussion, or

more likely, the following class. Some questions that help students to reflect are as follows: What did you like about the discussion? What was hard about it? Did you personally agree with your character's position? Why or why not? With whom did your character most agree? Disagree? What were the biggest changes you see between the time period of the discussion and today?

## **Assessment**

This activity can be assessed in a variety of ways. One would be to count the written component as one-half of the student grade and the oral component as a second half.

For the written component, consider the following:

- Accuracy and comprehensiveness
- Level of analysis
- Ability to put their character in a larger historical context
- Quality of research; types of sources

For the discussion, consider the following:

- How accurately the student represents their character's views
- Ability to make comments that reflect style, tone, and values of the time period
- Degree to which the student responds to others; whether or not they help to bring others into the discussion

## Two Lesson Outlines on the Antebellum Women's Movement

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### Introduction

One of my perennial goals in the U.S. History survey class is to develop in my students an understanding of the evolutionary nature of the United States over the last 400 years. Possessing a political memory of a mere decade or so, many survey students fail to comprehend that the United States—politically, socially, and culturally—has not been a static state.

This fact was brought home to me a few years ago in my Native American History class. One of my students expressed to me that he simply did not understand why the new United States found itself forced to make treaties that allowed native peoples to retain land desired by white settlers. The U.S. military had just defeated the British, he rightly noted, so why compromise with the Native Americans? His query, grounded in twenty-first century notions of American power and military strength, might seem embarrassingly presentist to us but was eminently reasonable to an 18-year-old lacking in historical knowledge and bombarded (at the time) with media pronouncements of “mission accomplished.” This young man’s difficulty in coming to terms with eighteenth-century America led me to contemplate means of helping students enter, in Carl Becker’s famous phrase, the “climate of the times.”

To redress similar misconceptions of our past, I now engage in exercises that seek to bring the distinctions between twenty-first century America and earlier periods into sharper relief. While, in a perfect world, students could cast aside all prior knowledge of current issues in order to understand how different they looked 200 years ago, this is simply too much to expect. Therefore, I like to start each topic by discussing modern manifestations of the topic (which also affords an excellent opportunity to help keep the students abreast of current affairs), then ask the students to consider how the issues contained within the topic may have been approached in the prior period. Admittedly, some topics are better for this sort of approach than others (in that they provide greater contrast), but really all the major themes touched upon during a survey can be addressed in this fashion. I have found that some topics almost *require* this approach to convey to students adequately the truly revolutionary changes of the last few centuries.

### The Women's Movement in Context

One of the topics that works quite well for this sort of approach is the women's movement. I like to begin the segment on the antebellum women's movement by asking students to think about the contributions of American women in business, politics, popular culture, and sports—and give examples. Then, students think about the opportunities currently afforded to American women and how these have directly enhanced the students' lives. For the

young women in the class these are a bit more obvious and personal (voting or being able to go to college are typically cited), but examples can be readily found for the entire class. I recommend to the students (particularly to males who might be skeptical) to think about a female teacher that has helped their education, a woman doctor who provided medical care through an illness or injury, or how the income from their mother's employment materially benefited their childhood. I then ask students to imagine an American state in which the franchise and professional careers were denied to women and how this might have affected their own lives. Current political conditions make this a particularly fruitful contrast.

At this point, I do not expect the students to be fully cognizant of how the status of women changed over the last 200 years; I simply want them to recognize that there was a change. I tell them that what we are going to examine for the next few days is how that change in status began, not how it was completed.

## Lectures: Key Ideas on Women and Antebellum Reform

### Lecture 1: Major Nineteenth-Century Ideas on Women

1. "Republican Motherhood" (a term coined by the historian Linda Kerber)
  - A. Ideal of self-government and service for women who otherwise had no public role
  - B. Women should take republican ideals (freedom, virtue, public morals) and instill them in their children (primarily sons) so that these children can grow up to be good citizens
  - C. Women's education was advocated by those who thought it would help them pass ideals onto their sons.
  - D. Educated women were socially acceptable if they used that education in their family's service.
  - E. Lower- and working-class women were expected to inculcate societal norms into their children so they might be productive members of society, but there was no expectation that these women would produce future leaders (political or economic).
  - F. The ideal positioned the home and private life as the sphere of women, but it also encouraged some political knowledge and education among American women. It created the widespread belief that women were guardians of morality, an idea utilized by the early women's movement to justify an increasing public role for women (helping to create a moral society). With the rudiments of education limited to the "better" sort, it will be these women who become the political/activist base of the women's movement.

