

Reforming American Society

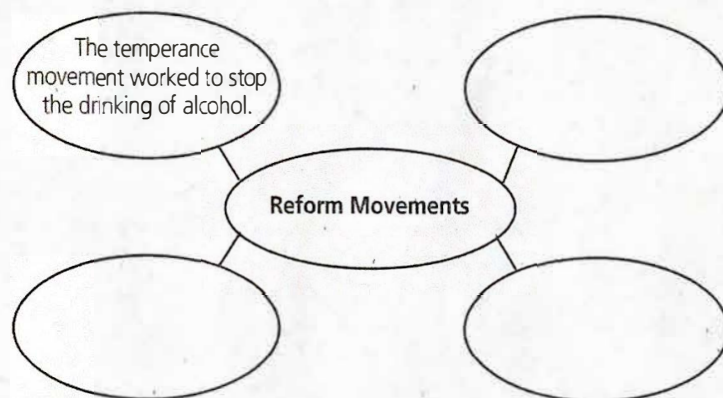
BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about the start of American art and literature.

In this section, you will learn about reform movements in the United States in the 1800s.

AS YOU READ

Use this diagram to take notes on the kinds of changes that reform movements in the United States in the mid-1800s worked for.



TERMS & NAMES

A Spirit of Revival

In the 1800s, many Americans had a growing interest in religion. Many attended **revivals**. These are meetings to **renew religious faith**. There was a wide renewal of faith in the 1790s and early 1800s. It is called the **Second Great Awakening**. At revivals, preachers urged people to give up their sinful ways. Many revivals spread across the frontier. Revivals also took place in cities in the East. There, preachers taught that religious faith led people to help others.

1. What was the Second Great Awakening?

Temperance Societies; Fighting for Workers' Rights

Some Americans began the **temperance movement**. This was a campaign to stop the drinking of alcohol. Heavy drinking was common in the early 1800s.

Some workers spent most of their wages on alcohol. Because of that, their families did not have enough money. Many women joined the temperance movement. They urged people to sign a pledge to give up alcohol. By 1838, about a million people signed.

Business owners also supported the temperance movement. They needed workers who could run machines and keep schedules. Drinking made it hard to do that. Some states banned the sale of alcohol. But most of these laws were *repealed* over time.

In the 1830s, workers called for better working conditions. Young women mill workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, started a **labor union**. This is a group of workers who band together to seek better working conditions. In 1836, the mill owners raised the rent of the company-owned boarding houses. About 1,500 women went on **strike**, stopping work to demand better conditions. Other workers called for shorter hours and higher wages. Hard times made the labor movement fall apart. But in 1840, President Van Buren ordered a ten-hour workday for public workers. This met some of the goals of the labor movement.

2. How did workers seek to get better working conditions?

beaten and chained. She traveled all over the United States pleading for better care for the mentally ill. As a result, 32 new hospitals were built.

Other reformers tried to make life better for people with other disabilities. New schools opened for the deaf and blind. Some reformers worked to improve prisons. They did not want children to go to the same jails as adults. They also called for adult prisoners to be *rehabilitated*.

4. What kind of reforms did Dorothea Dix work for?

Improving Education

Americans also wanted better schools. Massachusetts set up the first state board of education. **Horace Mann** was its head. By 1850, many states in the North started public schools for children. Some cities in the North opened public high schools. Churches and other groups opened hundreds of new private colleges. Women could not attend most colleges. Oberlin College in Ohio was the first college to admit women as students.

African Americans faced barriers to getting an education. In the South, it was against the law to teach a slave. Even in the North, most public schools did not let African American children go to school.

3. How did Horace Mann help reform education in the United States?

Caring for the Needy (pages 435–436)

Who was Dorothea Dix?

Some people tried to improve the way society took care of its weakest members. **Dorothea Dix** was a reformer from Boston. She learned that the mentally ill often received no treatment. Instead, they were