

Primary Source

Social Movements of the Nineteenth Century

Guiding Question

- How did reform movements in the early nineteenth century address the social and economic challenges of the era?

Objectives

- ☐ I can identify several social movements of the nineteenth century
- ☐ I can read and analyze primary sources.

Resource Overview

These sources accompany the *Social Movements of the Nineteenth Century* Lesson Plan. To prepare for the lesson, print a set of these documents for each student group you plan to have.

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Text Sources

Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments (1848)

Background Information

In July 1848, an important meeting took place at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York. It was the first big gathering in the United States where people came together to discuss how to achieve greater equality for women. About three hundred women and men came to the meeting, including Lucretia Mott and Frederick Douglass. At the end of the meeting, one hundred people—sixty-eight women and thirty-two men—signed a paper called the Declaration of Sentiments. This paper based itself on the Declaration of Independence and stated that women have the same natural rights as men.

Declaration of Sentiments

Adapted from: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/declaration-of-sentiments-annotated>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
We hold these truths to be self-evident ; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;	self-evident - obvious endowed - given inalienable - impossible to take away
that to secure these rights governments are instituted , deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed .	instituted - established deriving - receiving consent of the governed - The power of government comes from the people.

Whenever any form of Government becomes **destructive of these ends**, it is the right of those who suffer from it to **refuse allegiance** to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its **foundation on such principles**, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

destructive of these ends- no longer secures inalienable rights
refuse allegiance- stop being loyal or committed
foundation on such principles- creating a new government based on the ideas of inalienable rights and consent of the governed mentioned before

Analysis Questions:

1. From what document is the Declaration of Sentiments borrowing language?
2. Why is this similarity significant?

Excerpts from *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance* (1828)

Background Information

Lyman Beecher was a minister from Connecticut who played a key role in fighting against alcohol use in America before the Civil War. In 1826, he helped create a group called the American Temperance Society and took part in religious meetings of that time. Two years later, in 1828, he wrote a book called *Six Sermons* that talked about the problems with drinking and how to fix them.

Six Sermons Excerpt

Source: <https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/schaller-3e-dashboard-resources/document-lymann-beecher-excerpts-from-six-sermons-on-the-nature-occasions-signs-evils-and-remedy-of-intemperance-1828>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
Intemperance is the sin of our land, and with our boundless prosperity , is coming in upon us like a flood;	Intemperance - lack of self-control associated with drinking alcohol boundless prosperity - limitless growth and resources
and if any thing shall defeat the hopes of the world, which hang upon our experiment of civil liberty ,	experiment - The United States was called an “experiment” because it was an idealistic and new form of government. civil liberty - protection from unjust laws and government interference
it is that river of fire, which is rolling through the land, destroying the vital air, and extending around an atmosphere of death...	

Analysis Questions:

1. What is the “river of fire” that Beecher refers to?
2. What connection is Beecher making between intemperance and the duties of a citizen?

Free Soil Party Platform (1848)

Background Information

The Free Soil Party started in 1848 as a group of people who wanted to keep slavery out of the western territories. They believed the land in the West should be used by small farmers and workers who were free, not by people who owned slaves. They wanted to make sure free workers had good opportunities to succeed. They did not try to end slavery in places where it already existed because they thought the government did not have the constitutional power to do that. Still, many people in the party thought slavery was wrong and evil. The things they stood for helped make slavery a big issue across the country and later led to the creation of the Republican Party.

Free Soil Party Platform Excerpt

Source: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/free-soil-party-platform-1848>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
We have assembled in Convention, as a union of freemen, for the sake of freedom, forgetting all past political differences in a common resolve to maintain the rights of free labor against the aggressions of the Slave Power , and to secure free soil to a free people.	assembled - come together common resolve - firm determination together the Slave Power - referring to slave state political power in the Senate.
[W]e accept the issue which the Slave power has forced upon us; and to their demand for more Slave States, and more Slave Territory, our calm but final answer is, no more Slave States and no more Slave Territory.	the issue - referring to Southern desire to expand the Missouri Compromise line across new lands acquired from Mexico, ensuring new slave states would be added to the Union. The Free Soil Party opposed the expansion of slavery into new territories.