**Classroom resource:** the film *Mary Silliman's War*, based on the biography *The Way of Duty*, demonstrates republican motherhood in action.

2. Republican motherhood develops into the "domestic ideal"
  - A. During the antebellum period, women's activities centered on home and family.
  - B. Women have a "separate sphere"—a home that is a "haven in a heartless world":
    1. Woman is the moral/emotional centerpiece
    2. Husband can forget the trials of the outside world there
    3. Kids come there from school

4. Woman is the “angel” who doesn’t mention the world or discuss negative things; she is pretty, nice, and considerate
- C. Men are responsible for income and family decisions. They operate in the public sphere, while women remain in the private sphere of the home.
3. Women’s “advice” literature
  - A. Catherine Beecher’s *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) becomes a bestseller
  - B. Much literature was designed to allow women to run homes as efficiently as their husband’s office. Beecher includes diagrams of how to arrange a kitchen. Authors glorified homemaking, motherhood, and the female role in marriage. However, this literature can also be viewed as awakening women to the notion that they are capable of handling responsibilities similar to those of their husbands.
  - C. This literature was geared toward middle-class, white, and native-born women. Again, the group will be part of the foundation of the early women’s movement.
4. Catherine Ward Beecher advocates education of girls
  - A. Beecher argues that it is scandalous for middle-class women to work in factories or as domestics, as this lessens their ability to inculcate values into their children. She proposes converting teaching into a female profession.

*Argument:* Women are natural nurturers; employers don’t have to pay women as much (no families to support). Women can be teachers until they are married. This allows currently childless middle-class women to be surrogate republican mothers.
  - B. By 1883, 63 percent of American teachers are women.
5. Women’s relationships (Smith-Rosenberg)
  - A. The separate spheres ideology dictates that women spend most of their time with women, lending a particular character to these relationships.
  - B. One result is the transcendence of strict spectrum with heterosexuality on one end and homosexuality on the other end.
    1. Women look to other women for support and for sexual/love satisfaction they have been socialized to find with men.
    2. Ideas gave women “status and power” in the lives of other women, whereas they lacked this in the male world. These relationships play an important role in reform movements.
    3. Not relevant to know if these were actually physical relationships.

**Lecture resources:**

Joy Buel and Richard Buel, *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1984).

Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, 2 (Summer, 1966): 151–174.

Excerpt at [www.pinzler.com/ushistory/culttwo.html](http://www.pinzler.com/ushistory/culttwo.html)

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs* 1, 1 (Autumn, 1975): 1–29.

## Lecture 2: Women's Political Activism in the Antebellum Period

### Lecture Overview

There are broad types of antebellum reform activism:

1. Moral Reform
2. Temperance
3. Antislavery
4. Women's Rights

Women, primarily middle-class women from the Northeast (who have increased amounts of time to devote to public activities), will solve the dilemma of getting out of their domain/sphere (the home) by viewing the world as a home, in which women can exercise their maternal abilities without being condemned by society. It was okay for women to help others improve their lives. Reform-minded women will argue that the natural role of women is to inculcate proper values, so by becoming active in public life they are serving the same role as they have in the home.

1. Moral Reform
  - A. The New York Moral Reform Society (1834)
    1. The group's goal is to eliminate the sexual double-standard by elevating men's sexual morality to the level of women's, and in the process eliminate prostitution.
    2. Members portrayed women as innocent victims of unchecked male lechery (an acceptable way to criticize men when outlets to do so were limited).
    3. By 1839, some 400 communities have chapters.
    4. Tactics included:
      - a. Publishing names of men who frequent prostitutes in local papers and their own, *The Advocate of Moral Reform*
      - b. Marching on houses of prostitution and disrupting business there
      - c. Setting up halfway houses that taught prostitutes skills that reformers thought would make these women employable (usually domestic service)
  2. Temperance
    - A. The movement portrayed alcohol as a threat to home and the lives of an alcoholic's family (and society at large).
      1. 1830 saw the highest level of alcohol consumption in U.S. history.
      2. The average American drank 5 gallons of distilled spirits per year.
    - B. Advocates saw excessive drinking as a waste of money and harm to the family.
    - C. Advocates portrayed it as a male problem because women didn't go into bars; it became a way to criticize domestic violence, lack of support by drunken men, and (only thinly disguised) lower classes and immigrants (particularly the Irish).
    - D. Reformers stressed the means for women to contribute to the bettering of American society as a whole by acting as the moral compass of the nation.



