

## An Era of Reform: American Reform Movements in the mid-1800s

### CENTRAL QUESTION: To what extent did reform movements of the mid-1800s improve life for Americans?

#### *What is reform?*

When you reform something you are trying to improve it. You can reform institutions or you can reform the way something is done or the fact that it is done at all—this is when you reform a practice.

#### *Why were people reforming?*

People are reforming because life isn't so perfect for a lot of people in the U.S.

#### *Who was reforming?*

Average Americans were leading reform movements. Men and women, black and white, people like ministers and teachers.

What were some major reform movements in the mid-1800s?

- 1) Second Great Awakening
- 2) Prison reform
- 3) Education reform
- 4) Movement to end slavery
- 5) Equal rights for women

#### *What events, ideas, and people contributed to the **spirit of reform** in 19<sup>th</sup> century America?*

**SECOND GREAT AWAKENING:** a revival of religious feeling that swept across America from the 1800s to the 1840s. Stressed that everyone could gain forgiveness for sins—good works were stressed as a path towards forgiveness.

- Charles Finney is a major leader, and he is someone who inspired people to oppose slavery
- Christians were told to allow themselves to be “filled with the spirit of God.” Sometimes people cried for hours or fell down in frenzies.

**TRANSCENDENTALISM:** a philosophy that stressed critical thinking in order to challenge the norms of society. Transcendentalists believed in the goodness of people and the power of nature.

- There is a world that transcends the observable world. By observing nature and using emotion and imagination, we can transcend the world around us.
- Urged people to question society's rules and institutions, stressed individualism. Created model communities with optimistic vision of life. Thoreau and Emerson = two key figures.

#### **Prison Reform:**

I see terrible conditions in prisons. Prisoners are bound in chains and locked in cages. Children are treated as adults for minor offenses and debtors are jailed for as little as \$20. The mentally ill are locked in dirty, crowded prison cells and whipped if they misbehave.

With my eyes,  
I see . . .

With my hands,  
I write . . .

I write detailed reports for various states arguing for prison reform. Because of these reports, when I die in 1887 debtors are no longer put in prison, there is a special justice system for children, and cruel punishment is outlawed.

With my heart,  
I feel . . .

I feel sympathy for prisoners and the mentally ill. They should be treated more humanely, and the mentally ill need to be treated, not punished.

With my feet, I travel  
to prisons to document  
the horrible conditions.



**Dorothea Dix**

### Education Reform

*Who was the leader of education reform in America?*

Horace Mann. When he was a boy in Massachusetts he only went to school for 10 weeks a year. The rest of the time he had to work on his family's farm. He was lucky to have this much time in school! He and other reformers believed that school would keep children out of trouble, help them escape poverty, and help them become good citizens.

*In the early 1800s, did most children go to school?*

No. In the early 1800s most children didn't go to school at all or just went for a very brief period of time. Public schools are funded by tax dollars, and most communities didn't charge taxes.

*By 1850, how many children in the United States went to public school? What children were left out?*

By 1850 most white children—especially boys—in the North and West attended public schools. But many girls and African Americans were left out. Women had more options than African Americans.

