



» Dorothea Dix's efforts led to growing public awareness of the need to provide services for the mentally disabled, who often spent their lives in badly kept poorhouses or prisons.

 Interactive Flipped Video

 **TEKS**
1.A, 23.D, 23.E, 24.B, 25.B

>> Objectives

Explain how political and religious trends, including the Second Great Awakening, inspired reform movements.

Describe the impact of movements for temperance and for the reform of mental health care and prisons.

Explain the impact of movements for the reform of education and care for the disabled.

>> Key Terms

debtor
temperance
movement
social reform
predestination
Second Great Awakening
revival

7.3

The period between 1815 and 1860 is sometimes known as the Reform Era in the United States, because there were so many movements for social reform during this period. Social reform is an organized attempt to improve what is unjust or imperfect in society. The impulse toward social reform had political, social, and religious causes.

Reform Movements

An Era of Reform

Political Ideals Lead to Reform As you have read, during the Jacksonian era, politics was becoming more democratic. More people could vote and take part in government than ever before.

Still, some critics said American society was not democratic enough. They pointed to the promise of liberty and equality expressed in the Declaration of Independence. A true democracy, they argued, would not allow slavery. Others asked why women had fewer rights than men. By changing such injustices, reformers hoped to move the nation closer to its political ideals.

Social Conditions Call for Reform As you have learned, the Industrial Revolution was changing the American economy and working conditions, especially in the North, and cities were growing rapidly. Crowded cities created new challenges for social well being. At the same time, there was a growing need for an educated workforce. As American society changed, it required new institutions to meet its changing needs.

The Second Great Awakening and Its Causes During the colonial era, many American Protestant Christians believed in **predestination**. According to this idea, God decided in advance

which people would attain salvation after death. This belief led many people to worry that they could do nothing to be saved.

During the 1700s, Protestant thinkers in England and the colonies began to argue that salvation depended on a person's actions in this life. Its leaders stressed free will rather than predestination. They taught that individuals could choose to save their souls by their own actions. In the early 1800s, a dynamic religious movement known as the **Second Great Awakening** swept the nation. Arguments by religious thinkers were the main cause of this movement. Another cause was the democratic spirit of the Jacksonian era, which encouraged people to think independently and not blindly obey established religious authorities.

To stir religious feelings, preachers held **revivals**, huge outdoor meetings. Revivals might last for days and attract thousands of people. A witness recalled the excitement of a revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky:

The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by storm. I counted seven ministers all preaching at once. . . . Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy.

—James B. Finley, *Autobiography*

One leader of the Second Great Awakening was a minister named Charles Grandison Finney. A powerful speaker, Finney taught that individual salvation was the first step toward “the complete reformation of the whole world.” Such teachings had effects that changed the country, inspiring a number of new social reform movements. By working to reshape American society, these religiously inspired reformers contributed the idea of improving society to the American national identity.

? IDENTIFY CENTRAL IDEAS What was the central premise on which the Second Great Awakening rested?

Social Reform Movements

The emphasis the Second Great Awakening placed on improving society inspired many Americans. Women often played a leading role in these reform movements. These Americans launched a number of reform movements, with far-reaching effects on prisons, care of the disabled, education, and attitudes toward slavery.