### 3. Abolitionism

- A. The role of women in the abolitionist movement was hotly contested. The question of whether women had right to speak out in public helped fracture the American Anti-Slavery Society. The split reflected resistance to women in public activities, even if they were related to morality. A debate ensued over whether the prominence of women weakened the movement. The result was a push to put men in the forefront of the movement. Among women of continued importance were:
1. Angelina Grimke (1805–1879) and Sarah Grimke (1792–1873). The first women from slaveholding families to speak publicly and write as abolitionists, they hailed from South Carolina. Unhappy with the limited level of education afforded them by their wealthy family, they moved to Philadelphia in the 1820s and became Quakers and abolitionists. Obstacles they faced in the abolitionist movement because of their sex led both to become involved in the women's movement.
    - a. Angelina Grimke wrote “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South” (1836) and “Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States” (1837).
    - b. Sarah Grimke wrote “Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women” (1838).
    - c. Theodore Weld and the Grimke sisters compiled *Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), then retired from public life and became involved in education.

#### Lecture Resources:

*Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839)

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/weld/summary.html>

South Carolina Education Television Network. *Rebel Hearts: Sarah and Angelina Grimke and the Anti-Slavery Movement*, 1995.

### 4. The Women's Rights Movement

- A. April 1848: New York Married Women's Property Act
1. The first act that directly addressed women's legal/equal rights (an 1839 Mississippi women's property act, directed at clearing up legal issue of wealthy heiresses' property—particularly slaves—was not focused on defining a public role for women).
  2. Susan B Anthony (1820–1906), Ernestine Rose (1810–1892), and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) all lobbied for the bill. All three had been active in the abolitionist movement as well and had been angered by the sexist attitudes they encountered. Stanton had personally witnessed Lucretia Mott's snubbing at the 1840 London Anti-Slavery Conference. Rose faced an additional level of discrimination because she was Jewish.
  3. The act's advocates argued that women should no longer be considered legally dead after marriage.

4. The act established that women in the state of New York possessed property rights of their own, even after they were married. It was seen as a declaration that women had their own identity and were not completely beholden to their husbands. It also meant that, through property ownership, women could demonstrate their ability to be active in the public sphere.
- C. Seneca Falls Convention (July 19–20, 1848)
1. The convention, the true birth of the women’s rights and suffrage movements as organized political campaigns, was led by two veterans of the abolitionist movement: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott (1793–1880).
  2. The meeting was prompted by the April 1848 passage of the New York Married Women’s Property Act.
  3. Two hundred women and 40 men (including Frederick Douglass) attended the conference, the first ever devoted to issue of women’s rights.
  4. Reflecting the lack of political leadership roles for women in the past, Mott’s husband, James, presided over the convention.
  5. The Declaration of Sentiments
    - a. Stanton consciously modeled the document on the Declaration of Independence; she wanted to emphasize the fact that men *and* women are created equal, and believed it would be a difficult document to ignore if phrased in that manner.
    - b. Complaints about women’s status: They
      - i. Can’t vote.
      - ii. Have a criminal identity, but no civil one
      - iii. Can’t get into college (exceptions: Oberlin admits women in 1837; Vassar, the first women’s college, opens in 1861)
      - iv. Can be taxed but have no input in the construction of these laws (similar to the case with divorce laws).
    - c. Demands:
      - i. Give women the right to vote.
        - aa. Controversial because seen as giving families two votes, when one vote should do (British common law of coverture: woman’s identity is subsumed/covered in her husband’s)
      - ii. Give women independent civil and criminal identities.
      - iii. Women should have all the rights of American men because they are created equal.
      - iv. Since women are supposedly men’s moral equal (if not superior), they should be speaking in public, preaching in pulpits, etc. It is in the country’s best interest to give them this moral public role.

- d. The declaration contained a broad reform agenda, involving much more than the right to vote.
- D. The convention proved to be the beginning of a lengthy battle for women's rights.
  - 1. From 1850 onward, annual women's rights conventions were held. Mott presided over several of them.
    - a. Mott published *Discourse on Women* in 1850 to outline how women are second-class citizens in the United States.
  - 2. The movement was soon overshadowed by the abolitionist movement until after the Civil War, then witnessed a spurt of activity and progress during the Gilded Age.
  - 3. In 1866 the American Equal Rights Association was established, with Mott as president.
  - 4. New divorce laws emerged in some states, and women were given the right to vote in a few places.
  - 5. The women's movement gained steam late in the nineteenth century and then saw real progress during the early twentieth century.