### The Movement to End Slavery: Vocab and Important People

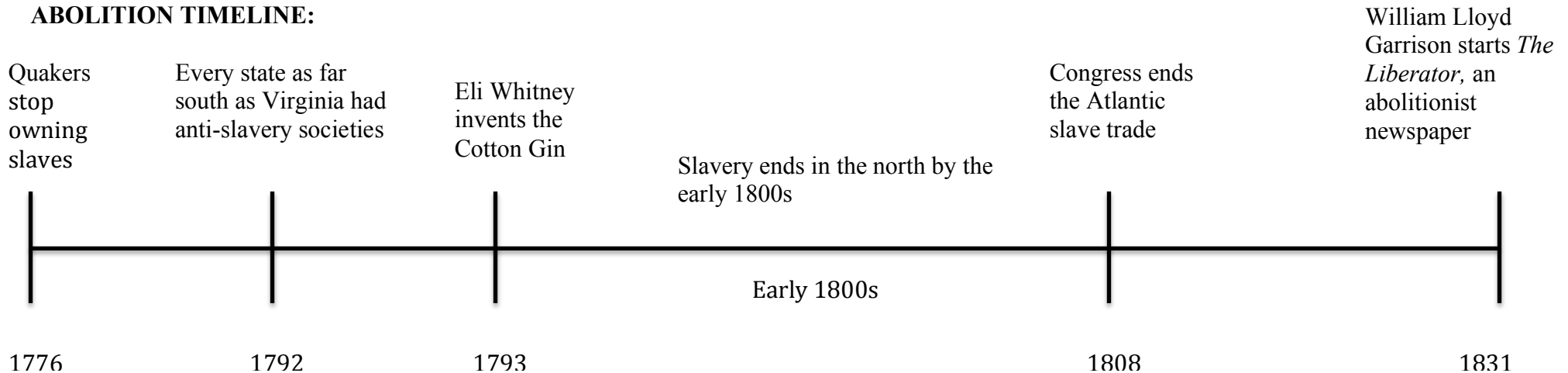
**Abolitionist:** a person who supported abolition, or the ending of slavery.

**William Lloyd Garrison:** publisher of the abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*. He vocally opposed slavery and fought for immediate abolition. He and other abolitionists were in the minority (even in the North) and he faced violence because of his beliefs. Angry proslavery mobs destroyed his printing press and burned down his house.

**Frederick Douglass:** an escaped slave and one of the most important antislavery voices in America before and during the Civil War. He was a fantastic speaker and his autobiography explained to people the horrors of slavery.

**Angelina and Sarah Grimke:** sisters who advocated for the abolition of slavery despite violence against them. They had been raised in a South Carolina slaveholding family but became abolitionists when they moved north and became Quakers. They led the way for other women to speak in public.

### ABOLITION TIMELINE:



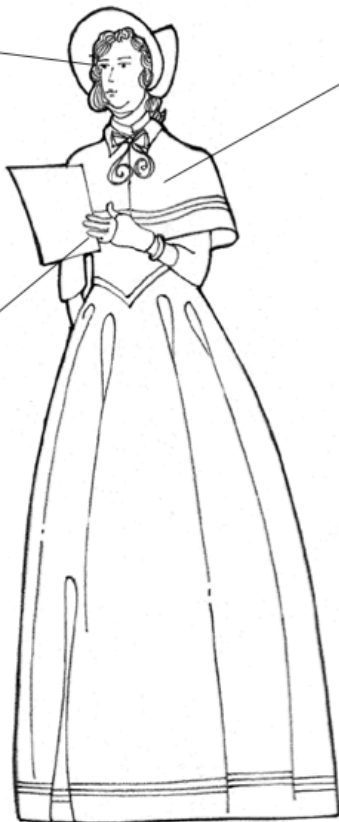
**Complete the following Sensory figure for Elizabeth Cady Stanton about the movement for equal rights for women:**

**With my eyes,  
I see . . .**

Unequal treatment of women. Men control our money and property and discipline us as they see fit. We are not allowed to become professionals!

**With my hands,  
I write . . .**

The Declaration of Sentiments. I don't like speaking, but I tend to do all the writing for people like Susan B. Anthony. I'm the voice behind the women's movement.



**Elizabeth Cady Stanton**

**With my heart,  
I feel . . .**

We deserve equal treatment! When I met Lucretia Mott at the anti-slavery convention in 1840 and we were forced to sit behind a curtain while men made decisions without us, I knew it was time to take action.

### *Equal Rights for Women*

**Declaration of Sentiments:** a formal statement of injustices suffered by women, written by the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention. Sentiments means “beliefs” or “convictions.”

**What document served as the model for the Declaration of Sentiments?**

The Declaration of Independence.

**Seneca Falls Convention:** the gathering of supporters of women's rights in July 1848 that launched the movement for women's right to vote.

**What was the legacy of the Seneca Falls Convention?**

Helped to create an organized campaign for women's rights. Slowly the movement made progress. States began granting women the right to vote, own property, etc. Only ONE woman who signed the Declaration of Sentiments would live to vote for president.

Who were some of the leaders in the movement for equal rights for women?

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Lucretia Mott
- Grimke sisters
- Susan B. Anthony