Let the soil of our **extensive domains** be kept free for the **hardy** pioneers of our own land, and the **oppressed and banished** of other lands, seeking homes of comfort and fields of **enterprise** in the new world.

extensive domains- large amounts of land

hardy- strong

oppressed and banished- people from other nations that have been treated badly or kicked out by their governments

enterprise- a project or mission

Analysis Questions:

1. What issue does the Free Soil Party stand against? How do you know?
2. What does the excerpt suggest about views of American expansion in the nineteenth century?

Excerpts from *Walden* (1854)

Background Information

In his book *Walden* (1854), Henry David Thoreau wrote about the beauty and importance of nature. He was part of a group of thinkers called Transcendentalists who believed that nature and having personal reflections on what the world is and means were more important things to focus on than money and social status. They felt that the best way to understand life was to spend time in nature and think deeply about one's own experiences.

Thoreau wrote about the two years he spent living in a small cabin near Walden Pond. He went there to live a simple life and to understand himself better by being alone in nature. In his writing, he shows how nature can be both a quiet place to escape from busy life and a way to feel more connected to the world. He wanted readers to think less about their possessions and instead find meaning by spending time in the natural world.

Walden Excerpt

Source: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-ushistory1/chapter/primary-source-henry-david-thoreau-reflects-on-nature-1854/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately , to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.	deliberately - with purpose to front - to face
Simplicity , simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail.	Simplicity - simple or easy to understand
The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements , ... is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, ... and the only cure for it, ... is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose.	nation - referring to the United States so-called internal improvements - government projects like roads and canals designed to better unify the country to promote trade in this time period. Thoreau is implying here that changes in the nation have not actually been improvements. unwieldy - uncontrollable cluttered - unorganized and messy heedless - reckless Spartan simplicity - Spartans were famous for their focus on physical toughness and living simple lives with little extravagance

Analysis Questions:

1. What changes are happening in the 1800s is Thoreau reacting to?
2. What solution(s) does he propose to the issues he sees?

Revival Sermon (1835)

Background Information

The Second Great Awakening was a time in American history when many people became very interested in religion. This religious movement spread across the United States in the early 1800s. Unlike the old ways of worshiping in traditional churches, this new movement focused on people's personal faith and their emotional connection to God. Religious leaders told people that they did not need to be in a traditional church setting or be born into a religious family to be close to God. Instead, they encouraged people to convert after finding a personal connection with God, which could happen in any setting for anyone.

People gathered in large outdoor meetings called “camp meetings”, especially on the western frontier. These meetings helped the movement grow quickly among ordinary Americans. The Second Great Awakening did more than just change how people thought about religion - it also made them want to improve society. People who joined this movement believed that in order to truly live out their faith, they needed to take action to improve society. Many worked in the Abolition, Temperance, and Women's Rights' movements. The Second Great Awakening changed American life by making religion more open to everyone and showing people how they could use their beliefs to help others.

Jedediah Burchard's Revival Sermon Excerpt

Source: <https://www.teachushistory.org/second-great-awakening-age-reform/resources/jedediah-burchards-revival-sermon>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
My friends, how do you feel? I would ask you in a kind and affectionate manner, - how do you feel? Have you lost the joy of your salvation - are you ... lukewarm ?	affectionate - loving salvation - a Christian religious term that means saved or rescued. lukewarm - not hot or cold, room temperature
Now friend, you who profess the religion of Jesus Christ - Wake up! - Wake up, and become ardent in the cause. Depend upon it, if you continue in your present lukewarm state, you come under the awful denunciation of [God.] You must have faith. God can't use ye without faith and he won't use you! - You must put away the sin of ...unbelief. Murder holds no comparison to the great sin of ...unbelief!	ardent - enthusiastic or passionate denunciation - public criticism, like being accused of a crime sin - religious term for breaking a moral or religious law

Analysis Questions:

1. What is the goal of this sermon?
2. How does the tone and language of this source compare to the other sources in the set? What effect do you think this had on the audience?

Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts on the conditions of the prisons (1843)

Background Information

In the mid-1800s, many people started working to change the way prisoners were treated. Some were especially worried about prisoners with mental illnesses, who often suffered terribly in prison. One of the most important people working for change was Dorothea Dix. She first became interested in helping prisoners in 1841 when she started teaching Sunday school to women in East Cambridge prison.