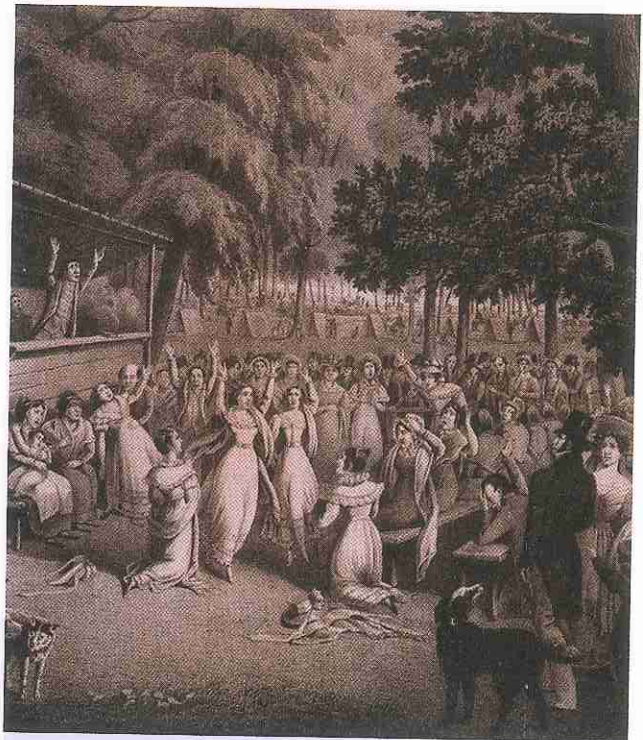
One of the most vigorous social reformers was Dorothea Dix, a Boston schoolteacher whose strong religious beliefs spurred her to care for those less fortunate. She turned her attention to what one minister called the “outsiders” in society: criminals and the mentally ill.

Reforming Care of the Disabled In 1841, Dix visited a jail for women near Boston. She was outraged to discover that some of the prisoners were not criminals, but mentally ill.

Dix demanded to know why these women were locked in small, dark, unheated cells. The jailer replied that “lunatics” did not feel the cold.

During the next 18 months, Dix visited every jail, poorhouse, and hospital in Massachusetts. Her shocking reports helped persuade state legislators to fund a new mental hospital:

I proceed, gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the present state of Insane Persons confined . . . in cages, closets, cellars, stalls, pens! Chained,



>> During the Second Great Awakening, preachers like the one at this camp meeting stressed the ability to save one's soul through action. **Identify Central Ideas** How did this teaching influence reform movements in the 1800s?

naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience.

—Dorothea Dix, “Memorial to the State Legislators of Massachusetts”

Dix went on to inspect jails as far away as Louisiana and Illinois. Her reports persuaded most legislatures to treat the mentally ill as patients, not criminals.

The Impact of Prison Reform Dix also joined a growing movement to improve conditions in prisons. Men, women, and children were often crammed together in cold, damp rooms. When food supplies were low, prisoners went hungry—unless they had money to buy meals from jailers.

Five out of six people in northern jails were **debtors**, or people who could not pay money they owed. While behind bars, debtors had no way to earn money to pay back their debts. As a result, many debtors remained in prison for years.

Dix and others called for changes in the prison system. As a result, some states built prisons with only one or two inmates to a cell. Cruel punishments were banned, and people convicted of minor crimes received

shorter sentences. Slowly, states stopped treating debtors as criminals.

The Impact of the Temperance Movement Alcohol abuse was widespread in the early 1800s. At political rallies, weddings, and funerals, men, women, and sometimes even children drank heavily. Men could buy whiskey in candy stores or barbershops.

The **temperance movement**, a campaign against alcohol abuse, took shape in the late 1820s. Women often took a leading role in the battle. They knew that “demon rum” could lead to the physical abuse of wives and children and the breakup of families.

Some temperance groups urged people to drink less. Others sought to end drinking altogether. They won a major victory in 1851, when Maine banned the sale of alcohol. Eight other states passed “Maine laws.” Most states later repealed the laws, but the temperance crusade would gain new strength in the late 1800s.

? **DESCRIBE** Dorothea’s Dix’s legacy as a social reformer.

The Impact of Educational Reform

In 1800, few American children attended school. Massachusetts was the only state that required free public schools supported by the community. Teachers were poorly trained and ill paid. Students of all ages crowded together in a single room.