## Exploring the Lane Debates of 1834

Cora Greer  
Machiasport, Maine

### Introduction

The most important objective in this lesson is to help students understand the issues in the Lane Debates and their significance in the antislavery crusade. This lesson plan is designed for either two or three 50-minute periods or for two 90-minute periods. It should be used after students have had a good overview of antebellum reform. There are a number of ways teachers might want to structure this lesson, though the materials seem to be tailor made for role-playing. Teachers may want to edit the primary source documents or to eliminate some completely. All primary sources are available online, and teachers may want to explore some further.

### Historical Context

The views of antebellum reformers, like those of reformers of later eras, evolved over time and were impacted by events. Deep religious convictions and evangelical fervor were the engines that drove the antebellum reform movement. The temperance crusade and reforms involving education, prisons, women's rights, asylums, utopianism, and abolition were middle-class in origin but were also fueled by the zeal that characterized the Second Great Awakening. A fundamental belief of the newly converted was that individuals could assume responsibility for perfecting their own life. It thus followed that if the converted put their energy in the cause of moral reform and lived according to God's will, the moral reformation of the world would be possible.

The leaders of the reform movement were part of a small group of inspired individuals whose roots were in the Northeast, who knew one another, and who were in frequent communication. In almost every case they were allied with more than one issue, and there was rarely uniformity as to how a particular goal might be accomplished. With few exceptions, however, antebellum reformers saw societal problems in moral terms, and believed remedies came from the actions of moral individuals. Most came from Federalist families and were often less than comfortable with the rough and tumble politics that characterized Jacksonian-era democracy. Thus, it is not surprising that, unlike later reformers, they were reluctant to engage in political action.

### A Critical Family

It is impossible to examine antebellum reform without making the acquaintance of the Beecher family. Lyman, the Calvinist patriarch of the family, was the leading evangelist in New England and the founder of the American Temperance Society. His most important contribution to the reform movement, however, may well have been his children, whose activities spanned the century. Catharine, a charter member of the "cult of domesticity," who believed there was no room for politics in "women's sphere," was also a leader in education

reform. Edward, like all the male Beechers, was a minister. An active abolitionist and supporter of Elijah Lovejoy, he organized the first antislavery society in Illinois. Henry Ward, probably the most famous clergyman of the nineteenth century, gained national attention when he raised funds to buy weapons (known as “Beecher’s Bibles”) for those willing to oppose slavery in Kansas and Nebraska. Isabella Beecher Hooker became one of the most prominent advocates of women’s suffrage in the United States. Finally, there is Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, arguably the most important and influential book published in the nineteenth century. Although Lyman Beecher’s early pastorates had been in somewhat rural areas, he became one of the leading revivalists in the East. Not surprisingly, Beecher became more prominent when he was given a congregation in Boston in 1826. During his six years in Boston Beecher fought doctrinal battles, denounced Unitarianism, championed temperance, and alerted the population to the dangers represented by the Irish and Catholicism.

By 1830, however, Lyman Beecher had caught the missionary zeal that was sending many Protestant clergy west. In a letter to Catharine he wrote:

The moral destiny of our nation, and all our institutions and hopes, and the world’s hopes, turns on the character of the West and the competition now is for that preoccupation in the education of the rising generation, in which Catholics and infidels have the start on us. . . . I have thought of going over to Cincinnati, the London of the West, to spend the remainder of my days in the great conflict, and in consecrating all my children to God in that region who are willing to go. If we gain the West, all is safe; if we lose it all is lost. (Rugoff, p.78)

While others might venture west in search of cheap land, Beecher saw an opportunity to save the nation. Thus in 1832 Lyman Beecher accepted a Presbyterian pastorate and the presidency of the Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. Accompanying Beecher on the trek west were the three younger children by his second wife, Catharine, and Harriet. The latter would stay for 19 years; during that time she would marry, bear several children, and witness the evolution of the controversy over slavery.

## A Site for a New Contest

Cincinnati in the 1830s was a prosperous city of 30,000 with a population of German and Irish immigrants and transplanted Easterners. There were also over 2,000 free blacks living in the city, which was increasingly becoming a stop on the Underground Railroad. Cincinnati, located across the Ohio River from Kentucky, was in many respects a southern city, and not unsympathetic to slavery. Most businessmen benefited from trade with Kentucky and points south. Many families, in fact, hired slaves from Kentucky as servants. The city had experienced a race riot in 1829, and racial tensions were still high when Beecher and his family arrived.

Lane was not a particularly distinguished school at this time, but for those wishing to spread the word, it was a prime location. It was therefore not surprising that, like Beecher,

a group of students from the Oneida Institute in upstate New York saw in Cincinnati, and Lane, a “New Jerusalem” where they could engage in a “holy war against infidelism, drink, self-indulgence, and most importantly slavery” (Rogoff, p.140). The group, and their leader, Theodore Weld, enrolled in Lane in 1833.