When Dix saw how badly the prisoners were being treated, she decided to visit prisons all over Massachusetts. She carefully wrote down everything she saw about how prisoners with mental illnesses were being neglected and hurt. In 1843, she wrote a report to the state government about what she had found. This report helped people understand mental illness better and led to important changes in both prisons and mental hospitals across the United States.

Dorothea Dix Memorial Excerpt

Source: <https://www.teachushistory.org/second-great-awakening-age-reform/resources/memorial-legislature-massachusetts>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
I found, near Boston, in the jails and asylums for the poor, a numerous class brought into unsuitable connection with criminals and the general mass of paupers . I refer to ...insane persons, dwelling in circumstances not only adverse to their own physical and moral improvement, but	asylums - an institution for the mentally ill paupers - a very poor person adverse - harmful
productive of extreme disadvantages to all other persons brought into association with them.	productive of extreme disadvantages - producing big problems association - a connection or link between people, a relationship

I applied myself diligently to trace the causes of these evils, and sought to supply remedies. As one obstacle was surmounted, fresh difficulties appeared. Every new investigation has given depth to the conviction that it is only by decided, prompt, and vigorous legislation the evils ...can be remedied.	diligently- carefully supply remedies- suggest solu-tions surmounted- overcome conviction- reasoning or opinion
I shall be obliged to speak with great plainness, and to reveal many things revolting to the taste... But truth is the highest consideration. I tell what I have seen — painful and shocking as the details often are — that from them you may feel more deeply the imperative obligation which lies upon you to prevent the possibility of a repetition or continuance of such outrages upon humanity.	obliged- morally required revolting to the taste- disturbing to talk about and hear imperative obligation- unavoidable responsibility outrages- shocking and angerinducing events

Analysis Questions:

1. What environment is Dorothea Dix presenting this information in?
2. What civic virtues or Founding Principles is her argument based in?

Image Sources



Johnston, David Claypoole. Scraps. Etching. Boston: D.C. Johnston, 1849. Old Sturbridge Village.
<https://www.teachushistory.org/files/styles/screen/public/resources/WomensRightsatthePolls.jpg?itok=yex3FfP7>

1. This image shows negative views of women's suffrage. What does the illustration show will happen if women are allowed to vote?
2. What is the illustrator showing with the presence of the men in the image?



Currier, Nathaniel. The Drunkard's Progress: From the First Glass to the Grave. Lithograph. Circa 1846. Library of Congress.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Drunkard%27s_Progress_-_Color.jpg

1. This image shows negative views of alcohol. What depictions do you see?
2. What is the significance of the woman and child below the bridge?



Haydon, Benjamin Robert. The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840. Oil on canvas, 1841. National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image. Wikimedia Commons.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f9/The_Anti-Slavery_Society_Convention%2C_1840_by_Benjamin_Robert_Haydon.jpg.

1. What kinds of people do you see? Why might that be significant?
2. What items do you see in the front and back of the image? Why might those be significant?



John Phelan, Replica of Thoreau House at Walden Pond, Concord MA, photograph, October 30, 2021, Wikimedia Commons, This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Replica_of_Thoreau_House_at_Walden_Pond,_Concord_MA.jpg.

1. What interests or surprises you about Walden Cabin?
2. Why was it important to Thoreau to live in a cabin like this while writing Walden?



Milbert, Jacques Gérard. Methodist Camp Meeting. Engraving. March 1, 1819. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Wikimedia Commons.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Methodist_camp_meeting_\(1819_engraving\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Methodist_camp_meeting_(1819_engraving).jpg).

1. The image shows people gathered around a stage. What do you imagine they are watching, based on the name of the source?
2. How do you think a camp meeting like this would compare to a traditional church environment? Why might that be important?



Norris, Shackled on His Bed at Bedlam. 1838. Wellcome Collection. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Norris,_shackled_on_his_bed_at_Bedlam._Wellcome_L0011319.jpg.

1. What is odd or significant about the bed that the subject of the image is sitting on?
2. Is the drawing scary, serious, silly, or something else? How does that affect how people with mental illness might have been treated?