Before reading this document get out a lined piece of paper and answer the following questions as you read each section

Social Reform

The 1820s and 1830s saw a great rise in popular politics, as free white males achieved universal suffrage. Women, blacks, and Native Americans, however, remained excluded from the political process and were often neglected by politicians. In protest, these marginalized groups and their sympathizers organized reform movements to heighten public awareness and to influence social and political policy. Many reformers believed that they were doing God’s work, and the Second Great Awakening did much to encourage them in their missions.

These reform movements, like many issues of the day, quickly became sectional in nature. New England and Midwestern areas settled by New Englanders were most likely to be reformist. Southerners, by contrast, actively opposed the abolition of slavery, pursued temperance and school reform only halfheartedly, and largely ignored women’s rights.

1.Where did most of the reformers come from?

2.Why do you think people in the South weren’t really into Social Reform?

**Abolitionism**

Perhaps the most prominent and controversial reform movement of the period was abolitionism, the anti-slave movement. Although abolitionism had attracted many followers in the revolutionary period, the movement lagged during the early 1800s. By the 1830s, the spirit of abolitionism surged, especially in the Northeast. In 1831,**William Lloyd Garrison** launched an abolitionist newspaper, ***The Liberator***, earning himself a reputation as the most radical white abolitionist. Whereas past abolitionists had suggested blacks be shipped back to Africa, Garrison worked in conjunction with prominent black abolitionists, including **Fredrick Douglass**, to demand equal civil rights for blacks. Garrison’s battle cry was “immediate emancipation,” but he recognized that it would take years to convince enough Americans to oppose slavery. To spread the abolition fervor, he founded the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832 and the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. By 1840, these organizations had spawned more than 1,500 local chapters. Even so, abolitionists were a small minority in the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, often subjected to jeering and physical violence.

*William Lloyd Garrison’s newspaper, The Liberator, spoke for the most extreme abolitionists. Along with Frederick Douglass, Garrison called for emancipation of slaves and full civil rights for blacks.*

Opposed to abolitionism, Southern congressmen succeeded in pushing the **gag rule** through Congress in 1836. This rule tabled all abolitionist petitions in Congress and thereby served as a preemptive strike against all anti-slavery discussions. The gag rule was not repealed until 1844, under increased pressure from Northern abolitionists and others concerned with the restriction of the right to petition granted by the Constitution.

3. What is an abolitionist?

4. What is emancipation?

5. What did William Lloyd Garrison do to further his cause?

6. What methods do we use today to get people to join a noble cause?

**Women’s Rights**

The position of American women in the early 1800s was legally and socially inferior to men. Women could not vote and, if married, could not own property or retain their own earnings. The reform movements of the 1830s, specifically abolition and temperance, gave women a chance to get involved in the public arena. Women reformers soon began to agitate not just for temperance and abolition, but also for women’s rights. Activists such as Angelina and Sarah Grimké,**Elizabeth Cady Stanton**, and **Lucretia Mott** argued that men and women are created equal and should be treated as such under the law. These advocates allied with abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, also an ardent feminist, merging the powers of the abolition and the women’s rights movements. Other advocates of both causes include Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass.

In 1848, Mott and Stanton organized a women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The **Seneca Falls Convention** issued a Declaration of Sentiments, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, that stated that all men and women are created equal. The Declaration and other reformist strategies, however, effected little change. While some states passed Married Women’s Property Acts to allow married women to retain their property, women would have to wait until 1920 to gain the vote.

**Public Schools**

The movement to reform public schools began in rural areas, where one-room schoolhouses provided only minimal education. School reformers hoped to improve education so that children would become responsible citizens sharing common cultural values. Extending the right to vote to all free males no doubt helped galvanize the movement, since politicians began fearing the affects of an illiterate, ill-educated electorate.

In 1837, **Horace Mann** of Massachusetts became secretary of that state’s board of education. He reformed the school system by increasing state spending on schools, lengthening the school year, dividing the students into grades, and introducing standardized textbooks. Much of the North reformed its schools along the lines dictated by Horace Mann, and free public schools spread throughout the region. The South, however, made little progress in public education, partly owing to its low population density and a general indifference toward progressive reforms.

What do you think is the true value of education?

**Temperance**

The production and consumption of alcohol in the United States rose markedly in the early 1800s. The temperance movement emerged as a backlash against the rising popularity of drinking. Founded in 1826, the American Temperance Society advocated total abstinence from alcohol. Many advocates saw drinking as an immoral and irreligious practice that caused poverty or mental instability. Others saw it as a male indulgence that harmed women and children who often suffered abuse at drunkards’ hands. During the 1830s, an increasing number of workingmen joined the movement in concern over the ill effects of alcohol on job performance. By 1835, about 5,000 temperance societies were affiliated with the American Temperance Society. Owing largely to this association’s impact, consumption of liquor began to decrease in the late 1830s and early 1840s, and many states passed restrictions or bans on the sale of alcohol.

Why were people against the consumption of alcohol?

**Prisons, Poorhouses, and Asylums**

Beginning in the 1820s, social activists pressed for prison reform. These reformers argued that prisons, instead of simply confining criminals, should focus on rehabilitation through instruction, order, and discipline. Believing crime was largely the result of childhood neglect and trauma, prison reformers hoped that such methods would counteract the effects of a poor upbringing and effectively purge criminals of their violent and immoral tendencies.

Further rehabilitative efforts were directed at the poor and the insane. To combat poverty, almshouses were built for poor invalids. Workhouses were built for the able-bodied poor in the hopes that a regimented environment would turn them into productive citizens. Until the early 1840s, the insane were confined in these poorhouses or in prisons, living in miserable conditions that often exacerbated their illnesses. In 1843, **Dorothea Dix**, a Massachusetts schoolteacher, described to the state legislature the conditions of the insane in prison and encouraged the construction of insane asylums to better rehabilitate the mentally ill. In the following years, asylums opened throughout the United States.

**Utopian Communities**

The most extreme reform movement in the United States was the utopian movement, founded in the first half of the 1800s on the belief that humans could live perfectly in small experimental societies. Though **utopian communities** varied in their philosophies, most were designed and founded by intellectuals as alternatives to the competitive economy. Utopian communities aimed to perfect social relationships; reform the institutions of marriage and private property; and balance political, occupational, and religious influences. Most utopian communities did not last beyond the early 1850s, but one, the Oneida community in New York, survived from 1848 to 1881.

Look up at least three utopian communities and list them:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/books/sat2/history/chapter9section2.rhtml>