Like many antislavery Northerners of his generation, Lyman Beecher favored colonization, a solution that did not arouse the fear, or wrath, of slaveholders, while sending the freed slaves to Africa. Beecher believed strongly that slavery was an evil, but believed the institution could best be abolished by slave owners who saw the light and gave up their slaves of their own free will. Thus Lane Theological Seminary under Beecher’s presidency was not a pro-slavery institution; there was an active Colonization Society there, and Beecher had admitted an African American student.

Weld, like Garrison, saw colonization as both outdated and unsuccessful, and immediately began to proselytize his cause of abolition and emancipation to his fellow students. Successful in this endeavor, Weld proposed a series of debates on abolitionism versus colonization. Beecher agreed at first, but heeding the counsel of conservative townspeople and faculty, he urged postponement of what he felt would be a divisive confrontation. His plea was rejected, and there followed eighteen evenings of speeches on the topics of slavery, abolition, and colonization. The battle between conservative and radical antislavery forces had been joined.

## **Role-Playing Activity Instructions**

The availability of so much primary source materials lends itself to a role-playing exercise where students take on the roles of Beecher, Weld, and other prominent figures. The long “Defense of the Students” in the Oberlin College Web site provides additional material and roles. Catharine Beecher’s letter could be used to help buttress the colonization argument; although it was written after the Lane Debates, it clearly expresses Catharine’s views on the issue of abolition.

## **Lesson Objectives**

1. To make students aware of some of the issues in the antislavery debate of the 1830s
2. To help students understand the religious fervor that fueled the antislavery movement
3. To help students understand the impracticality of both colonization and immediate emancipation as solutions to the slavery issue

## **Assessment Possibilities**

### **1. Group Work**

Answers to the following questions could best be accomplished by dividing the class into four groups and having the groups report either orally or in written form on their assigned question.

1. What were the main arguments of those favoring colonization? Of those favoring immediate abolition?
2. What were some of the immediate results of the debates?
3. What characteristics do the participants in the Lane Debates share with other antebellum reformers?
4. What was the long-term significance of the Lane Debates?

## 2. Potential Free-Response Questions

1. Assess the validity of the following statement.

*Immediate emancipation, as espoused by Weld and Garrison, inflamed the passions of Southerners, frightened Northerners, and caused both political parties to try to avoid the slavery issue.*

2. Assess the validity of the following statement.

*Both sides in the Lane Debates came to their antislavery position based on their religious convictions rather than from the belief that slavery was antithetical to the Enlightenment concepts of liberty and equality.*

## The Lane Debates: Online Source

Resources for Studying the Lane Debates

[www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/LaneDebates/Resources.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/LaneDebates/Resources.html)

- “Theodore Weld’s Reply to James Hall” (1834) (a letter published in the *Cincinnati Journal*)
- “Dr. Beecher’s Address on Abolitionism & Colonization” (1834) (reprinted from the *Cincinnati Journal*)
- “Lane Seminary—Defense of the Students,” statement by the Lane Rebels published in *The Liberator* (January 10, 1835)
- “Debate at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati—Speech of James A. Thome, of Kentucky Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society,” May 6, 1834
- Extract from Lyman Beecher’s *Autobiography* (1864)
- Extract from Lewis Tappan’s *Arthur Tappan* (1871)

## Online Resources about the Beechers and the Lane Debates

An American Family: The Beecher Tradition

<http://newman.baruch.cuny.edu/digital/2001/beecher/default.htm>

Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*: Part I

[www.northeastjournal.com/LeadingStories/aug06/stowe.html](http://www.northeastjournal.com/LeadingStories/aug06/stowe.html)

## Special Focus: Antebellum Reform

PBS Online: “Only a Teacher: Schoolhouse Pioneers”  
[www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/beecher.html](http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/beecher.html)

Thomas, Benjamin, *The Gospel Truth: Theodore Weld, Crusader for Freedom*, Chapter 5, “The Lane Debates”  
[www.gospeltruth.net/Weld/weldbioch5.htm](http://www.gospeltruth.net/Weld/weldbioch5.htm)

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Culture

- Site Map: [www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/sitemap.html](http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/sitemap.html)
- Abolition 1830–50: [www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/abhp.html](http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/abhp.html)
- Student Protest at Lane Seminary: [www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/lanehp.html](http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/lanehp.html)



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