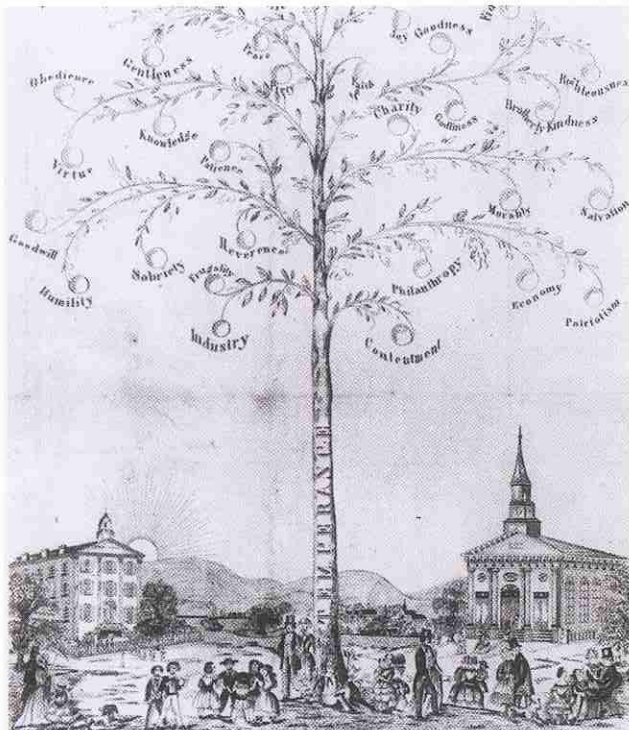
As more men won the right to vote, reformers acted to improve education. They argued that a republic required educated citizens.

Education Reform Gives Rise to Public Schools

Horace Mann became head of the Massachusetts board of education in 1837. A Unitarian inspired by the Second Great Awakening, Mann believed that education would help citizens become better Christians. He hounded legislators to provide more money for education. Under his leadership, Massachusetts built new schools, extended the school year, and raised teachers’ pay. The state also opened three colleges to train teachers.

Other states followed the lead of Massachusetts. By the 1850s, most northern states had set up free tax-supported elementary schools. Schools in the South improved more slowly. In both the North and the South, schooling usually ended in the eighth grade. There were few public high schools.

Expanding Education for African Americans In most areas, African Americans had little chance to



>> Analyze Political Cartoons This cartoon shows a tree growing fruits with labels such as “Goodness,” “Knowledge,” “Morality,” and “Patience.” How did these “fruits” reflect reformers’ hopes for the temperance movement?

attend school. A few cities, like Boston and New York, set up separate schools for black students. However, these schools received less money than schools for white students did. In the North, African American men and women often opened their own schools to educate their children.

Some attempts to educate African Americans met with hostility. In the 1830s, Prudence Crandall, a Connecticut Quaker, began a school for African American girls. Crandall continued to teach even as rocks smashed through the window. Finally, a mob broke in one night and destroyed the school.

Despite such obstacles, some African Americans went on to attend private colleges such as Harvard, Dartmouth, and Oberlin. In 1854, Pennsylvania chartered the first college for African American men.

Reforming Education for People With Disabilities

Some reformers improved education for people with disabilities. In 1817, a Christian evangelical Thomas Gallaudet (gal uh DEHT) set up a school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut.

Samuel Gridley Howe founded the first American school for the blind in 1832. Howe was active in many reform movements spurred by the Second Great Awakening, working for improvements in public schools, prisons, and treatment of the disabled. Howe used a system of raised letters to enable students to read with their fingers. One of Howe's pupils, Laura Bridgman, was the first deaf and blind student to receive a formal education.

? GENERATE EXPLANATIONS Why did reformers insist that states set up publicly funded schools for their residents?

ASSESSMENT

1. Identify Central Issues What did critics of American society feel was unjust about it?



>> As part of the social and educational reform movements, Thomas Gallaudet opened this school in Connecticut to serve deaf children.

[Interactive Gallery](#)

- 2. Analyze Information** What was the Second Great Awakening, and why did it have the effects it had?
- 3. Summarize** Dorothea Dix's efforts to improve society.
- 4. Hypothesize** why women so often took a leading role in the temperance movement.
- 5. Contrast** the educational opportunities available for white children and African American children in the North while educational reform was going on.